Summary

Harry Potter felt like two different people on even the best of days. Life was a series of duties, of appointments to fill, of masks to put on. There were four different masks he was wearing, and personally he thought it worse than when he had been at war.

Then he comes across the battered journal of Abraxas Malfoy...

He always knew that his 'saving-people thing' would get him into trouble

Big Thanks to @bellachrome for both helping beta this and for writing all of Tom's POV scenes <3
Disclaimer: I do not own anything Harry Potter (only the Original Characters that are purely the product of my brain)
Hope you enjoy reading!
In Which Harry Is Really Friggin' Tired

Harry Potter felt like two different people on even the best of days.

There was Lord Potter-Black, who was The-Boy-Who-Lived (twice), the hero of the Wizarding World, the Head of the Aurors, divorcée of the seeker for the Holyhead Harpies, Ginny Weasley, and the co-owner of Weasley Wizard Wheezes. Lord Potter-Black was praised for (most) all these things, seen walking around and smooth talking the masses at social parties with Lord Longbottom (and his wife Luna Longbottom nee. Lovegood), always having an answer for every question asked.

There was Harry- Harry, who had come back from the war with the sole intent of fixing his world the best he could. Who made the Potter Manor into a shelter for the people left in the aftermath of the war, who helped design products with George Weasley for the survivors who had PTSD, who had gotten married in his Auror uniform because he had come directly from breaking up a sex-trafficking ring.

Then there was Potter.

Just Potter, as that was all Draco Malfoy had ever called him and there was no need to ever change that. Potter, who sat with Narcissa, Draco, Andromeda, and Teddy once a week for dinner and enjoyed the little family they had left- as they were the last surviving people with Black blood.

Life was a series of duties, of appointments to fill, of masks to put on.

There were four different masks he wore, and personally he thought it worse than when he had been at war.

The fourth side of Harry was one that only Luna, Hermione, Neville, Draco, Narcissa, Andromeda knew about. They had been the ones who had stuck by his side when the fame of his Lordships had driven away Ron and corrupted Ginny. So in turn, they were the ones that knew about the Hallows. The Elder Wand that wouldn’t stay broken, the Resurrection Stone that would stay lost, and the Invisibility Cloak that wouldn’t stay destroyed.

The fourth side of Harry was that he was the Master of Death.

Unable to die.

It came in handy occasionally. A killing curse would clip him during a firefight and he’d feel dizzy but be able to keep fighting (though building up the tolerance for that curse was not a fun time), but as time went on he realized it was a curse within a boon.

If he died for good, like blood-drained out, body destroyed death- something irreversible- he’d find himself in that same white Kings Cross Station, but when he came back… his body would be that of the malnutritioned seventeen-year-old that had come back to life in the Forbidden Forest.

Eventually, tired of putting on glamors, Harry retired from the public eye and took up residence in Grimmauld Place.

He only held court with the people that knew his secret, and only went out into the public when he either was trying to get support for the orphanage he’d started or he was with his Godson.
Harry was sat in the sunroom of the Malfoy Manor, head on the knees that were pulled up to his chest. “What am I doing here?”

It wasn’t as much a question as a dejected mutter, but Hermione took it as one anyway.

Shifting her sleeping three year old son on her hip, she pointed at him angrily as if it would help get her point across more. “You tried to kill yourself Harry!” Her voice was a hissed whisper, mothering instincts kicking in even if her eyes were blazing with rage.

Neville had at least had the decency to have Luna watch their two twins at home while he sat on a nearby couch looking too tired for his own good. Though, as this had been Hermione’s house since she married Draco four years ago, he guessed he had no right to bring it up.

“I didn’t try ‘Mione.”

His heart had stopped beating, too much blood lost, hence his stick-like seventeen-year-old limbs.

There was a sigh from the second youngest (looking) person in the room, Teddy sporting only half his usual piercings and black hair, showing just how rattled by this whole situation he was. “Harry stop being a smart-aleck. The fact you even had a premeditated plan, much less carried it out is what’s worrying. You may not be able to die, but who’s to say you won’t try again or get worse when nothing happens?”

Damn himself for helping the kid study to be a mind healer.

He sighed, rubbing his face and moving to cross his legs. “I know you guys are worried, I just…”

His best friend was handing off her son to Draco smoothly and he knew he was about to get a lecture. As soon as the door close she was raising her voice, hands waving as she started to turn a light shade of red and tear up. “What, Harry?” Hermione hissed. “You just wanted to see if you could worry us? You wanted to see how far you could go, how bad you could get? What stupid reason do you have for this ?!”

“I JUST WANTED TO SEE MY FAMILY!” It was out of his lips before he could stop it, frustration leading to shame when a stale silence fell over the room. “...I- I wanted to see my parents or Sirius or even Snape. To talk to Remus and Tonks, tell them how much I miss them, how we’ve all been. I just- I wanted to feel as if I did something right for once…”

Narcissa, who had been sitting in the back of the room with her silvery hair in a simple but elegant bun and a frown on her lips, stood and moved to sit next to him on the couch. “Harry, darling… you cannot dwell on the dead forever. Especially with who you are. You have to learn to live as you are or life itself will become your death.”

It was then that Harry Potter had broken down crying for the first time since the war, on the shoulder of the woman he saw as a grandmother, because he realized he wasn’t really living.

He hadn't been for a long, long while.
In Which Harry Has A Birthday (What An Occurrence)

Chapter by PurpleMango

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry Potter-Black was Head Auror but quit due to dying too often- When Harry dies via physical harm, he is reset to his seventeen-year-old body.
Hermione and Draco are married, along with Neville and Luna, while Narcissa maintains the role of ‘Wine Aunt’ to the whole extended family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Neville, Draco, Hermione, and him celebrated their birthdays together nowadays.

Teddy (and his new husband, David Greengrass) were the ones to organize the huge ball this year, and he raised a single eyebrow at his godson when he found the Malfoy Manor overrun with people from every corner of the Wizarding World.

Teddy just smiled his normal shit-eating grin, slapping his back in a way most people would not dare to do to an ex-Auror. “Too many people Gramps?”

“You're a real pain in my ass, you know that?”

David barked a laugh from where he strolled over and caught Teddy’s arm causally in a way that made Harry’s stomach drop out a little because he wanted that so bad with someone. “I think the whole world knows that, and yet everyone also knows that you dote on him.”

Harry rolled his eyes. He hated social gatherings, but David was right, he loved his godson as if he were his own blood and would never refuse a request from him.

Damn did he hate people though.

Well- not entirely, as an argument could be made he actually liked people more than he should what with his ‘saving people thing’ and yet…

He was surrounded by people the second he stepped off the last stair leading to the ballroom, everyone from politicians to hopeful potential bed-mates trying to get a piece of him.

“Harry!” And there she was. The demon herself. “Oh, how have you been!”

He cussed colorfully under his breath as the crowd parted, because apparently drama was what made the world turn around here, letting the red haired harpy through. Sending a pleading look to Teddy, he took on a smile that was as fake as it was cold. “Ginevra. Who invited you?”

The woman beamed as if she didn't see the cold look he was sending her, pulling a (regretful looking) guy to her side. “Dennis is my date tonight!”
Dennis Creevey had been one of the many people who had hated Harry for having lost one of their family members during the war, but over time they had grown to be friends, especially after he had hired the man to work in the orphanage as the resident medi-witch. But now he looked like he wanted to see anyone else. “Er… Hey Harry.”

“Hey Dennis.” He let his eyes soften a bit, knowing he probably looked like he was about to start a in depth training on torture techniques (as he'd been explained to when one of his newer Auror tranies had started crying under his glare and he'd been forced to bring out his stash of blankets and chocolate). Moving forward, he clasped the man's forearm in the greeting from one of the surviving DA members to another. “I thought you didn't like these social events.”

With a slightly less pained smile the man clasped his arm back and they drew each other into a short hug around the clasped arms. “I thought I should come. It’s the fiftieth birthday of our three favorite lions after all.”

“What, no snakes allowed Creevey?” Draco appeared with Hermione on his arm, both looking flawless as usual and he knew their son and daughter were wandering around somewhere (probably with the three Longbottom teens and Teddy's adopted daughter). The blonde man's tone was teasing, he'd been the one to mentor Dennis on his way to becoming the medi-witch he was, as Draco had been working as a fully trained healer himself and was now heading up St. Mungos in the ‘special cases’ ward.

Dennis greeted the two just as he'd greeted Harry, and the two men got into a discussion about medicine and different things they had learned easily.

Harry looked at where Ginny was standing, eyes turning glacial. “If you hurt him, I will spare none of my wrath, Ginevera. He does not deserve the special kind of misery you bring.”

With the crowd watching in fascination, he stalked towards the other side of the room.

Despite what some people would say about him, he was actually not on speaking terms with fame, simply because they just didn't get along.

So he did what he always did- he found the people he knew could give him both an exciting conversation and some protection from those people he didn't want to talk to- and made himself comfy.

If those people happened to be influential Lords that just really wanted someone to share cooking recipes with, high up politicians that wanted another adventure novel recommendation, or the ‘ever mysterious’ Vampire Lord who he had made friends with through their mutual love of horror movies and gardening… then so sue him.

It wasn't his fault the most interesting and intelligent people usually held the highest positions of power.

All in all, it was a fairly good night. Lord Zabini got three new recipes to try out, the Irish minister went home with four new books to read, and Lord Zacarias and him had a wonderful time arguing the merits of their favorite man-eating flowers (to the delighted horror of all the journalists that they had both pretended not to see).

In the end, he wished his many friends well, and retired to the room he had in the manor with the handsome Vampire Lord in tow, both giggling conspiratorially like teenagers.
Draco caught him the next morning, Zacarias having already left. Eyeing the bite marks on Harry's neck he raised an eyebrow. “Have fun?”

“I did.” And maybe his smile was a little too cheeky, maybe his steps a little bouncier, but he had been dealt a hard hand and so no one could fault his need for a little fun. “What's up?”

The blonde rolled his eyes, mind obviously thinking the same thing as Harry had been, and he held out a thin book-like thing that was bound in green leather and had a thin green ribbon tucked in white pages. “I thought you would find this interesting. My father gave it to me after the war... and I thought it might help you find something to do.” Draco moved to rub the back of his neck in an unusually nervous tick for him. “It's my grandfather's journal.”

Then the man rushed away quickly, probably heading to work, and Harry was left staring at green leather, wondering just what the journal would hold.

He opened it, looking at the flowing and loopy writing on the inside of the cover.

*Do not touch! This journal is the property of Abraxas Malfoy and any unauthorized trespassers that are not within Malfoy blood or giving permission of a Malfoy will suffer!*

Harry grinned, blaming it on the left over rush of endorphins from the night before.

Maybe, just maybe, this would be interesting.

Chapter End Notes

^-^ Harry being a Soft Dad Figure for Teddy is my favorite thing
In Which Harry Has a Family

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry celebrated his fiftieth birthday, had some ;) fun with the Vampire Lord Zacarias, and got an interesting gift from Draco- one green leather journal of Abraxas Malfoy

Chapter Notes

Thanks @bellachrome for being such a wonderful beta and muse <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The journal was quickly his favorite thing to read when in the moments in between his wrangling the teenage kids of his friends, as it had a multitude of spells that he didn’t know and he always liked it when he could tell Draco about the antics his grandfather had gotten up to.

He was especially interested in the curriculum, because as it turned out Hogwarts had once had classes on alchemy, spell-crafting, warding, healing, and wizarding politics.

When Hermione found out that the journal had spells that even she didn’t know, she’d begged him to let her read it, but after a few minutes of arguing, she gave up trying to take the book from him.

There was a noticeable shift in the start of the third year and Harry frowned when the cause of this was finally revealed.

February 13th, 1938

I find myself intrigued with this new freshman and as loathe as I am to talk about people in this journal that I do not know or are not my friends, I wonder at this boy.

Tom Riddle is the strangest of our first years. A mudblood, and yet he is at the top of his class already, his eyes burning whenever someone tells him he cannot do something. I am positive he lives in the library, as the spells I have seen him cast almost absentmindedly are beyond anything even I can do (and again, I hate that I had to write that). And yet... I believe that there may be something about this boy, something powerful that I will have to watch for.

We will see...

Abraxas

The Malfoy ancestor seemed to be obsessed with the young Dark Lord though- as the boy remarked many times throughout his personal notes- not as much as Dumbledore seemed to be. The underlying
tension in the journal's writing came to a head the next winter.

I'm right! I knew it!

I know this is not the usual method of writing, let me take a second to compose myself.

September 26th, 1938

Tom Riddle is a parseltongue, an heir of Slytherin and I am the only one to know!

It was a mistake really, I was up late studying and headed to the kitchens for some refreshments, and Tom was in a nearby classroom. I had heard hissing and went to check it out- apparently he has a snake familiar named Lilith (named after some muggle demon that he had smiled at referencing).

I made a vow not to tell anyone about the incident, but I was right. Tom Riddle is indeed powerful, and I will be part of the group that stands at his side, because I believe he was meant to change the world.

With bated breath,

Abraxas

The journal went on to tell of the Malfoy boy slowly making friends with Riddle.

When Harry had gotten to the end of the year, he tucked the green silk ribbon into the page and closed the journal with a sigh. Genevieve Longbottom (one of the twins out of the three Longbottom children), who was going on her fifth year in Hogwarts, moved over to plop down on the couch next to him. “What’s up Uncle?”

“He’s been frowning and sighing for the last hour, ignore him.” The comment came from Erik Greengrass-Lupin, who was currently hiding behind a book across from them.

Harry frowned deeper. “I have not.”

A soft snort came from Silas Malfoy (the eldest of the Malfoy siblings), who had his head in Erik’s lap. “You most definitely have been.”

Gwendolyn Longbottom and Marian Malfoy were curled up together in a nearby loveseat, Marian pausing in her pressing kisses (that everyone ignored) to her girlfriend’s lips to grin over at him. “Harry, you’ve been sitting there frowning for almost six days now.”

He huffed. It had been three days, not six.

“Are you lot bugging Harry?” Teddy moved into the room smoothly, smile bright and hair a deep purple today. He’d stopped wearing most of his outrageous piercings when he’d turned twenty-five, but still had two little studs in each ear and a nose piercing even though he was going on thirty-six. The man grinned at him. “I thought you’d be hiding away in some dark corner, kiddo.”

Narrowing his eyes at his godson, he pulled the sneer he’d perfected over years of watching Lucius whenever he’d join Draco in visiting his father in Azkaban. “I am over seventeen years your senior, Theodore.”
The man just laughed, ruffling Harry’s hair as he walked by. “And yet you look ten years younger!”

The biggest secret of the three intertwined families was still him. David had to swear an oath of secrecy when marrying Teddy (despite Harry insisting he could care less), and all the children were told certain parts of his secret when they got their Hogwarts letter, the reason why he looked their age reviled at a later time.

So it wasn’t much of a surprise to him when the room went quiet as soon as Teddy left.

He hadn’t talked to any of the teens about his secret, but the tension in the air told him that they knew and had questions either way.

Harry sighed, shrinking the journal and putting it back into a simple pouch in which kept the Deathly Hallows around his neck (as it was currently one of his most prized items). “I can feel your questions… You all know that I will answer anything you ask.” The only two teenagers missing were Grant Longbottom and Calla Greengrass-Lupin, but they were out on a double date and he wasn’t about to call them back just to depress them.

“When- when did you last die?” Genevieve, who was sitting to his side looked at him with those same wide blue eyes Luna had. “You look only in your twenties when you take off your glamour.”

Thinking about it, he let himself sink back into the sofa. “About five years ago. I was exploring the Forest of Dean in my animagus form and got shot by a muggle hunter. I’m not really sure what happened, but when I got home six days had passed and I was covered in blood…” The whole group already knew about his white stag animagus and the memory came back to him slowly. “I have a theory that he tried to eat me and my body reformed inside his stomach- thus killing him.”

Erik’s attention was officially off the book in hand. “Wicked.”

Silas looked up his boyfriend, wrinkling his nose. “I think you mean- disgusting.”

“Whatever you say babe.” The younger Greengrass-Lupin dipped his head to kiss the elder Malfoy, ignoring the gagging sound the younger Malfoy made (which was hypocritical, considering that she was wrapped around her own girlfriend).

Rolling his eyes, he looked to Genevieve, who was both proudly asexual and by far his favorite to talk to when the others got all gooey like this. “How’s your Charms essay going?”

The girl shrugged, both ignoring the ongoing insult-war going on between the other teenagers. “I’m not very good at theory… Can you help me?”

He tried not to let it show how much the noisy hooligans across from them were irritating him, but she must have seen it anyways, smiling and nodding. “Yes please.”

With similar smiles, they both retreated to the Malfoy library.

Chapter End Notes

Soft! Dad! Harry! ^-^
January 5th, 1941

I think something is wrong with Tom.

Gone is the studious, careful, and brilliant boy I know. He’s slipping in his studies, obsessed with his lineage- something he’d never before taken much stock in- and finding the Chamber of Secrets. He had given that up the end of his second year and yet now, after refusing my invitation to the Malfoy Manor for Yule, he’s acting different! I tried to bring it up, but he yelled at me.

He never yells at any of us, we’re his friends... and yet now he’s calling us his ‘followers’.

I am worried, but I will still stay by his side,

Abraxas

Harry read this with a sinking stomach.

He’d been pleasantly surprised about the character of young Tom Riddle, even going so far as to agree with some of the boy’s ideals and methods, but now… He could feel the telltale signs of a certain old man’s meddling.

Sighing deeply, he rubbed at the bridge of his nose. “Damn it Dumbledore… what did you do?”

Hermione looked up from where she was doing paperwork, her desk piled high with the stacks of papers (as being the Minister of Magic took a lot of work), narrowing her eyes at where he was sitting in one of her chairs with a glamour on and a cane resting on the side of his chair that he used for show. “What now?”
“I think that Dumbledore made Tom go off the deep end.” At her raised eyebrow, he elaborated. “We both already admitted that his ideals as Abraxas writes about them, are not the worst thing, and are actually fairly well constructed and thought out. Yet... Abraxas thinks that something strange happened over Yule, because now Tom’s suddenly obsessed with the Chamber and with his parents.”

The woman connected the dots immediately. “Compulsion charms?”

He hummed and they both looked at each other for a long moment.

The aftermath of the war had been difficult, but the private healer he’d hired during his time as Head Auror? That had been a testament to the amount of betrayal that had been woven into their everyday lives... hence why neither talked to Ronald or Ginevra Weasley anymore.

Harry was the first to break eye contact, looking down at the book without actually reading it. “Do you think...” He drifted off.

“Yes. I do think that he would do something like this.” Hermione’s voice was as hard as ice, as she was one of the most resolute of the family (other than Narcissa and Draco) in her hate for Dumbledore. “I think he would do anything to stop those that he sees as a threat, even if it means making them worse just so he has a reason to dislike them.”

He just nodded, knowing he believed what she did just as strongly, but hating the idea that one man could have ruined so many lives by making a problem and then trying to fix it.

So he read on.

*January 23rd, 1942*

*I’m not sure what to do.*

*On one hand, Tom is doing better in his studies and acting a little more of the cool-headed boy we all know and love, but at the same time he’s colder towards us. As if we aren’t his friends, just his lackeys.*

*Septimus Weasley and Charlus Potter both decided to stop coming to our group meetings and it looks like even Augusta Fawley wants to leave but is waiting a little longer to do so.*

*This is affecting our plans for the Knights. We needed some of those lighter family connections to enforce our passing of the bills we need- but now Tom’s talking about more ‘direct’ strategies...*  

*Worried, but forever loyal to the cause,*

*Abraxas*

There had been quite the talk with the elder woman when Augusta Longbottom nee. Fawley had been mentioned. She had just smiled sadly and told them that yes, she had been friends with Tom Riddle, but that there had been a falling out.

Now it seemed to make sense.

The Potter heir, the Weasley heir, and the Fawley heir had been scared off by Tom sudden change.
Three light families fell back in Dumbledore’s hands, right where the old man wanted them.

April 7th, 1942

Tom found his family. He’s related to Salazar Slytherin though the Gaunt family, but his father… is a muggle. I fear that he might do something rash, as he cursed Orion pretty badly yesterday for daring to make a teasing joke about it.

Not even transfiguration is funny anymore. Tom isn’t amused with Dumbledore, he’s outright paranoid, talking of the man like he’s more than just the old coot Tom used to think he was.

I fear for my best friend… but I would never leave his side, not when he needs me now more than ever.

I just wish- I wish that someone could save him from himself.

Hoping everything works out,

Abraxas

September 2nd, 1942

Our fifth year.

I had seen the newspapers. Mofin Gaunt was arrested for the murders of the Riddle family. But no one else seemed to see the glint in Tom’s eyes. He did it. I know he did.

And yet… I find myself unable to bring myself to do anything about it.

He’s happy. Happier than I’ve seen in a long while.

And even wearing that ring on his finger, the Gaunt ring, I can’t bring myself to leave him or even tell him off. Because even in the darkest moments I realize he is more than my best friend. He is my Lord.

I fear for not only Tom now, but myself as well,

Abraxas

Moving to rub at his face tiredly, Harry closed the journal again.

“What’s going on in that brain of yours?” Hermione was looking at him in the same way McGonagall used to, causing his lips to quirk up slightly. The woman smiled in turn. “I’m doing it again, aren’t I? Marian is always telling me she hates that look.”

Snorting softly, he stood to pace the floor in front of the desk, organizing his thoughts. “I-... Abraxas- he asked for someone to save Tom. Pleading really. And if what we know from Augusta is true, then maybe he could be saved.” He looked up at his best friend, eyes full of pain and desperation. “So many people… we could save so many people.”
Hermione stared at him for a long moment, before sighing deeply. “Harry-... Harry you can’t save everyone.”

“But I can save some of them! Even one person would be better than this- this mess of orphans and widows that we have! I could stop the war before it even started! I could-”

“And how would you do this?” There was no judgement in her tone, only a plain and simple question. That was Hermione’s platform after all, facts and cold hard logic. “The time turners all got destroyed, not to mention the fact they only went back five hours without serious damage to the wearer. How are you going to get back almost a hundred years?”

Harry frowned. “I don’t know.” His hands clenched. “But i’m not giving up. If I can’t die then I’m going to use this to the best of my abilities instead of loitering around the house and waiting for everyone I love to turn to dust.”

Chapter End Notes

And hence we get more into the actual plot of this whole rollercoaster:
~TIME TRAVEL~
In Which Harry Decides To Walk Into The Woods Again

Chapter by PurpleMango

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry, upon debating with Hermione, comes to the conclusion that Dumbledore's actions were cataclysmic to sending Tom Riddle of the metaphorical deep end. With Abraxas pleading for a savior, Harry (like the good-intentioned idiot he is) decides to find a way to time travel back over 100 years so he can try to convince good ol' Tommy Ridds not to go insane

Chapter Notes

We stan

angsty parallels

in

this

house

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It turns out that the Black library was full of interesting things.

Like that book on the best ways of cooking people that he’d put on the tallest shelf he could and shuddered at (he didn’t eat meat for a few days after that) or that random fairy that he’d found with her wing crushed in a book who cursed his hair purple for a whole three weeks even though he’d let her go.

But it wasn’t until he found the secret room that things got interesting.

The very back of the library was colder than the rest of the house, something that Harry both hated and subsequently ignored in sake of curling up by the fireplace. But as Harry’s eye caught on a book in the familiar language of the snakes and he tried to pull the small green book off the shelf, the floor started to shake, but there was barely any time to react before he was falling- falling- falling- into a soft surface.

Blinking, he looked around at his surroundings.

He was laying on a bed with green velvet blankets, next to the bed a ladder was attached to the wall leading up to the hole he’d fallen through, and around him were stacks upon stacks of books. Walls lined with books that he could sense had some type of familiar magic resonating off them. Though he could take them without losing any body parts, so he shrugged it off and proceeded to work though reading anything related to time or unknown books of spells or potions.

When he emerged from his cave of books, Andromeda and Teddy practically strong armed him to
the Malfoy Manor to eat because apparently he’d been gone for more than a week.

*Which was probably why he felt so weak, but whatever.*

Hermione stormed in, but before she could go into her rant about him ignoring his body’s biological needs for the sake of getting stuck in a library (she was just jealous), he waved the book he’d found in the air. “I found it!”

The woman seemed to stumble, because she’d been the only one he’d talked about this to and having him mention it around the whole family, they both knew it had to be something more concrete than ‘make an uber-huge time turner with all the remaining time sand and yeet myself into the sun’ (he really needed to stop talking to so many teenagers).

“A spell?” The gleam in her eyes promising pain vanished, swallowed up by her curiosity.

“A potion.” He flipped to the bookmarked page. “It requires some rare materials- like a basilisk fang, time sand, phoenix tears, and thestral hair- but I think we got those covered.”

*June 19th, 1943*

*I have not written in a while.*

*Tom opened the Chamber of Secrets and the basilisk within killed a girl. Myrtle Warren. The attacks were blamed on an oafish boy though, Haggis (or something), and Tom got a medal for ‘helping find the attacker’. I fear someone will find him out- and does that not reflect on who I have become, who I chose to protect?*

*But Tom seems happier with every life he’s taken and although it scares me, I find that I really only want to see him smile again. The rest of the Knights agree with me (silently).*

*We would do anything to make the boy that we all see as our leader be happy again, as he once was with plotting bills and plans for the Ministry.*

*Merlin save our souls,*

*Abraxas*

The potion wasn’t hard to do, because just like the Elixir of Life, all things of extreme power tend to be oversimplified with the thought that people wouldn’t actually be stupid enough to attempt them.

He had a basilisk fang, Hermione had time sand, they could rework the potion to work with the latent phoenix tears in his blood, and he was pretty chill with the thestral herd at Hogwarts.

They could actually do this.

*So- as Marian Malfoy had argued her father’s grumbles about ‘stupid Gryffindor ideas’- Why The Fuck Not?*

*October 30th, 1944*
Lord Voldemort.

The name of my Lord.

The name of the person who used to be my best friend.

I promised myself and my future lines to his plans, but yet, in the back of my head I wondered if my son or my grandson would hate me for my choice. I wished that they could have seen my Lord at the height of his time at Hogwarts, when the world bent to his will.

When I loved him.

I will marry. I will carry out the line of Mayfoys and we will aid my Lord in his work. This is what I have wanted for so long… and yet, why does it feel like a sword though my heart to see the boy I once loved destroy himself?

With every smile bathed in blood and violence, Tom Riddle dies a little and Lord Voldemort is given new strength. I don’t know what it says about me that I now feel only sick when I see the smile I once cherished.

I dream for the coming of a savior,

Abraxas

It’s not hard to leave.

Harry thinks that he’s known ever since he took a silver knife to both his wrists that leaving wasn’t the hard part. Sure, his family was the most important thing to him since ever, but they were okay without him (they tried to deny this, but when asked if any of them would come with him, there was only a sad silence).

This was his mission anyways, his war to finish.

He’d gotten that beat into him every time Vernon had taken a belt to him because of Dumbledore’s manipulations, every life threatening encounter he was told that he was brave to have sacrificed himself for others, every time anyone had told him that his eyes were the one thing that he’d retained from the dying wish of the mother that had loved him until her last breath.

It had started with a weapon.

It would end with love.

November, 1956

I cannot write as often. My mental barriers are not strong enough to keep my Lord out and I do not wish for this journal to be destroyed. I wish for my sons and grandsons to come to understand why they have to fight in a war they will never understood.

Because I failed them.

My Lord killed another. His eyes are blood red now like those of an albino snake, his hair thinning, face a sickly pale. I wonder if this is what it looked like to see the once beautiful fall, to see the great
be conquered in the times of old.

Tom Riddle, my brother, my best friend, my family- is gone. There is none of the former cunning genius in this man’s eyes, only violence. And although my Lord is brilliant, compared to what he was, he dims in comparison.

I fear this war will never be over,

Abraxas

It was done. Shimmering and swirling like liquid time, gold and warm to the touch- Harry stared at where Hermione and Draco were working in tandem to clean up and pour the thick liquid into a glass vial.

Everyone was here, watching intently.

The teenagers, his friends, even Narcissa and Augusta.

In his heaviest Auror robes, both his wands strapped to his thighs, and Hermione’s best expandable pouch around his neck with everything that the women of the families had insisted he bring, Harry looked around the room. “I…. I’m not sure what to say.” There were some chuckles. “I mean, I’m notoriously bad at these types of things. Whether walking into a forest alone or taking a time-traveling potion, I’m really bad at goodbyes...”

The silence was broken when Genevieve ran over to tug him into a hug. “I’ll miss you.”

“We all will.” Neville broke from the group to hug him and suddenly it was a mess of crying, hugs, and shaky words of love from the family he’d found.

When he was released from the crying masses he smiled with lips that were wet with salt, took the potion in hand, and walked into the forest surrounding the manor.

Alone walking to what could very well be his death.

So just a normal Saturday.

It had been decided in the roundabout logic that Teddy loved to use, that he couldn’t take the potion anywhere near civilization (Malfoy Manor), in case he popped into existence in said civilization (Malfoy Manor) without any rhyme or reason when he went back in time. That was a sure way to get him locked up with the Unspeakables forever.

So into the forest it was.

Deja Vu much?

Stopping in a clearing he knew was more than a little in the middle of nowhere, he uncorked the potion in his hand, took a deep breath and knocked back the slimy golden liquid like a shot of weird cough syrup.

October 1st, 1957

My Lord has decided to travel- to see the world and uncover it’s mysteries as Headmaster Dippet
told him to. I hope that he regains the part of him that we miss so much, the cunning brilliance that was there so long ago…

I think that this will be my last entry into these pages. My wife is pregnant and I will- once finished with this short goodbye- put this journal into the deep recesses of the library and hope that my fears for this war are unfounded.

The savior I had wished for all that time… they did not show- we are lost to sides played by the corrupt government and the shade of a genius that has descended into madness.

It seems almost fitting in this time of great unease all I can think of to say is this: “Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.”

With a heavy heart,

Abraxas Septimus Malfoy

Chapter End Notes

Any comments, kudos, loud yodeling, or smoke signals are avidly encouraged :) Both I (Mango) and Bells appreciate your time <3
In Which Harry Finds A New Ally In An Old Lover

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Determined to go back in time to stop the war from happening and from Tom Riddle turning into Voldyshorts, Harry planned to employ the use of time travel. A shot of golden time-travel potion in hand, Harry said goodbye to his family and once again walked into the woods.

Chapter Notes

Thanks @bellachrome again for being such a wonderful beta for my cracky ramblings!
((side-note: at the beginning of the chapter Harry is of consensual age, having come through time at the physical age of ~35 and the mental age of... a very old man ^-^))

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Suggestion: Don’t time travel.

At first the potion had just tasted disgusting, like most potions.

Then, like a pot boiling, it slowly got warmer and warmer until he was falling to his knees with tears running down his cheeks from the pain as overwhelming heat consumed him.

Slowly, burning so hot it felt like his insides were freezing, a golden light surrounded him and in the back of his brain he wondered if the golden light was just the liquid leaking out of him because he was being slowly torn apart.

That was to say, time travel was more painful than getting skinned (he was never going into the woods as his animagus form again).

When he collapsed, he found there was snow surrounding him, and even thought he couldn’t remember if it had snowed or not recently, his brain was still lingering on the pain. Faintly he remembered thinking about how he wished he was back in bed with Zacarias before this whole thing had started- but then the pain reached an all time high and he blacked out.

There was warmth, a nice weight of a thick blanket over his aching body that trapped in the slow, easy heat. Groaning at the way his brain felt like it was mush, his throat not much better, someone’s warm hands were taking his chin in hand. “Open your mouth.”

The voice was faintly familiar and none of his internal warning clocks were going off, so he did as told and as soon as the taste of pain relief potion hit his tongue, he swallowed.

Sighing in bliss when the pain dimmed to something manageable, he pried open his tired eyes,
blinking when a familiar face came into his blurry line of sight. Squinting, he whispered ‘Zacarias?’ softly.

“You know my name?” The man who looked as if not a day had gone by, studied him skeptically. “And how is it you appeared in the courtyard of my castle with no identification, seeming to be in a great deal of pain, with a… very strange take on the wizarding Auror robes?”

He laughed.

Teddy was so right and he was absolutely fucked.

“You think this funny?” There was that promise of violence in the vampire’s eyes whenever he got a bit to pushy with his teasing.

Immediately sobering, he shook his head. “No no, sorry I… I’m not exactly sure what to say, as I don’t come from around h-”

There was some strange buzzing feeling in his body and suddenly he found himself on the hard floor, gasping for breath as he stared at the wooden slats of the bed in wonder. 

“What?

Coughing and wincing, he crawled out from under the bed, seeing the Vampire Lord had the same wide eyed look on his face. “You… are a ghost? Part ghost?”

Rolling his eyes, he pulled himself back up to the bed, flopping back down with a sigh. “No... I’m from the future.”

So… Good news? He was in 1942, later than he’d wanted, but still, mid July of 1942 was better than 1800.

Bad news- Apparently Zacarias had heard about the potion and decided to give him an hour lecture on why it was the stupidest idea that Harry could have had.

The lecture included:

- A lengthy rendition of Hermione’s argument on paradoxes
- Theories that his presence here could be rejected by time itself and could rip a hole in the fabric of the universe
- Many comments on his intelligence (that weren’t very nice)
- A whole side tangent about his changing the already delicately balanced potion to include blood-diluted phoenix tears
- Sneering barbs over the fact that he had thought he could ‘naively make a difference in a universe that would probably try to kill him off to fix the problem’
- Comments on the sheer luck that he’d ended up in the castle of the one person that would both believe him and who knew the potion
- And a lot of heated looks

Eventually Harry just sighed and started stripping.

“What are you doing!” The vampire sounded incredulous.
He kicked off his boots, shedding his robe with a grin. “Taking my mind off the situation. Care to help?” There was only a second pause, before the man was standing in front of him, hands dexterously undoing his shirt buttons.

Needless to say, it was beyond wonderful…

Right up to the point that he turned intangible again and fell though the bed.

They both then grudgingly decided that maybe ‘distractions’ could wait until they figured out a solution to the whole ‘falling through things’ thing.

He decided not to tell the vampire that he could technically fix things if he died, pop back to his seventeen year old self, but both the hate for being a weak child and the fear that somehow he would go back to the future kept his lips firmly shut.

Though… it seemed fate had decided for him.

It seems that not only had his whole body been royally fudged over, but his animagus form was now that of a bat. The good part of that was that it seemed relatively more stable than his normal body. He would sit on the Vampire Lord’s shoulder as the man took long walks, but something about flying without a broom was exhilarating.

And yet, being grabbed out of the air by a hawk three times his size to be killed and fed to smaller hawks was not a pleasant feeling.

_Fate hated Harry Potter._

And frankly? He hated her too. Fate was a fucking bitch.

Waking to the feeling of Deja Vu and another pounding headache, he didn’t have to be told to open his mouth when warm hands took his chin in hand, swallowing down the pain potion and peering at the Vampire. “What in bloody hell…”

“Children shouldn’t curse.” The man was looking at him in a strange mix of amusement and suspicion. “You didn’t tell me this would happen.”

Harry was still stuck on the ‘child’ part of the man’s sentence. Sure he was a twig but he should at least-

Oh no. His hands were tiny.

_What the-_ Stumbling up on unsteady legs, he scrambled to the mirror, gaping at the tiny child he saw looking back at him. “Noooooo! No i’m supposed to be seventeen! I’m always seventeen, what the hell!”

“This happen often?”

Waving his hand at the sulking vampire, he tugged at his hair, still processing this change. “I’m usually seventeen when I die! I’m always seventeen but this- I seem to be-…” Taking a category of his height and the most prominent scars, he worked backwards, whining when he saw the scar that he’d gotten from the basilisk. His body seemed to always made the scars that had been relevant to his age more prominent and the scar on his left forearm looked as if it had just scabbed over. “The blood in the potion! It must have worked to send me both back in time literally but back in time when I got
the phoenix tears in my blood *physically* as well.”

The Vampire Lord hummed. “Well, as loathe as I am to admit you are right, it seems like a logical conclusion… And I suppose that this should help towards your mission to save your family, as now you can go to Hogwarts.”

Looking up at the man, his eyes widened. “You’re right!”

“Most always.”

Ignoring the quip, he grinned widely. “And now that i’m stable I can go to Diagon Alley and talk to the goblins, get this all started!”

The man raised a single eyebrow. “Can you even stand up for more than twenty minutes? You look like a small gust of wind could blow you over.”

“And you’re an asshole- so I guess we’re both even!” Huffing in a very childlike manor (*shut up he was over fifty years old he was not a child*), he grabbed the few things on the bedside table and stalked out of the tower room, knowing exactly how to get out of the wards so he could apparate to Diagon.

Zacarias caught up to him before he could even make it down a single staircase, walking at his normal pace, and his eyes were amused. “Do you want a company on your trip? My form of travel would be faster…” He kept ignoring the man. “And you wouldn’t have to walk out to the edge of the wards…”

Harry stopped short, looking back at the smirking vampire and holding out his hand impatiently. “Fine, but the story is that you found me as a child and raised me. I was going to play it as I got lost, but this would work much better.”

With a laugh, the Vampire Lord took his hand. “Bossy little brat.”

Before he could kick the man’s shins, they were being sucked through the shadows in the dim light of the castle, into an alley in what looked like Knockturn Alley. Stumbling, he used the hand holding his to keep his balance, glaring up at the man. “I hate you.”

“Mhmmm… sure you do.” The man rolled his eyes, dragging him along as she started to walk, not letting go of his hand. “Let’s get this over with.”

Stumbling slightly, he had to jog to keep up, ignoring the eyes on them. “Slow down you stupid pine tree! You’re too damn tall!”

The people around them seemed to freeze, recognizing the Vampire Lord easily and wondering what would happen to the small child with him, but Zacarias just laughed and slowed his pace. “Like I said. Bossy.”

Harry narrowed his eyes, hissing at the taller man and turning his face away. He wished he could hex the man, but all his stuff was in the expandable bag he’d grabbed before leaving, his normal Auror robes about three times too big for him and he was in the worst mood he’d been in since showing up half-dead.

They both ignored the gossip around them (and each other), but even as grumpy as both of them were, their hands stayed connected.
Harry: *time travels without being killed*
Harry: *happens to be picked up by someone he both knows and who he can trust with his secrets*
Harry: *is taken care of by said influential Vampire Lord*
Harry: *is seen in public with said influential Vampire Lord*
Harry: Fate hates me. I'm sure of it.
In Which Harry Gains A New Name

Chapter by PurpleMango

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Having traveled through time to 1942, Harry finds his body unstable, at times turning intangible and falling through things. But after having died by killer hawks, he finds himself stable again.
With a catch... He's in his twelve, almost thirteen-year-old body.
Not to be deterred, Harry has Zacarias take him to Gringotts so he can join this new and unfamiliar wizarding society.

Chapter Notes

I'm going to keep posting every day until Bells gets her first Tom scene posted!~ So look forward to that!
On that note- We stan @Bellachrome because of her wonderful patience for my spelling mistakes \(^{-}-^/\)/*3
ONTO THE STORY!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Gringotts was a tall marble building - the same as he remembered, except that the goblins didn’t eye him like he was about to do a cartwheel and then steal another dragon from them.

((Which he wouldn't. That was only for special occasions, like Yule.))

The teller they approached looked at them warily all the same. “What is your business today?”

Putting his hand into his pouch he drew out a thick letter and handed it over silently. He knew inside was a detailed description of the papers he needed to have filed, who he was, what he’d done, and a few assurances that he could pay an appropriate price for what he was asking. He watched the goblin’s eyes go wide in an unusual break of character for a goblin, before hastily moving from his stand. “Right this way, Little Lord.”

Dipping his head, he glanced at the vampire, who followed him lazily. “Aren’t you going back?”

“Can’t a guardian be concerned for their brat?” At his glare the man gave him a toothy smile. “Let me sate my curiosity at least.”

With a long suffering sigh that didn’t fit the tiny body he WAS STUCK IN (that was going to drive him insane), Harry was led to an office, the goblin teller waving him in and handing the documents to another goblin who eyed him before starting to read over the papers.

Settling down in a chair, it wasn’t long before the goblin looked up. “Mr. Potter, I am Ragnarok,
Head Goblin of the Gringotts London branch, and I will be helping you get settled into society. It seems that you have already done half my work though, as I see you have been blood adopted into the Malfoy family and have found a suitable couple that could have possibly had you as a child… I will need to do a tying ritual, to tie your magics to the family in question so that any inheritance test can be passed to the Ministry, and for that I will need you to do an inheritance test and then to find an item of value in the Malfoy vaults to tie you to the family magics.”

He nodded, taking the knife that was offered to him, already knowing the process. Nicking the pad of his middle finger, he let three drops of blood fall onto the rune-lined parchment before sticking it in his mouth and wiping the knife on his robes. They were already too big for him anyways.

Having done the whole inheritance test once before really ruined it for any other times, but the blood forming words would have been cool if he wasn’t tired and grumpy at being a literal child.

Wow. He had a name. What a surprise.

**Name:** Hadrian Aurelius Malfoy

**Date of Birth:** July 31st, 1929

**Date of Death:** N/A*

*(23 dates excluded)*

**Parents***:

Aurelius Nicolas Malfoy (blood adopted father) (deceased)

Lorelle Rose Steward nee. Malfoy (blood adopter mother) (deceased)

Septimus Brutus Malfoy (godfather/blood adopted uncle) (alive)

*(3 names excluded)*

**Magical Guardian:** Lord Zacarias Zamarie-Zetell

**Titles:**

Heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Peverell

Heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Slytherin

Heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Malfoy

Triwizard Tournament champion (1995)

Boy-Who-Lived

Boy-Who-Won

Master of Death

The goblin looked at him with glinting eyes. “I see that you did the tying ritual already. I will alter this slightly to cover a few of your… unusual results and send this to the ministry, Heir Malfoy.”

Dipping his head in respect, he grinned toothily. “May your gold prosper, Master Goblin.”
“And your enemies bleed, little Lord.” With a grin that showed that the goblin was impressed with his knowledge of goblin customs, the goblin left the room.

“I cannot believe you made me your magical guardian.”

Looking up at the scowling vampire with a frown, he huffed. “I did nothing of the sort. Lady Magic must have taken your words into account and done that herself, though I am glad for it or I would have had to deal with either Dippet or Dumbledore.” The sneer was prominent now. “Meddling old coot.”

Zacarias raised an eyebrow at him. “I take it you do not like the Hogwarts Professor?”

He snorted softly, but Ragnarok was returning, so he didn’t start on the rant he usually gave whenever someone mentioned Dumbdoor.

“Heir Malfoy, your godfather is most likely to come storming in those doors within the hour, is there anything I can do for you or Lord Zacarias before that happens?”

Harry nodded. “I would like a full medical examination at the expertise of your best healer to get this stupid body back to the shape that I want it.” He frowned down at his stick-thin body. “Pathetic really to think I somehow killed a basilisk like this.”

Two sets of eyes stared at him.

He waved them off. “Reminiscing. Ignore me.”

After being practically force-fed three nutrient potions and having had a full cleansing ritual done to him, the older goblin healer then took it upon herself to yell at Zacarias for ‘not feeding this boy!’ It was quite satisfying, if not a tad mortifying in that lovely second-hand embarrassment for the vampire.

Needless to say, he was still laughing at Zacarias’ pinched face when two people rushed in. “You-you got scolded- hahahaha- for not feeding me! What a riot! I love her!” Harry was too busy laughing to notice the newcomers.

The Vampire Lord growled lowly at him. “I would kill you if you wouldn't spring back like a damn weed, brat.”

Sticking his tongue out, he slid off the makeshift hospital bed, throwing on the too-big Auror coat. His eyes met the two other people in the room, a short haired blonde man and a woman with tightly curled light brown hair who were both just staring at him.

The man stepped forward. “Hadrian… is that you?”

Glancing back at Zacarias for a second and trying to refrain from rolling his eyes at the slightly lost shrug the vampire lord gave, he bowed. “Lord Malfoy I presume?”

The woman rushed forward, pulling him into a hug. “When we heard that Aurelius and Lorelle were gone… Where have you been? With the vampires?” The woman looked up to the Vampire Lord with thinly veiled horror in her eyes, clearly thinking of a clan of vampires trying to raise a child.

And as amusing as it was to think of Zacarias even attempting to talk to a child, much less raise one, the vampire was also a friend and he didn’t like the accusation in this woman’s voice. “Lady Malfoy-
auntie… I owe Lord Zacarias my life for saving me that horrible day so long ago and taking me into his home.” Looking back, he knew that both him and the vampire were thinking of a completely different day in the snow. “And I would ask only that you allow him to continue to be my magical guardian, as he has no ill will towards me.”

Dark eyes narrowed on him for the briefest of a second before the tall man just smiled politely. There was no way that Harry would let any other adult have that type of power over him, but they both knew that Zacarias would do next to nothing to try to control him- which was exactly what he wanted. “Yes, I wish no harm towards the child, only to check up on him once and awhile.” A grin was sent his way, hair ruffled with a pale hand. “Watch out for hawks, little bat.”

He scowled deeply at the man’s grim amusement, but watched the vampire leave without stopping him.

Chapter End Notes

Aww Draco, you big sap, blood adopting Harry as a Malfoy- And you try to say you don’t care... ^^-^ Comments, Morse code messages, or just plain old frantic screaming are always appreciated ways of communicating how much you liked the chapter. Thanks for reading!
In Which Harry Meets Tom

Chapter Summary

Previously~
After dying and finding himself in the body of his twelve-year-old self, Harry goes to the Goblins in hopes they can help him transition back into society. Thankfully to the work that Hermione and Draco had done, Harry became the heir of the Malfoy family and was instantly swept into the arms of his ‘aunt’ and ‘uncle’. Zarcarias, who by magic’s hand is now his Magical Guardian, said a cheeky goodbye and left Harry to the Malfoys. (His other titles, of Heir Peverell and Heir Slytherin are for now unknown to those around him.)

Chapter Notes

My lovely co-author and beta @Bellachrome is the one who writes all of Tom's POV scenes (and all of his interactions actually), so please, shower her in adoration because WE LOVE TOM!
And guess what?
WE HAVE A TOM SCENE!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry wondered at the fate of the real Hadrian Malfoy- the one that by the time Draco had been born had become something of a family folk story, passed down in whispers from mother to child. The eldest son of the eldest son, the rightful heir of the Malfoy family, missing when his parents were found slaughtered.

It was said that the family had gone away, newborn with them, to a quaint cottage in the woods- and when they were found again the walls were painted red and the newborn was nowhere to be found.

Though upon conferring with the Goblins in his last life, it was found that the death certificate had been issued sometime late July of 1942… But at the thought that he had replaced the boy, that a child’s death could be overlooked because of him- he quickly pushed the morbid thought to the side before it consumed him.

He was yawning by the time he stepped through the Gringotts doors, dipping his head to the goblins as he passed, not about to let his manners slip just because he was a ‘pureblood’. The goblins nodded in return though so he was sure he’d made the right choice.

Cordelia Malfoy, his new adopted mother, eyed his outfit as if he was wearing a muggle stop sign (and nothing else) and shook her head slightly, her pursed lips showing her displeasure. “Darling, we probably have clothes that will fit you at the manor -as Abraxas was your size once- if you wish to go back now and leave the shopping to another day…”

“Yes, I believe that would be best.” He yawned again, his sleep-addled brain not quite up for
shopping (or dealing with the general public at all in fact). “I do find myself quite tired.”

He found himself being pushed gently towards a floo. “It’s Malfoy Manor dear. Go ahead.”

Not about to protest the one form of wizarding travel he absolutely despised (because fuck was he exhausted), Harry moved forward, grabbing a handful of floo powder before throwing it down. “Malfoy Manor!”

Ah, yes, the familiar feeling of being sucked through a tube and being spat out again.

Lovely.

Stumbling out of the floo, he ended up crashing into someone considerably taller than himself, falling to his butt. Wincing and rubbing at his face (momentarily displacing his glasses), he muttered a tired apology. “Sorry, I wasn’t expecting someone to be standing-”

“I didn’t think it was possible to have such difficulty using a floo.”

The familiar voice made his eyes snap open and he stood up, patience all burnt out when he saw just who put him on his ass and then had the gall to insult him. Glaring at Tom Riddle like he wished he could set the boy on fire wandlessly (he probably would have if he wasn’t so damn tired and out of sorts) he hissed out the first thing that came to mind. “Fuck you.”

The two words were coated with a century’s worth of bitterness and hate that wasn’t even all directed towards the boy in front of him- but damn it had been a hard few weeks okay? Give him a fucking break.

The whole room froze, but then the two elder Malfoys were there, Septimus smiling at the group. “Oh! I see you’ve all met Hadrian!” The elder turned on him with kind eyes. “Hardian, Lord Zacarias caught up with us, gave me this to give to you.”

He was handed a small box and upon opening it, started to giggle madly, the sleep deprivation and the weight of the situation catching up to him.

Inside the box was the bloody, headless body of a hawk with a note.

> Just to make sure it didn’t hurt any of my other bats.

> Have fun and try not to die.

> -Zac

Feeling his exhaustion catch up to him, he felt his knees give, and collapsed to the floor with the box clutched in his hands tightly.

How utterly bizarre and yet completely fascinating.

From the instant the boy had tumbled out of the floo and crashed into him- interrupting him in the middle of musing on how to find the Chamber of Secrets- looked up at him with eyes full of fury and loathing, and cursed him in such a manner that Tom was sure would have made even his no-good dead mother turn in her grave, Tom had been curious. After all, it’s not just anyone off the street who
gets granted access to Malfoy Manor- he himself had worked hard to get into Abraxas’ good graces to be allowed here- and especially not with that terrible floo technique.

He raked his gaze down the boy’s frame quickly, assessing him. Unruly pitch-black hair like a mop of shadows, skin the color of fresh honey, eyes as vibrant green as emeralds- his looks combined with his petite frame gave him the appearance of a fairy, or a doll, or some other unearthly creature.

Fascinating.

And then the boy was moving away from him- grasping at a box, opening it- laughing at its contents (a dead bird! not even he had laughed once the animals he killed were dead)- and collapsing in a dead faint.

Horrified silence stretched through the room as the inhabitants froze, unsure what to do.

Then Lady Malfoy frowned, waving her hand a little in her tame and unconvincing imitation of someone fretting. “A dead bird! He gave Hadrian a dead bird Septimus! I don’t like it! He’s a vampire for Merlin’s sake!”

Septimus sighed, moving to pick the boy up. Surprisingly, the box stayed gripped in his doll-like fingers. “He is a Vampire Lord, my dear. I may be able to take guardianship from him, but it would not go over well if he does truly care for the boy. They do seem close, and we also have to remember that Hadrian was raised by that man.”

Tom filed away the information for future reference, his eyes not straying from the small unconscious figure. He was… strange, for sure. Uncultured, given his inability to stay upright through wizarding travel and his nasty tongue. And a bit touched, given his reaction to the dead creature he had been given.

And yet…

There was something about him, something that drew Tom’s attention. He itched to corner the boy and talk him in circles and take him apart, piece by piece, to understand how he worked.

For even though everything he had learned about the boy he had learned in the span of barely five minutes… Tom found him utterly and entirely fascinating.

Chapter End Notes

*shakes head at the stupidity of certain characters* ... any type of comments (bird noises included) are always wonderful to get, as well as kudos!
Also, along with that- I will be posting chapters every third day now :)

Harry folded his Auror robes carefully, taking out the trunk he had in the expandable pouch, unshrinking it and putting the folded robes carefully inside. Another piece of his future that he would carefully pack away. Looking at the smaller green robes laid across the bed that were just as elegant as any of Draco’s robes, he sighed and started to put them on.

Malfoy Manor was different from the place he’d practically lived in. No teenagers, none of Teddy’s art on the walls, none of Hermione’s books lying all over strategically ((read: messily)) in a way that drove Draco crazy.

The wall that Teddy had painted over to create a lovely mural of a forest with all types of mythological creatures was gone, along with the hand prints along the side of all the kids. Stepping forward, he pressed his hand to where he had helped Genevieve press a sloppy purple hand-print.

“Lost?”

Pulling back as if burned, he looked at the older boy- probably some ancestor of a Death Eater- and shook his head quickly. He could feel eyes as he scurried quickly around the corner, knowing the twisting halls and that this was the fastest way to get to the kitchen.

There were wide eyes of many elves as he burst into the kitchen, but when he held a finger up to his lips and slipped into a crevice that would hide him easily (Calla Lupin always knew the best hiding places), the elves acted like nothing was wrong.

Only a second later, the older boy burst in, footsteps stopping. “Where…” The voice then seemed as if it was talking to one of the elves. “Hey, where did the kid go?”

“Young Master Malfoy has not passed through here.”

Technically true, passing though would mean also exiting.

The boy huffed. “Where did he go then!” There were footsteps and he caught sight of the boy...
storming down the length of the kitchen, before pacing back, and he pressed himself more to the wall. Luckily the hiding spot was hard to see if you didn’t know where to look and the boy left in a huff.

Waiting a few minutes silently, he crept out of the crevice, smiling at the elves watching him and dipping his head as he moved to a small counter and slid onto a worn barstool. “Thank you. May I have some breakfast?”

Instantly he was given a plate, piled high with food.

Eyeing it, he dipped his head again (although it was way too much food). “Compliments to the chief.” Seeing the wide, glistening eyes he held up his hand hastily. “But I don’t need any more food! I’m fine with this…”

It had taken Hermione almost all of the time that she and Draco were dancing around each other to even slightly feel comfortable with house elves- only after he had found her an obscure book about house elves and how their bond to their family was pretty much the basis of their magic did she admit that they were okay. Though she had specific rules in her house (because it was her house and no one could protest that) about treating the house elves and the current Malfoys broke all of them.

Lady Malfoy found him sitting at the counter, half frantic, and pushed through the elves without even greeting them.

Strike one.

Fussing over him, she frowned. “Why are you sitting in here with the house elves? This place is filthy!” Oh, and that one made a few of the elves flinch, starting to tear up at their place of work being insulted and the fact the woman had spit the name of their race like a curse.

Strike two and three

Frowning in the way that he knew would express his displeasure, he slid off the stool, standing tall as if this woman was a basilisk (for all the bitter venom in her she very well could be). “They’re my friends and the kitchen is spotless!” He could see the surprise of her face, but cut her off before she could make the situation worse, turning to the head house elf. “Thank you, Mipsy, for allowing me in your kitchen. All of you, have a good day.”

Lady Malfoy rushed after him, not seeming to take the hint that he didn’t want to be around her (he had no idea how such a caring healer had ever been related in any way to her bigoted ass).

“Darling!”

He stalked into the main room that he guessed he would have to sit in and watch the rest of them eat dinner because ‘family bonding’, and sunk into the empty seat at the end of the table that he knew he would be made to sit because he was the Malfoy heir.

Merlin he hated these uppity pureblood mind-games.

“Hadrian darling, I didn’t mean to upset you, but they really have no place in being friends with you! They’re house elves- they’re servants for Melin’s sake!”

“Cordelia-” Lord Malfoy seemed to be trying to restrain his wife, but the woman would have none of it, and he could feel a lecture coming on.

With a short inhale, he sagged, lowering his head like a scorned child. “I- I just… It’s a lot, y’know? I never- I thought that anyone would want me and Zac was the only one that I ever really saw so I’m
not used to this... can you forgive me?"

The older woman melted like a popsicle on a hot summer day, moving to pet his hair as if he was a cute dog. “It’s okay darling. You’ll have plenty of time to get acquainted with us before you go to Hogwarts.” He blinked at the woman, who smiled and moved to sit in the empty seat to the side of Lord Malfoy. “Oh, it was going to be a surprise, but Headmaster Dippet said he would be delighted to have you in the second year, and he apologized for not seeing your name written in the letters book- there must have been some mistake or something.”

Humming, he dug through his expandable pouch, digging out the book he’d been reading (read: he borrowed it. Indefinitely.) from Zacarias’ library on ancient blood wards. Opening it, he looked up at the popping sound beside him, smiling at a smaller elf. “Hello again Buttons.”

The small elf blushed, fidgeting. “Can I bes getting anything for Little Master?”

“A cup of coffee would be delightful, thank you Buttons.”

A frown crept across the elf’s face and with two pops, a cup of tea was sitting next to his book, a nervous look on the little elf’s face as she tried to stutter out a explanation. “Mas-master is… is not old- old enough for-”

He broke her off, giggling, enjoying the way her eyes darted back up to him in suprise. “Thank you for not enforcing my bad habits Buttons. The tea will do nicely as I already had a cup of coffee in the kitchens.”

There was a gasp from the elf, who seemed less afraid of him now. “Little Master snuck coffee? Mipsy told him he was not to have coffee!”

“But I neeeeed coffee…” He groaned, pouting when the elf narrowed her eyes at him. Chuckling, he caved. “Fine. You win. I’ll drink your tea and forget about stealing any coffee… for now.” The elf disappeared and he took a long drag of the hot liquid, making a face as he turned his attention back to the section on blood magic and tying them into wards.

Halfway though breakfast (damn purebloods, taking so long to eat), a boy with blonde hair to his right cleared his throat. “Hadrian, my name is Abraxas.”

“I know.” He didn’t look up from the book. “Abraxas Septimus Malfoy, born October 7th, favorite color purple.”

The boy coughed and after a long pause: “Well… I was wondering…If I may be so blunt with you, as you are my cousin- Why is it that you appear out of nowhere and usurp my title of heir?”

Lord Malfoy rubbed at the bridge of his nose and Lady Malfoy’s eyes went wide. “Braxas!” He waved it off, finally looking at the boy that he’d read the most internal thoughts of. Mid length hair so white it almost looked silver, and steel blue eyes, he was reminded of a very old-fashioned Draco. Taking another sip of his tea, he moved his book to the side carefully. “Well… I imagine it’s because I can do this.” Focusing on his tea, he flicked a finger, making a small orb of liquid break from the still cup and rise into the air.

Last time he’d played with the elemental magics he’d found in that hidden room under the Black library, he’d been taking Genevieve ice skating though the ballroom in their pajamas and socks.
Smiling at the thought of it, he twisted his fingers and fanned them out, watching as the ball of auburn liquid formed a shape like a snowflake. Leaning forward, he blew on it gently to freeze it and with a grin he plucked the snowflake that was the size of a tangerine out of the air and put it in his mouth with a grin.

“How- how did you do that?” The boy seemed to forget his irrational jealousy, eyes wide.

“Magic.” Harry moved to pick up his book, nodding to the table of wide eyes. “I seem to need a reference book on the different types of human sacrifices, if you will excuse me…”

Lord Malfoy was the first to regain his pureblood mask. “Of- of course Hadrian.”

Dipping his head, he started for the door, but paused before leaving and turned back with a frown. “Oh- I almost forgot to mention. Abraxas, I relinquish my title of Malfoy heir to you… Merlin knows I would rather not deal with politics.”

He then turned on his heel and made for the peace of the library, a tad bit pleased that he was able to shock the table of stuck-up purebloods into silence.

Chapter End Notes

Guess you'll have to wait three more days to see Tom, as he seemed to be hiding in the shadows for this chapter ^-^

Oops.
Either way we love the comments (and assorted screaming/bird noises) that y'all are sending us, as it's very useful in encouraging me to write more on this ever-expanding story <3
In Which Harry Bakes A Pie (And Starts His Mission To Takeover Hogwarts)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
In a time not his own, having abdicated the Malfoy Heirship after some fancy elemental magic, and stuck as a twelve-year-old, Harry continues his avoidance of most all inhabitants of the Malfoy Manor (except the elves).

Chapter Notes

Many thanks to @bellachrome for making sure that Tom stays a (relatively) sane character in all my crack-fueled writing
With that--- ONWARDS, TO THE STORY!

Living in the Malfoy Manor was like an extreme game of hide-and-go-seek.

He would hide and Tom Riddle’s minions would scour the house for him, only for him to pop into existence wherever they had given up, making sure to do something 'strange' and 'fantastical' only to disappear again.

It was two weeks before any of them thought to check the kitchens.

He was singing badly as he helped knead out dough for the pumpkin pie he was planning on making, but when he turned around, he froze under the gaze of Tom Riddle himself. The boy was sitting on one of the bar-stools, cup of coffee in hand, watching him with brown eyes that had just the slightest hint of red in them.

“Um… Funny seeing you here?”

The older boy (going on his fifth year in Hogwarts if Harry remembered correctly) raised a single eyebrow. “We’re staying in the same manor.”

Looking from the dough in his hands to the pie pan sitting just a few feet in front of his parent’s murderer, he shrugged a shoulder, moving to carefully lay the flattened dough in the pan. “Why’s it matter to you? I thought you were obsessing over something about a ‘cavern of secrets’ or something. That’s what you were ranting about when you got in my way out of the floo, wasn’t it?”

Riddle stared at him. “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he said evenly. “And, in my... obviously incorrect assumption that anyone who used the floo would know how to exit properly, I was standing far enough from the floo that I would have been perfectly fine if not for you.”

“It’s not my fault floos hate me.” He muttered with a scowl, mixing the ingredients for the pie in a large bowl.
“...why are you cooking?” The mini Dark Lord made it sound as if cooking was the most unfathomable thing since the pictures of infected wounds that Dennis Creevey liked to hang in his office (honestly, what the fuck Dennis).

Looking at the dark-haired boy with assessing eyes, he shrugged and moved to pour the thick pumpkin liquid into the pie crust. “I like cooking.” Handing off the pie to a house elf with his thanks, he struggled with climbing on the counter so he could swing his feet back and forth and sip his cup of tea. He made a face. “Who do you have to kill to get a good cup of coffee around here?”

Harry was proud of that day.

He made the stoic upcoming Dark Lord crack a half-smile.

Headmaster Dippet was a old man. With the whitest hair since Silas Malfoy (he swore that kid had more than a few of the latent Veela genes in him), Armando Dippet looked like he was two seconds from keeling over and dying.

He gave the man 25 years at max- though it didn’t help that he also knew a faint future of what might or might not come to pass.

Either way, the white-haired man looked down at him with kind brown eyes. “I am Headmaster Armando Dippet... welcome to Hogwarts Mr. Malfoy.”

Dipping his head, he smiled slightly. “I am quite excited to see the castle. Zacarias used to tell me stories of this place- but I fear in my neverending enthusiasm that if someone were to ask him now he would not be pleased to be reminded.” Bouncing forward, he smiled back at his ‘uncle’. “Thank you for coming with me, Uncle Septimus, but I believe that I am fine here. Hogwarts feels like coming home after such a long time.”

Dippet smiled down at him while Septimus said his goodbyes, the old Headmaster turning. “Shall we? I believe that we will make the welcoming feast just in time to be sorted.”

Nothing he had said had been a lie. Hogwarts’ sentient magic seemed to pulse, filling a part of him that he didn’t know he was missing with soft contentment. The old castle had been his first place of safety and would always be considered his childhood home. By the time they got to the Great Hall he was practically vibrating with energy, the type of childish excitement he’d missed having since leaving his old timeline.

The wooden doors opened and he beamed, breathing in the smell of the old castle. His voice was a soft murmur. “Hey beautiful.”

Like the clouds moving to allow the sun to shine on his skin, he was brushed with a gentle warmth that he knew as Hogwarts’ magic. Closing his eyes, he basked in the feeling of being home.

“Mr. Malfoy.”

The warmth dimmed, but still stayed with him and he smiled up at the older man. “Sorry Headmaster, I got caught up in her magic... It’s quite wonderful.”

The man’s eyes widened. “Mr. Malfoy, are you saying-”

“So what’s the sorting?” He bounced down the main isle, up to the sorting hat, reverently brushing a hand against it. It didn’t look half as worn as it did his his past life and he wondered on the rumor
he’d head that Riddle had tried to set it on fire the same time he’d left the diadem in the Room of Requirement. “And what’s your name sir?”

The hat looked up at him, bemused. “My name is Alastair, Young Lord.”

Dipping his head he moved it and sat down on the stool. “Well met Alistair. I hope you’re good at reading on a time limit.” Winking, he set the hat on his head.

There was a long pause.

“Well. I see you were right. There is a lot of material to unpack here… But it seems to me that your heirship would put you in-”

Harry interrupted the hat smoothly. “I see your reasoning, Alistair, but you have to see mine. I want to convince Dumbledore that I am a greater threat than Riddle, and how better to do that than make him think I convinced you with my unending charm, to put me in a house where I can plot my evil undisturbed? Plus- good access to the kitchens.”

The voice snorted. “I was planning on letting you go to Gryffindor- as we both know if you needed it Godric’s sword would be in your hands in a second, but Hufflepuff? How do you justify that?”

“I found a way back to a time that I know nothing about with the plan to convince a troubled boy to have a bit of compassion, out of a undying loyalty to everyone I couldn’t protect. I am planning on taking the brunt of an attack by one of the most powerful wizard of all time because I believe that there is hope for a boy that no one has ever held hope for, and I plan to try to get rid of the divides between the houses while I attempt this impossible feat.”

There was a long silence as the hat seemed to think about this. “I do not believe I could find fault with that, much less try to talk you out of your decision…I hope, for your sake, that this life will find you living better than you lived in your last one. So you are going to… Hufflepuff!”

Harry took the hat off gently, standing and setting it back on the stool, face absent of any childhood wonder. Instead his eyes were those of the man that had been the end of a war. “Thank you. Your words mean much to me… and I too hope that for myself.”

Robed in the cheerful colors of a bumblebee, he started to the Hufflepuff table.

“Mr. Malfoy.”

He paused, looking back at the old hat. “Yes Alistair?”

The hat looked as if it was frowning, but it’s wrinkled eyes held mirth. “As was said to you before: ‘You cannot dwell on the dead forever.’”

Feeling his breath catch slightly at having Narcissa’s words reflected back at him, he gave the hat a sharp grin. “Not to worry, my friend, when I am done here there will be no dead left for me to dwell on.” And with that, he moved to sit at the Badger’s table, with the people that the rest of the school mistook as weak.

Within a few days, the students of Hogwarts would forget the scene he’d caused.

But Hogwarts itself would remember, and as long as he held that warm burn of the school’s magic within him, he could do anything.

Turning his best smile on, he looked around the other second years his ‘age’. “Hello! I’m Hadrian
Malfoy, but call me Harry!”

Chapter End Notes

We really love reading the comments, quips, and questions all y'all hunny bunches of oats have- so feel free to continue that if you ever have a question or comment about the story (or just tell Bells how much you love her because she always needs more love) ^.^ See you in three days!
In Which Harry Gives Hogwarts No Time To Acclimate

Chapter Summary

Previously:
After a good few weeks of playing pop-goes-the-Harry with Tom's goons, they're off to Hogwarts! Meeting Headmaster Dippet at the gate, he is lead into the (more than a little sentient) castle just in time to get sorted into the house of the Badgers.
GO HUFFLEPUFF!

Chapter Notes

Thanks Bells for everything... but specifically your amazing renditions of Tom- I love way you write the prickly not-yet-Dark Lord :) Much love! <3

The only way to describe the Hufflepuff common room was that it was a literal Hobbit hole- Harry had loved the ‘Lord of the Rings’ books, and now he could see why Teddy had always raved about the Hufflepuff rooms.

With a open, circular area, the room was lined with big round windows that illuminated the room with a soft yellow glow even at night. In the center of the room, a tall tree grew from the floor, the ceilings and walls lined with plants of every type. It smelled of earth and rain, clean and fresh like springtime air.

Above the fireplace a portrait of Helga Hufflepuff sat and when he looked at her, she winked with a small smile.

“Okay! Welcome all you first years- and Mr. Malfoy- to Hufflepuff! We might be the house of the misfits to the rest of the school, but we are a family! No matter your family at home, your magic, or your views, you have a family here... though there is no bullying or arguing allowed. We settle our disagreements over hot chocolate, talking out our problems like the mature wizards we are. Behind the door off to the side there-” The prefect pointed to a small door. “-Are the kitchens. Please be respectful to the house elves, as they are working to make your lives easier, and no first years are allowed in the kitchens on their own.”

A tall dark-skinned woman with a cheery smile stepped forward, hair cut short, and idly he wondered if she got a few less than agreeable comments because of the standards for women in this time period. “Hello my Hufflepuffs! I’m Professor Marigold, I teach Herbology as well as being the Head of the House for Hufflepuff. I think that the prefects explained everything, so you all can start to get settled, and if ever needed my office door is always open!”

There was a soft silence through the room as the woman moved off to her offices, except for a few quiet murmurs.

The male prefect spoke up. “Now, since you are new to the Hufflepuff family, please introduce
Harry turned out the group, running a hand over the intricate rune work on the walls, recognizing it was to both expand the space and to keep it warm for the plants.

“-alfoy... Mr. Malfoy!”

He blinked, looking at the room of hufflepuffs who were staring at him and offering up a sheepish smile. “Sorry. I get distracted easily- um- Hello, i’m Hadrian Malfoy. And, well, my guardian Lord Zacarias- he didn’t really believe much in keeping sweets around, so I would have to say... hot chocolate?”

A boy in the back connected the dots. “The Vampire Lord?”

He nodded slightly. “Yeah. Zacarias. I grew up with him.” The room gaped at him and he shrugged, shuffling his feet as if he were shy. “He found me. My parents, they- they were attacked and well I… I was the only one who made it out alive.”

He knew by the faces that the whole of the Hogwarts rumor mill would know this by morning.

Good.

He had a reputation to build and everyone knew it didn’t take a day to do that.

But he’d happily topple Dumbledore’s world in one.

The other three boys in the dorm he was assigned were (mostly) friendly.

Cameron Bayer reminded him of Cedric a bit and Stephen Gilligan was a funny boy that he’d been sitting near at dinner so they both seemed happy enough to have him around, but the third boy seemed to be less open to his presence. Dominic Smith was a larger boy with the piercing gaze of a slytherin pureblood and he wondered briefly if the boy was in the wrong dorms.

He held out a hand to the boy, smile hesitant. He didn’t want to have to deal with this on his first day, for Merlin’s sake. “Hello. I’m Hadrian Malfoy.”

The boy just looked at the hand, before moving away to his bed. “I know. Stay away from me.”

Harry wondered if this was how Draco had felt way back when, because ow.

Cameron smiled at him with that perfect golden-boy smile. “Ignore Dom, he’s always prickly around new people.” The boy leaned in conspiratorially. “His whole family are Ravenclaws and Slytherins.”

“Oh… Mine too.” He gave the boy a small smile. “I’m sure that by the end of the year we’ll all be good friends.”

Or he was going to throw a coffee cup at the boy and call it even. Never let it be said Harry was anything but a spiteful little shit.

Infuriating.
The boy was fascinating, of course, but he was also utterly infuriating.

Tom stared at the boy, messy black hair falling into his eyes, causing the light to catch in his emerald irises just enough that he could see them flash across the room.

The boy was fascinating and infuriating and Tom couldn’t get him out of his mind.

It had started with that time in the kitchen- no, it had started before that time in the kitchen, when Tom sent out his minions repeatedly to try and find this strange, senseless child who would throw away a Malfoy heirship without so much as a backwards glance, who would prank his men and then disappear like shifting shadow, who would stumble out of the floo with the least amount of grace Tom had ever seen and greet him with such a foul curse.

He was strange, that was for sure. He didn’t fit any of the typologies Tom had constructed in his head- you know the ones- the do-gooder teacher’s pet, the snobby pureblood, the desperate-to-prove-themselves mudblood. He was… something else entirely. Like he had looked at Tom’s perception of the world, and laughed.

*What kind of a person would throw that amount of power away?*

In all honesty, it was more than anything else that baffled Tom. He could understand the power behind the various pranks the boy pulled on Tom’s men, the getting in well with the elves- *brilliant, really, that bit* - the smiling and ingratiating himself to everyone.

But *throwing the Malfoy heirship away?*

And the boy hadn’t done it to get in well with the Malfoys. No, the Malfoys would have liked him regardless, they would have had to, he would have been their heir. The Malfoys were a well-off, well-respected, well-established pureblood family. One of the most powerful in their sphere of influence, foremost even among the Sacred Twenty-Eight, the boy would have been welcomed in even if he had kept the heirship.

But he hadn’t.

Tom hadn’t bought for a minute the whole idea of “not wanting to get into politics”. You didn’t- just-no. Politics were power. Manipulation was might.

Hadrian had everything Tom wanted tossed in his lap, and he had thrown it away.

*What kind of a person would throw that amount of power away?*

And, then, he realized: *someone to whom the amount of power in the Malfoy heirship was inconsequential.*

That was when it all started to make sense to him. Hadrian was raised by the Vampire Lord Zacarias. He was probably trained by him from a young age. He still had the backing of this immortal and powerful creature. And that was just what he let them know.

He was the sole survivor of whatever attack had slain his family, Tom realized, recalling the rumor that had spread around Hogwarts shortly after the sorting.

And oh, the sorting- infuriating, that boy, he was infuriating- Tom knew he had it in him to be a Slytherin, knew Harry had the power, the cunning, the manipulative skills to be in the house of the purest of blood and magic and mind, knew that he could be *great by Tom’s side*
And the boy was sorted into Hufflepuff.

*Hufflepuff*.

Tom *knew* that Harry had done it on purpose, *knew* that he had somehow convinced the hat to sort him into the house of misfits, of outcasts, of those deemed too lesser- than to be sorted elsewhere. And it *infuriated* him.

That Harry had so much power and yet chose to hide it… well.

The boy was utterly *infuriating*.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, kudos, the gurgling noises that turtles make, or long explicit comments on why Bells is amazing are all wonderful forms of telling us you like this story! See you in three days!
In Which Harry Makes Some Enemies (Always Gotta Have Those)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Building upon his reputation of having been brought up by the influential (and notorious) Vampire Lord, Harry settles in with his Hufflepuff dorm-mates, all but one getting along with him fairly well. He plots Dumbledore's downfall and Tom Riddle slowly gets more entangled into the mystery of Hadrian Malfoy.
Y’know, like a normal Monday.

Chapter Notes

This is me, on my soapbox, yelling at you about how much I adore @bellachrome and her muse: Tommy Riddlemethis ^-^
Now onto the chapter!

You know it’s going to be a bad-interesting year when Tom Riddle won’t stop staring at you.

Honestly, if he held up an egg between him and the boy it would cook under the intensity of the stare the taller boy was shoving down his proverbial throat.

With a long-suffering sigh, Harry slumped down at the breakfast table, not able to be anything more than a sack of lifeless bones without his coffee. Instantly a steaming cup of dark liquid appeared and he found himself descending like a dementor on the helpless cup of scolding hot liquid- Damn, he was beginning to sound a bit too morbid. Maybe he needed that coffee more than he thought.

When he looked up, two girls were giggling across from him and he blinked like a deer in headlights.
“Good morning…?”

“Hi! I’m Lucinda Fenly, but call me Lucy! And this is Grace Morrison!” The cheerful girl smiled while the other girl, Grace, hid her face while giggling.

Harry dipped his head in a show of respect. “Sorry about my table manners- I uh- I tend to not be able to function without coffee… Habits of staying up all night reading with Zacarias I guess.”
((Well, more like he had used coffee to get him through his divorce and keep him from strangling the more incompetent of the Aurors he’d led- but past lives didn’t seem like great breakfast conversation.))

Grace seemed to perk up at this. “Do vampires drink coffee?” The girl colored after a second. “I mean…”

Recognizing the signs of a muggle-born anywhere, he just smiled gently. “No no it’s a good question. In fact I asked him the same thing when I was old enough to realize him saying he was going to eat me was just his way of keeping me inside the protective wards… Vampires can eat and
drink human food just like the rest of us, but unlike us, they gain no nutritional value from it. It’s very curious really. They lack the enzymes in their system to do anything more than break the food down and get rid of it. So it’s much easier for them to just drink liquids.”

By now most of the Hufflepuff table and part of the Ravenclaw table was listening to him.

“I remember one time I made him a cake on my birthday and got so upset that he actually suffered though eating a slice just so I would stop crying- well he spent the rest of the day throwing up and made me promise never to inflict ‘that torture’ on him again.” Harry laughed brightly. “But other than that, living with him was actually pretty cool. Did you know that the red cross is run by vampires as well as most muggle hospitals? They take blood samples and trained specialists can smell the different diseases in the blood- that way the muggles get treated correctly and they get to feed! It’s really an ingenious system if you think about it!”

One Ravenclaw leaned over. “Really? I heard that vampires are dark creatures, that they snatch up kids in the night!”

He tilted his head, frown softly disapproving. “Well I may be biased because I was raised by one- but I think I would rather have been ‘snatched up’ than have died alone in the snow… Let me put it this way. Did you know that only 11% of the murders committed a year are even remotely related to a vampire and 9% of those, the vampires are the ones getting murdered? Now compare that to wizards- wizards are the ones behind 79% of murders.”

There was a shocked silence over the enrapt crowd.

“I think I would be more scared of my next door neighbor than Zacarias. That’s why he’s my Magical Guardian.” Harry knew that by the end of the day the school would be buzzing with this- and when children talk, parents are bound to hear- hopefully this was a start in the direction Hermione had fought so hard to go. Dark didn’t always mean evil and he would always support his sister-in-everything-but-blood, even if she wasn’t around to see it.

He relaxed into his seat, sipping his coffee and nibbling on the waffles he’d asked for the night before (after making friends with the whole staff of elves). For the first time all weekend he didn’t really mind Tom Riddle’s stare. Because, compared to it, Dumbledore’s seething and furious glare was much much worse.

Too bad stares couldn’t set people on fire.

He had really wanted to see how much it hurt to be burned alive before Neville had stopped him.

Harry wasn’t going to Hogwarts to learn.

Not really- he could teach probably at least the basics of the core classes if he wanted to, having helped both Teddy and all the other’s kids with homework- but it was a mandatory part of his ‘student’ facade, so he reluctantly put up with it.

Professor Marigold was a wonderful herbology teacher, along with the woman teaching defence, and of course Professor Slughorn was as delightfully a suck-up as usual.

But Professor Albus Dumbledore… Seemed to have a real problem with him. ((Which meant he was doing well.))

Sitting with his head resting against his hand, he found himself yawning as the man lectured the class
on the basic laws of transfiguration.

“Mr. Malfoy! Can you tell me Thoric’s Third Law?”

Rubbing at his eyes, he yawned again behind his hand slightly. “Sir, I believe that it the law that states that transferred things still retain the inherent properties of their original state... Like if I turn a turtle into a chocolate bar and then eat the chocolate bar, I would get the nutrients from eating a turtle, not a chocolate bar.”

Dumbledore’s eyes held none of his usual fake-twinkly-bullshit. “No sleeping in my class, Mr. Malfoy. If I see you put your head down again I will dock you twenty points.” Before any of the other Hufflepuffs could protest, the man moved on to speak about something else.

Harry snorted. Yeah- he was doing alright in his quest to get the man’s full attention. That law had been something out of the sixth year textbooks at least.

Though he was the one smirking when the old coot had turned into a neon pink goat during dinner. Being friends with the house elves was a blessing- especially when he promised the potion would only last for a few hours and wasn’t harmful.

Harry was in stitches by the time the teachers corralled the brightly colored goat (that seemed to be spooked), Slughorn fumbling to try to fix the transfiguration professor, even though Harry knew it probably wouldn’t be possible.

George Weasley original, that one- Dumbledore was going to have to wait it out.

He caught brown eyes he knew had flecks of red that flashed in the light from across the hall. The boy narrowed his eyes just a tad and in return he sent a cheeky grin, winking as he held a finger up to his smirking lips.

Yes, he thought he was doing exceptionally.

Harry was knee deep in reference books, manuscripts, and different textbooks when a familiar voice washed over him. “What are you doing?”

Glancing up from where he’d made a literal nest of books and parchment in a corner of the library, he looked at Tom Riddle warily. “Reading. Why do you care?”

“I’m a prefect.” The boy flashed a shiny badge and he wondered idly if it was shined every morning just like the boy’s ego. “Just making sure that you don’t have any... contraband books.”

He hummed idly, looking back down at the book on his lap with a slight eye-roll. “And while that is fascinating, I believe that you have more pressing duties than scolding me for taking a book off the top shelves.”

The normally velvet voice was hiding an edge of irritation when it came out, as if Tom was seconds away from strangling him. “And what is the topic you are reading up on?”

Eyes darting up to find the boy from under his thick lashes, he let an innocent smile curve his lips. “Potions. It seems I forgot how to brew the Potion for Curing Boils.”

With a wave of his hand, the book in Harry’s hands flew to the boy, who looked smugly victorious- Though it didn’t last long in looking down at the book.
Harry leaned back against the bookshelf, head cocked to the side in the way that he knew pissed most people off. “Wow. I didn’t know you read Finnish, Riddle. Color me impressed.”

Red-tinted eyes narrowed on him.

“I have Japanese, Greek, Latin, Norse… you want to see any of my other books?”

With a huff, the boy dropped the book, eyes lighting up with cruel pleasure when Harry scrambled to catch it. “Stay out of the Restricted Section, Malfoy… or else.” Then the prefect spun on his heel, stalking away, his robes billowing the same ridiculous way Snape’s used to do.

Frowning deeply, he carefully laid the book down. “Evil overlords these days- no respect for literature.”

Five languages.

The kid could read five languages?!

And, no, no, that was only… those were only the ones he had out, that he was reading (fluent, was he fluent? he had to be at least semi-proficient, if he was reading books in foreign languages ), that he was using for his research on a potion for curing boils.

Tom didn’t believe for a second that that was the only thing this- this child genius was researching.

He said child genius, because what else could he be?? Hadrian- Harry, his mind whispered traitorously, covetously- was twelve. Twelve , for Merlin’s sake.

What kind of twelve year old read five languages?

Tom flopped onto the lounge in his private prefect rooms, draping himself across the couch dramatically. He laughed bitterly. Not only was Hadrian utterly infuriating , he was also utterly brilliant . Tom would have to get Hadrian Malfoy on his good side, or else there was no way he could keep the title of King of Slytherin from Hadrian if he truly wanted it.

And wasn’t that a terrifying thought.

Chapter End Notes

In my head the numbers go something like this-- {((and this is out of murder cases involving a person with magic))}
79% of the murders are by wizards on either other wizards, or more likely, creatures and people with creature blood
10% of the murders are by muggles (8% of that, the victim is under the age of 17)
4% are accidents involving people not knowing wtf to do around werewolves (as wolfsbane hasn't been invented yet)
4% of the murders are by other creatures- such being the unspecified races
2% are by vampires that are not affiliated with a clan and hence go hungry, leading to
bloodlust
and the last 1% percent of murders are by dragons, mostly by accident

Just wanted to clear that up ~^-^-~

We DO have a Tom scene in here- so please tell @bellachrome how much you love Tom- it'll help her write more of these scenes! Thanks!
As always any comments, kudos, or questions are highly appreciated.
See you in three!
In Which Harry Opens His Stupid Mouth

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry had made himself antiquated with Dumbledore's bad side and defended the Vampires that has 'raised' him, as those were pretty easy tasks. But dealing with a teenage Riddle's strange staring? And he was pretty sure that he hadn't done anything too exciting yet!

Chapter Notes

I almost forgot I can't just lay around growing mold- as humans do need to eat and move and such.
Shame...
With that aside though, all thanks @bellachrome for helping me write this story- she's a real lifesaver.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Walking into the Great Hall for morning breakfast, letting the warm magic of Hogwarts guide his feet as he read an old tome on Necromancy, he plopped down at his normal seat and reached for a cup of coffee (at least these elves were 100% fine with keeping his coffee addiction in homeostasis).

And arm draped over him and he fought off the urge to flinch, knowing it was just Cameron’s touchy-feely-Hufflepuff-thing kicking in. “Hey pretty boy! What’cha reading?”

Sending the boy a slight glare at the nickname, he flipped the page. “A book on necromancy and parselmagic.”

The group around him froze, Grace tittering out a nervous laugh. “...Funny one Harry.”

He raised an eyebrow at her before looking back down at the book. ”Zacarias used to read me stories in Gaelic about the olde necromancers when I was younger, so when I turned eleven, he got me this book. It might be in parseltongue, but I found out from the goblins over the summer that the snake speech was passed down from Salazar Slytherin though my mother’s side from Iso- Isolt S-” He frowneded as if not knowing how to pronounce the name.

“Isolt Sayre?” This was the first time Dominic had actually engaged with him. “One of the founders of Ilvermorny?”

Harry shrugged a shoulder halfheartedly. “Sure. I think that was her name.”

Whispers spread through the hall, Lucy leaning in with sparkling eyes. “Have you ever tried to talk to snakes?”

“Yeah, but they tend to make fairly bad conversationalists.” Smiling slightly at the girl, he leaned in.
“Too many silly thoughts about mice and biting people.” With a wink, he snorted softly and leaned back again to sip his coffee.

There was the sound of footsteps, but he didn’t look up from the book.

Someone cleared their throat.

With a sigh he moved gracefully to turn himself around- looking at where Tom Riddle, Pollux Black and Abraxas were standing. He tilted his head, smiling at Abraxas softly. “Good morning cousin. A tad early for a social call, isn’t it? I haven’t even had a full cup of coffee.”

The boy’s smile back was strained, glancing at where Tom’s jaw was clenched and wisely not saying a word.

“The Slytherin Court moves to accept Hadrian Malfoy as the Prince… due to the possession of a bloodline gift from Salazar Slytherin. Is the offer seconded?” The mini Dark Lord looked like he wanted anything but this to happen.

Abraxas pursed his lips. “Motion to accept a prince on the basis of the gift of Parseltongue seconded.”

Pollux moved to pass the motion but Harry waved his hand smoothly, silencing the boy. “Objection to the court, if it may please the King of Slytherin?”

The two other boys’ eyes widened at the language he’d used, Tom narrowing his eyes, as if he thought Harry would actually move to overthrow him. “The grounds of this objection?”

Harry raised his eyebrow. “I’m in Hufflepuff.”

“The court has no rules for that, only a rule to extend the offer of the sitting court to any of Salazar’s blood with the gifts.” Abraxas sounded as if he was trying to help Harry, as if trying to just plead with him to say yes or crawl into a hole and never come back out.

He would do neither.

“Then I object- on the basis of fuck your rules .” There was a silence surrounding them, everyone seeming to have frozen in place. “I have no need for a title, as I said before, and I will not accept your offer. So by the Court’s discretion and may it please the King, let me enjoy my damn breakfast in peace!” The last part was a mix between a hiss and a shout, his annoyance seeping through the cracks of his usual cheer.

When there was only a still silence, the whole Hall staring at him, he turned back around in his seat with a huff of annoyance.

“You heard him. He clearly stated he doesn’t want anything to do with your ‘court’. ” One of the older Hufflepuffs stood, his prefect badge glinting and Harry could imagine the way Tom was probably bristling.

But without a word, three sets of footsteps retreated.

Dominic looked at him from Cameron’s other side. “You okay there pretty boy?”

Blinking for a few seconds, he let a brilliant smile slip onto his face. The situation might not have been handled ideally… but it went close enough to what he’d expected and plus, he’d gained another friend along the way. “Peachy now that I can finish my coffee Dominic... thank you for checking
in.”

His new friend smiled. “Of course Harry.”

The Hufflepuff Prefect down the table caught his eye and they exchanged small smiles.

Strike that. A possible two new friends.

That had been a better reward that he’d thought- especially if the scorching glare he was getting from the head table was any indication of how unsettled Dumbledore was.

Other than Professor Marigold, who he’d already made good friends with by showing how to make sure the bowtruckles didn’t get hurt when trying to get some bark off (you had to put some wood lice out and wait for them to move away from the tree and be incredibly respectful), his favorite teacher was probably Stella Moorvitch.

He’d heard from some of the older students that she was a stern (and slightly mean) old lady, but he’d been privy to Minerva McGonagall while she was fighting a war, so nothing could really scare him about badass older women again.

Professor Moorvitch was an older Russian woman, with a lighter accent that slipped through whenever she would yell at the students, but she seemed to have a soft spot for Harry. Whether that was because he was the only one who would sit near her desk (with Grace and Lucy joining him hesitantly) or the fact he would laugh at the muttered curse words in her rough first language… he didn’t know, but for some reason she liked him.

Usually the class read books about the stars and quietly shared telescopes around the observatory classroom, but as Stephan joked- If you wanted to find Harry, follow what sounded like two people arguing with mashed potatoes in their mouth and he and Moorvitch would be sitting next to a telescope talking and pointing out things to each other.

Harry had been listening to the professor tell him an old story about a bear constellation, quickly packing his stuff up when he realized he was late for breakfast now that they had been sitting and talking all night. She’d been especially interested in the Muggle science behind the stars and he promised to get her a book on it before he rushed out.

Feeling glad that he had made sure to tell his friends not to wait because they would all have been late, he ran down the stairs of the observatory, crashing into a group of boys when he turned the corner which made him fall to the ground.

Damn this tiny body- useless- it was useless!

Picking himself off the floor with a wince, he leaned down to pick up the book he had been holding, only to find it kicked away from his hands.

“Pathetic really. This is the brat that the King had to actually offer the title of ‘Prince’ to? No wonder the King looked sick when he came back from talking to such a wimp.”

He was glad the book wasn’t one of his older tomes or the boy would have been cursed- do-gooder image be damned… “That’s not a very nice thing to say.” Harry tilted his head, assessing the three older boys, who were all wearing Slytherin robes. Two were holding their wands, but the other one looked bored as if he didn’t understand the point of teasing a younger student. “I am still a Malfoy, afterall.”
He couldn’t believe he’d actually tried to play the Malfoy card—though the ends justify the means I guess and he really didn’t want to miss another meal or when he went to the goblins for a check up, his healer would skin him alive.

The boy in front of the group scoffed (like an asshole). “You are the son of a Malfoy that ran away from his family to get married to some half-blood whore in the woods—you don’t even deserve to have that name.”

Harry blinked. Did that mean he was a half-blood again? Not that it really mattered to him either way—he had no use for ‘pure’ blood. “And your point is? I’m still a Malfoy… And as distant as we are, Abraxas is still my cousin.” He so wished he was still the Malfoy heir just so her could rub it in the boy’s face, but the cool logic that Hermione and Draco had slowly instilled into him year by year made him think before he opened his mouth. “Braxas is Riddle’s right hand— isn’t he? And you wouldn’t want to upset your King, would you?”

The bored boy who was now leaning against the wall looked at the ‘leader’ of the small group. “Kid has a point Macnair.”

“Thanks.” Ah— and there was his sarcasm.

The boy, who he now recognized slightly by comparing him to the other Death Eater with the name ‘Macnair’, gritted his teeth. “Shut up Nott, if you aren’t committed then go cosy up to the Ravenclaws.”

The boy who must have been Theodore Nott’s grandfather rolled his eyes, but shut his mouth and looked away.

Harry looked at the three appraisingly. “So how’s this going to go down? I’m a second year that’s half your size, not to mention the fact that there are three—well maybe two—of you and one of me.”

Macnair raised his wand. “You’re going to stay away from Slytherin. We don’t want half-blood bastards Hufflepuffs around us or our court.” There was a rush of wind, a cut opening on his cheek, and he felt the warm drip of blood down the side of his face.

Then with a wave of the wand from the boy to the leader’s side, he was slammed back against the wall with a rough ‘oomf’. A hex hit him, his right ring finger making a snapping sound and he gritted his teeth against the pain.

He might not be used to used to pain in this body, but he still was above seeing him cry out or something mortifying like that.

“Travers, Macnair— are you really going to torture this kid?” Nott sounded rather reluctant, as if it was a waste of time. “He’s not even strong enough to try to fight you off, how is that fun?”

Wow, great morals kiddo. Harry laughed lowly, letting his head fall back against the wall. “Oh, this? This is nothing. A broken fingers and a small cut— what are you— first years?”

The second boy, Travers, hissed like a wounded cat. “That’s it. I’m gonna beat the life out of this kid.” The bindings holding him to the wall dropped, and he was sinking to his feet, legs unsteady. A boot hit his side before he knew what was happening and he groaned as he fell to the cold ground.

His healer was going to get into a fist fight with him when she heard what happened.

“Vat is going on ‘ere!”
Ah- his ticket out.

Moorvitch loomed over the boys like the shadow of Baba Yaga herself. Her eyes caught his and the older woman’s face went stone cold. With a flick of her wand the three boys were restrained in iron bands and he noticed the restraints of the boy that had just stood back and watched were only slightly looser. “‘Adrin?’

He gave her a weak smile, ignoring the pain in his ribs as he stood slowly, brushing himself off. “I- I’m fine, thank you Professor…”

The woman put a hand on his shoulder as if to guide him down the hall, the three Slytherin boys levitating behind them. They got to the Great Hall and the Russian witch smiled down at him, voice just above a whisper. “Iv you vere to cry, no one vould judge ‘ou…”

Harry knew that when talking with him for extended periods of time there was a point where people stopped seeing him as a child- **case and point: Zacarias**- so he nodded in thanks and used a twinge of magic to make his eyes watery.

The Professor pushed the Great Hall doors open loudly, drawing the eyes of the hall as she stalked in, the three bound Slytherins floating behind her like prisoners of war. But as he trudged in, eyes downcast and fingers clenched in the hem of his sleeves, he heard gasps though the hall.

The Astronomy Professor- **was she an Auror at some point? She had the same battle-hardened eyes-** dropped the boys at the base of the steps to the head table. “Zees bois ve’re attacking ‘Adrian! Zey must be punished!”

Wiping his eyes and sniffing like he’d seen Gwendolyn and Marian do whenever they wanted to get something from their parents, he made his voice wobble slightly. “I- I don’t… They didn’t mean-”

“‘Adrian zey were beating ‘ou into zee ground!” Moorivitch’s eyes flashed at him. “I vill be contacting your guardian eizer way!”

Oh shit- he didn’t think about that- **would Zacarias even show up? He’d portrayed the vampire as a caring guardian. His whole story could go to pieces if the vampire didn’t show….**

Debating asking one of the house elves for a drink, he winced at the pain in his side. Fuck did broken ribs hurt. Pulling out his trusty Holly wand, he pressed it to his side and clenched his teeth. “Sternum emendo.” Flinching at the flash of white hot pain, he sighed as he felt the rib heal and pressed on it lightly.

Sore- but not horrible.

Screwing up his face in concentration, he ran the tip of his wand over the cut on his cheek. “Episkey.” Slowly, the cut mended and he wiped his face again, before smiling faintly up at the Professor with wide eyes. “See? All good- please please don’t bother Zacarias- he would kill me himself if he found out what happened… I promised him I’d be alright here, safe .”

“My dear boy…” Harry stiffened a bit at the familiar voice calling him that forever hated nickname. “Your magical guardian should know. Not to mention, I am sure the staff are as interested to meet the Vampire Lord in person as I am.” Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled.

Looking down at his shoes, he nodded sullenly. “Could- If you could, I… Please don’t punish these boys.” The hall around him was still in shocked silence and he smiled sadly at the head table. “They didn’t know what they were doing and I don’t place any blame on their shoulders… I believe that there is still hope for them.”
He could see Dumblesnore wanting to get the ‘nasty Slytherins’ in trouble, but the man’s mask of kindness wouldn’t let him, not with the way Harry had worded that.

Dippet smiled. “You are a very kind boy, Hadrian Malfoy, and a skilled one at that. They will all get three detentions with their head of house, but because of your request they will not receive anything more than that.”

“Thank you Headmaster.” Dipping his head, he walked back to his table and sat down tiredly. Moving to grab his goblet, he grimaced at his broken finger, drawing his wand again. “Mano emendo.” He watched with grim satisfaction as his finger snapped back in place, healing.

“Harry! Pretty boy!” He was ambushed by Cameron and Lucy, who both tried to clean up his face and hair. “Are you okay! What happened?”

Shrugging, he sagged, leaning against Cameron, who was the perfect height to lay his head on. “They didn’t like me being invited to the court- or rejecting the offer- or anything I did really.”

Domonic looked mutinous. “They should know better than to attack a second year! They’re sixth years!”

Grace was frowning as well. “Why didn’t you let them be punished?”

Harry took a long drink of the cold water and sighed. “It’s not worth it. I don’t want to make more enemies than I already have.”

Stephen smiled at him from across the table. “Don’t worry- you have us- we’ll protect you pretty boy.”

Chapter End Notes

I had the need to see Harry hurt because i’m a horrible person (.^.) So expect to see some furious Tom in the next chap. Any words (or noises) of discontent at me hurting the smol is always fine- as well as any other comments or kudos. See you in three!
In Which Harry Aches... (Seriously What Was He Thinking, Letting Those Boys Beat Him Up?)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
With the knowledge of him being able to speak the language of the snakes, Harry rejected a position in Slytherin's 'court', gaining a couple new friends and more than a few watchful eyes. Disliking the fact that Harry disrespected their King, three Slytherins attacked him, only for one Professor Moorvitch to come to his aid.

Getting the boys out of the trouble Dumbledore would bring- our protagonist heals his wounds and retires for the night- not expecting there to be any more trouble that comes from the event.

Chapter Notes

*chanting under breath* Tom! Tom! Tom! Tom!
Much love to @bellachrome for the amazing insight into our favorite mini Dark Lord's brain~ <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“How dare you?”

The three boys shuddered at the tone, deceptively soft for the fury radiating from Tom like heat from a raging inferno. Tom lounged in his chair, his Slytherin throne, assessing the three with the calculation befitting of a serpent king. Nott averted his eyes, and Travers nearly flinched but caught himself just in time.

Tom sneered at them. Weaklings, cowards, too scared to even respond to his point-blank question. “I ask again: how dare you?”

Macnair jumped to defend himself. “My King, he’s an unworthy half-blood-”

“I don’t care , Macnair.”

Silence.

Tom snarled. Fools. All of them, fools. “Have you forgotten so quickly my own background? My own upbringing?” He rose before them like a snake preparing to strike, “Have you forgotten that I myself did not know my heritage until I arrived at this school?”

“My King-”

“I did not give you permission to speak, Macnair.” Tom’s voice bordered on a snake’s hiss.

Macnair shut his mouth; it was the first common sense he had shown in a while.
Tom gazed at the three boys, his rage turning to shards of pure ice, sharp and deadly. “The reason I do not care is simple.” He paused for dramatic effect- never let him say he didn’t know how to play to the crowd- the entire Slytherin common room waiting with baited breath for his next words.

“Hadrian Malfoy has more magical power than the three of you put together.”

Travers spluttered. “My King-”

“And,” Tom continued as if Travers had not even spoke, “he is of the Malfoy house, one of the families of high pureblood society; Lord Malfoy took him into his own home as soon as he discovered his existence.” Tom took a deep, slow breath, reveling in the way the three immature brats in front of him squirmed under his scrutiny. “And on top of that, he is a parselmouth. He possesses a blood talent of Slytherin which none of you can claim.”

The silence in the common room stretched like the pause before a duel, tension and apprehension thick in the air.

Abraxas leaned against the marble fireplace, face stone cold. “Did you forget you were hurting my cousin, my blood when you kicked him hard enough to break a rib?” The boys flinched and Tom allowed the blonde to seethe, as it was his family after all. “I heard him- that spell was to heal a broken rib- a spell that is only taught to third year healers.”

A broken rib which Hadrian had healed with that spell himself. Tom spared a second to appreciate the ingenuity and power the boy possessed.

Infuriating.

Well, the boy was infuriating, that much was a given… but he was his - his to fight with, his to toy with, his to banter with, his to pick apart and try to understand.

Who did these children think they were, trying to go after Hadrian Malfoy?

“Hadrian Malfoy is mine to deal with and mine alone,” Tom snarled. “I don’t care what you think of him. I don’t care if he annoys you, angers you, or threatens your measly ego in any way. I only care that you listen and obey: you do not touch him.”

Abraxas, his right hand, his most trusted, who never asked anything of him, stood and moved forward with a fire in his eyes. “My King…” The boy’s usually soft voice was rough with righteous fury - what this fascinating, infuriating, beautiful boy could inspire in people - eyes looking over to him respectfully. “May I, for the attack of a family member, have the honor of first blood?”

Tom looked at Abraxas, looked at his friend right hand, and smiled cruelly. “Abraxas… you may have as much blood as it takes to satisfy you.”

Abraxas flashed his teeth in response- his expression all sharp edges and malice- and moved forward, the three troublemakers cowering beneath him. Tom reclined once more on his throne, and grinned.

He would revel in the screams of those who dare hurt what he claimed as his.

The next morning- with help from a bunch of bruise salve and a hot bath (that he had to cast a re-heating charm on three times before he finally pulled himself out)- Harry was feeling slightly more alive.
Glancing to the Slytherin table as he walked into the Great Hall, he froze mid-step.

The three boys from the night before looked like they’d been run over by a train.

Eyes drifting from them to the end of the table, where the court sat, he saw a light in Abraxas’ eyes that made the whole realization sink in.

He’d seen that light before. He’d seen what the rage and fury people repressed did to them and it had been his job to put those people down— to lead them to the chair where they’d— ah— meet a Dementor in a manner far too close and personal to survive.

_Melin have mercy on him— he’d messed with the timeline so much already— this wasn’t supposed to happen._

Changing his course, he narrowed his eyes and stalked towards the Slytherin table. The hall went silent but he kept moving, only stopping when he was at his cousin’s shoulder. “Abraxas... look at me.”

The boy he’d read the diary of (or journal whatever), who he’d seen the most inner thoughts of, who he’d come to see as someone he cared for even before they met— looked up at him with eyes that reminded him of how crazed Lucius had been after the war and Harry almost started crying. “Hadrian?”

“Stand up please.” He kept his voice light, but as soon as the boy stood, he was hugging the blonde. With a deep breath he pulled back to look up at the shocked eyes of his cousin. “Cast a curse again on someone you’re not dueling and I will make sure you _never_ have kids.”

Abraxas stiffened. “How-”

“Your eyes. Now sit down and eat your damn breakfast. It’s too early to be interacting with you or anyone else thinking with their ego.” He glared at the red-tinted eyes watching him, shoving his hands into his pocket and stalked off, casting a mild healing spell on the three boys when he passed. Sinking to a seat next to Grace and Pomona Sprout (who he would have an existential crisis over being friends with later), he grabbed a cup of coffee that appeared and drank it down greedily.

Pomona looked at him with a smile. “Getting your fix?”

Huffing, he ignored her giggling. “I’m too young to die from exhaustion.”

Lucy leaned over the table, wiping away something on his nose before smiling. “Smudge of dirt.”

_Oh so not only had he decided to tell off Abraxas— in front of Riddle— but he also had dirt on his face. Merlin he was a mess._

His frown was pronounced. “Thanks mom .”

Halfway through his spanish muggle horror novel ( _What? Even he needed a brain break from the textbooks_ ), a familiar voice called out across the hall. “Where’s that idiotic little bat?”

Eyes snapping up at the voice, he looked to where Lord Zacarias stood, a woman he recognized as the man’s lieutenant at his side. Harry jumped up from his seat and ran at the man. “Zac! You came!”

Catching him easily in his arms and lifting him like he was as light as a piece of parchment, the
vampire smirked like a venomous snake. “Don’t you know not to come too close little bat? Forget who I am while you stayed in your precious castle?”

“Noope!” He reached out and messed up the man’s hair with a laugh. “Kill any hawks lately?”

The vampire huffed, setting him down. “Why yes, you meddlesome brat, I had a wonderful time hunting down each and every last of those miserable creatures that dared exist near my castle.”

Harry grinned at the red-haired woman to Zacarias’ right. “Hey Annie! Read any good adventure novels lately?”

The woman startled a little at him knowing her name, but with a look from Zacarias she played along perfectly, smiling down at him. “Why I have, Harry dearest. It’s about this princess locked in a tower- but surprise ending- she’s saved by another princess, a princess warrior .”

He knew he would get along with Annabelle, in any universe.

“Hey! That’s spoiling the ending! What if I wanted to read it?” He whined teasingly, enjoying the woman’s grin.

“Hadrian.” Zacarias had gone into his ‘serious’ mode, a frown on his lips. “I heard you were hurt...”

There was silence though the hall, wondering what was going to happen.

But the man just grinned, slow and dangerous. “Did you throw another fight? I saw you take down one of my knights with a single severing spell so don’t you dare tell me that you couldn’t fight back.” With a shake of his head the Vampire Lord ruffled his hair, eyes holding humor and some stronger emotions. “You pinned me down last time we fought- how could you lose to three stupid bullies?”

Trying not to flush at the memories they both knew the man was actually referring to, he ducked his head. “I… I’m not used to my wand- or dueling with teenagers... We both know that they’re much squishier than any of your knights! I didn’t-” Now his voice was a dejected mutter. “I didn’t want to hurt anyone.”

Annabelle laughed, scooping him up and he found himself sitting on her shoulders. “Come on darling, why don’t you show us around this majestic school of yours.”

Smirking at where Zacarias was frowning, he pointed towards the Great Hall doors. “Onward Annie! Let’s leave the sourpuss behind, he’s only going to sulk like the big dingbat he is!”

The Lord hissed at him with narrowed eyes. “You’re on thin ice kid. You’d be a pretty tasty snack.”

“Ooooh, so scary. Can it Fangface- we both know I’m too cute to eat or you’d have let those hawks live.” Harry grinned sharply. “And for your information, my official Hufflepuff nickname is ‘Pretty boy’, not ‘kid’. ”

Anne reached up to pat his knee. “Zac’s just pouting over you liking me more.”

“I am not!”

By the time the three had left the Great Hall, all laughing and bantering with each other, there was no doubt in anyone’s mind that the vampires were anything but a danger to Hadrian Malfoy.
Chapter End Notes

We stan some good domestic vibes <3 :) Thanks Bells for helping make this story come to life!
Any comments, kudos, or pterodactyl noises are always more than appreciated!
See you in three <3
“Malfoy! What is the first rule to casting a transfiguration spell?” Cold blue eyes fixed on him.

Harry pursed his lips, as if to think about the question for a second. “It is to make firm and decisive wand movements, or the spell will not come out right, if at all, Sir.”

Dumbledore’s twinkle returned. “Incorrect. The first rule is to know that no transfiguration will last forever.”

A trick question in which no answer I give is the right one. Very mature.

Harry dipped his head. “I thought we were talking second year material, but if we are covering fifth year material, then you are very right sir.”

Stephan snickered quietly from beside him.

“Ten points from Hufflepuff for cheek, Mr. Malfoy.”

All his classmates tensed, but he just nodded. “Very good sir. Cheek is never acceptable... isn’t that right, Mr. Diggory?” He smiled at Benjamin Diggory, a Gryffindor who was always cracking jokes during class and fooling around.

The boy grinned back. “Maybe your cheek is just bad.”

With a shrug, he looked to one of the more studious girls sitting behind the boy, raising an eyebrow with a friendly smile. “Do you think my cheek is too much, Miss Bones?”

“Yes.” The girl sniffed, but her eyes held mirth. “Yes, it is quite distracting.”
He sighed long-sufferingly, looking back to Dumbledore. “You hear that Professor? I guess that my nickname is well founded now. The best student in class finds me ‘distracting’.”

This sent the class into giggles and whispers, the girl herself going red with something between embarrassment and laughter. Effectively he’d turned the man’s classroom into a disorganized mess with just a few words and he leaned back in his chair with a challenging smile at the professor.

Piercing blue eyes narrowed as the man got acquainted with his impenetrable mind shield and he booted the old coot out the back door with no more than the twitch of his lips.

*Another point to Harry.*

Potions had always been hard for him at Hogwarts as a kid, hating the judgmental stare of Snape that never seemed to leave him—so compared to that Slughorn was an absolute peach.

He added the Valerian, stirring seven times before waving his wand to finish the potion and slumping back in his seat tiredly. Glancing at Pomona’s potion he frowned lightly. “You should add another glob of flobberworm mucus to that. It’ll correct some of the color…”

The girl eyed him, but did as he’d suggested, the color turning from the light pink back to the dark purple it was supposed to be. With a smile, Pomona looked up at him. “Thanks Harry!”

“Mr. Malfoy- I see you have quite the eye for potions?” Slughorn seemed to appear out of nowhere. Not the melting out of the shadows that Snape used to do, but more like a cartoon character popping up with a stupid smile. “Maybe you would be so inclined to join my club for exceptional students? I hear your marks are quite high in Defense as well- have you thought about becoming an Auror?”

At this Harry smiled widely, chuckling slightly. “Only briefly Professor, but I fear that I would be better suited towards healing.”

The man beamed at this. “Well I am sure you will excel at whatever you put your mind to doing!” Patting Harry’s shoulder in a way that he actively had to hold back a scowl, the man looked pleased with himself. “I will have to get you in contact with a healer, a friend of mine-”

“I’m actually currently trying to get Zacarias to let me train under Miriam Stout.” He tried to mask his chuckle when the Professor’s eyes widened at the name of the woman who headed the Janus Thickey Ward at St. Mungos.

*Bless Draco’s lectures about the history of St. Mungos.*

Slughorn sputtered for a few second before smiling again. “Well it seems that you’re more connected that even I am!”

Harry could hear the defeat in those words and looked at the man seriously, hiding his smile under layers of masks. “But as for your club, I would love to come. I am always looking to meet new and interesting people.”

This perked the man back up and flabby fingers grabbed his vial of perfect Sleeping Potion. “Well then! Whenever our next get-together is, I’ll make sure to get you an invite!”

When the man hobbled away like a happy penguin, Pomona looked at him with amused eyes, shaking her head. “You say you want friends, but then try to bite our heads off every morning… I pity whoever you marry because you’re a handful of brilliance short of crazy.”
“More like i’m a handful of brilliance over crazy.”

They shared a similar smile.

Professor Chandler Dalton was the current charms teacher, and as much as he missed Flitwick’s rather funny and strange ingenuity, Dalton always seemed to have his own take on things. He heard that the majority of Slytherin hated the muggle-born professor, but if anything that made Harry work harder to get the man to like him.

Not that it was hard.

Apparently, according to Moorvitch, he had the charm of a baby animal fumbling its way around a thick forest. (Not sure if that was exactly a good thing, he had just smiled at the older Russian woman and took that as advice to just be himself.)

So when he set fire to his desk while trying to conjure a few simple flames and ended up soaking wet because of the aguamenti the Professor had cast, he was glad for the chuckles the man was trying to muffle, bursting into a peal of laughter himself.

He hadn’t made such a foolish mistake since he’d tried to paint a wall magically and everything in the room (including him) had ended up purple. It seemed his magic was disproportionate to his current body and having a hard time adapting.

Since that ‘incident’ though, the professor had been letting him stay a little after class every day to try to practice doing the spells without blowing anything up.

Wandless magic was breeze with his raw magical talent, but focusing that though his Holly wand (or Merlin forbid- the Elder Wand) was like holding a magnifying glass to the sun and watching the planets burn.

He focused, trying to control the amount of magic he let go into the spell, head starting to hurt slightly. “Wingardium Leviosa.”

The chair in the middle of the room levitated in a controlled manor, as if it still had some weight to it and he smiled. The chair started to rise faster and he narrowed his eyes, concentrating so it leveled out at a good height again.

“Very good!” Professor Dalton came up beside him, sending a proud smile his way. “See? This is why you’re my best student!”

Harry looked up at the man. “Really?”

And all his concentration was lost.

There was a crash- both of them turning to find a hole in the ceiling.

Moving to the window quickly, they saw a familiar chair scattered in pieces out on the grass, a certain group of Slytherin students looking up at them. Dalton whistled lowly. “They don’t look happy.”

He cursed quietly, leaning out the window and waving at his cousin. “Sorry ‘Braxas! I seem to have lost control of my levitation spell!” Stowing his wand away in his wrist holder, he held out his hand and flicked his fingers. The chair repaired itself, levitating much more steadily and he lowered it
through the hole it had made before repairing the ceiling.

Dalton sighed. “Come on then Mister Jr. Healer. Let’s go see if anyone got hurt.” Racing out to the grass green, they both skidded to a halt, and Harry winced at the gash on one of the boy’s arms. The Professor looked away, a bit pale. “Wow... um- that must hurt.”

“Professor? Are you okay?”

The man waved his hand. “I’m trusting this to you Harry. I- I can’t stand the sight of blood.”

Harry conjured up a bucket for the man just before he threw up, patting the professor’s back. “It’s alright. Luckily, this is just a flesh wound.” Giggling at the man’s muttered words of irritation at him, he turned back to the group. “I apologize for this inconvenience- but if you allow me, I can heal you- you’ll be as good as new...”

The boy, who he now recognized as Nott, was on the ground clutching at his arm. With a wary glance up at him, the boy nodded stiffly and he could tell the pain was chipping away at his pureblood mask. “Yes. You may.”

Worrying at his lip for a single second of indecision, he knelt down in the dewy grass left behind from the morning. “This might be uncomfortable, but it will help numb the pain.” Like a plant uncurling it’s vines, he let his magic seep into the air to curl around the boy’s wound, numbing the nerves and making everything smell faintly of the thick electricity thunderstorms gave off. “Now just a quick- Vulcanra Sanentu- and you’re all good! ”

The group watched as the wound knit itself back together and when it was all finished, he pulled his magic back into himself tightly, feeling it hum with the joy of being used to do something other than stupidly simple spells.

“I’ve never heard of that spell.” Professor Dalton was back, eyes curious.

With a startle, he realized that- oh yeah Severus Snape wasn’t a thing yet... Fuck.

Laughing nervously, he waved his hand. “I- uh- must have read it somewhere. No big deal. It’s not-”

His arm was caught before he could run away. “Harry this is great! If you made that spell- and the magic numbing thing- that’s a mastery in healing right there!”

Today just wasn’t his day, was it? He was hoping to have a Normal day, but noooooo, Fate has to fuck with him even now!

Slowly pulling his arm from the Professor with what he hoped was a perfectly normal- not the queasy sick feeling he was feeling inside- smile. But his voice came out sharper than he intended. “No. No one will speak of this.” He stumbled back a bit, headache coming back in full force. “No one.”

Then with the feeling of shame and guilt making him feel as if he had ingested a ton of raw bloody meat, he ran for the Hufflepuff dorms.

Knowing his luck, he’d probably just made the future Snape a Gryffindor- and wasn’t that a sick thought?

Chapter End Notes
Hint Hint: remember this scene ^-^ it's important later ((I am trying SO hard not to spoil anything for the future))
Good news though- we get some quality Tom next chap!
See you in three!
In Which Harry Just Wants His Brain To SHUT UP

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Dumbledore really doesn't like Harry, Slughorn loves Harry, and Dalton seems to find him both adorable and yet funny at the same time- A normal Thursday if you ask Harry.
After an incident involving a chair, the ceiling (shouldn't it be stronger?), and one specific group of Slytherins, Harry ponders fate and just how much he's changed by existing in a time that's not his own.

Chapter Notes

A few words--
1) The order in which Tom's horcruxes are made during this story is kinda not canon complaint- canon has the Diary first and then the Ring- but in this story Tom killed his relatives before Harry even got there (hence the ring horcrux) and hasn't given much thought to the CoS now that he's distracted by pretty green eyes (^^^^That's important later^^^^)
2) Sorry to any unanswered comments- I've been really sick lately
3) This is predominantly mine and Bell's story. We love that we can share it with all y'all, but we have poured many late nights into it, so if you don't like the way that we write the characters or what we do with the plot please don't read the story ((and i'm really trying not to be rude guys)).
With that aside, I hereby swear my undying allegiance to @bellachrome's skeleton army for her dedication to being my beta and for writing Tom's scenes

See the end of the chapter for more notes

What was that?

_The boy was infuriating_ , Tom thought to himself, but he didn’t feel… infuriated… at the moment. Perturbed, yes. Irritated that Hadrian (Harry, his thoughts whispered back) had been so close to him and he barely even interacted with the boy, yes. Confused and fascinated by the way that Harry fled the scene so quickly after that gorgeous, breathtaking, _divine_ display of healing magic, yes.

Infuriated with him, however?

No… that _honor_ was reserved for Professor Dalton.

Tom forced his features into the most pleasant configuration he could manage given the circumstances, icing them into place with the sheer cold force of his rage. Dalton, who he knew half the girls in his year either found attractive or had a crush on; Dalton, who was charming and earnest like a puppy; Dalton, who was his antithesis in every way--

Dalton, who was apparently _giving Hadrian private lessons_.

Tom was not going to not think about how negatively that last reason made him feel, much less why. He was too busy being full of rage.

Sadly, he himself could not take out his anger on Dalton directly; he had an image to maintain, after all. Perfect prefect Tom Riddle (such a good boy despite his upbringing), the teacher’s pet whenever possible (always so good with his magic such a shame), destined for great things (if only he could work around the less reputable part of his bloodline).

But… well. Being the King of Slytherin had some perks.

He watched Dalton fumble his apologies for Hadrian and awkwardly trot back inside the castle, outwardly cool and collected but inwardly burning with rage. As soon as the professor was out of earshot and sight, he turned to his followers and allowed the cruel smile he had bit back finally spread across his face.

The boy may be infuriating… but nonetheless.

“My snakes… we have something to discuss.”

The common room was quiet, all watching the boy sitting in the black leather wingback chair, firelight glinting against his handsome features and making him look otherworldly. To his sides were two boys with stone-cold faces, six boys sitting around the three on the chairs, leaving the rest of the fifteen or so people to stand.

Tom lounged in his chair, firelight making his eyes gleam more red than brown. “I have an… offer.” His tone made it clear it was more of a recommended course of action (an order) and those gathered watched, eager to please their King. “There is a certain mudblood among us who… seems to have forgotten his proper place.” He scanned their faces, calculation flickering in his eyes. “A professor, nonetheless. Someone who should know better but so obviously does not.” He straightened himself, causing the others in the room to straighten up as well. “I would like him reminded of where he belongs.” Tom’s blank mask cracked into a hatred-filled snarl. “Beneath us.”

The room kept still, waiting for their permission to speak, but the energy got higher at the prospect of getting to act against the least favorite of the Slytherin’s Professors.

“Who of you, my snakes, will take up this offer?” The red eyes glinted with dark anticipation, expectant and malicious.

A boy stepped forward slowly. William Macnair. “I will take this offer, in respect to having displeased you, my King.”

“As will I.” Markus Travers joined the boy and after a second of hesitation Theoden Nott did as well, muttering his agreement. Tom narrowed his eyes at Nott; he seemed more reluctant than the others, which meant he needed to be watched lest he do something… counterproductive.

There was a low chuckle from the couch where a boy with cruel eyes sat. “Yes… I have had enough of that bumbling fool. I will join in on the hunt.” Reinhard Lestrange was a blunt tool, but he was cunning in small doses and more viscous than a hungry nundu.

Tom inclined his head in a regal nod. Yes. This would do nicely. “Very well. I will be awaiting your results.”
Harry remembered when Draco had first started teaching him healing. The man would come back from his nine hour shifts in St. Mungos, hair messy and bags under his eyes, and Narcissa and Harry would be tasked with dealing with the man until he fell asleep. Though sometimes the adrenaline of saving lives and the way Draco’s brain would just run and run and run… the man just needed to talk.

So Harry would take those days- right after he’d retired but before Hermione had married Draco- and he would listen to the healer speak while he sipped his coffee, trying to stay awake himself.

Eventually, after enough long nights of listening, he understood healing enough that he began to experiment with it. His brand of magic had changed after he’d died, long and creeping into the air like vines, and with every death it only seemed to get stronger.

(Teddy had made that joke about ‘things not killing you making you stronger’ so many times he thought he’d punch the next person to say that.)

Healing was almost a joke of his that he shared with those darker flowers that bloomed on his magic the more he wanted death but couldn’t reach it- those same flowers that he could draw on to suck the life from things or cause things pain without even a hand gesture.

He had become obsessed with healing magic because he knew deep down that he was marked by Death himself.

But the thought of taking credit for something that Draco had taught him to do, or that Snape had spent his time carefully crafting- it was unthinkable to him in a way that left him curled up in his bed for the rest of the weekend- Harry would have stayed in bed longer than just that but eventually Stephen drew him out of his mind with the healing powers of chocolate.

It was also bugging him... What was happening with Professor Dalton?

As they didn’t have their lessons until Wednesdays and Fridays after class, Harry was stuck with not being able to really talk to the man, but the professor seemed twitchy and distracted.

Tuesday night, Harry was wandering the halls.

He found himself like this sometimes- in a way he and Draco were the same- but this time he didn’t have anyone to sit with him and talk him to sleep. His brain kept going in circles and he just… he was so tired.

Body heavy like lead weights tired. Bone deep, aching tired.

But his fucking brain wouldn’t shut up.

You’re pathetic. How could you take credit for a spell that was crafted by the man who spent his whole life trying to save you? The man who died so you could live?

Apparently he still had some issues with the whole ‘Snape’ thing.

How could you just sit there? You know that professor will say something. Or those Slytherins- how could you trust them with something so important?
Harry tried so hard to just ignore the voice, just keep moving, keep walking in hopes he’d just get tired enough to collapse and maybe get a few hours of interrupted sleep. Dreamless sleep was out of the question- Draco had made him vow only to use it once a month at max since he’d been close to abusing it during his Auror career.

By now he was shaking slightly, legs almost numb, and almost deliriously he resigned himself to going back to the Hufflepuff dorms.

Except- That wall in front of him was to the Slytherin dorms.

Legs about ready to give out on him, he started to turn away- *it's only a little farther, weakling* - but the warm magic of Hogwarts pulsed and he saw the opening to the Slytherin common room fade from stone to an archway.

With a yawn, rubbing his eyes, he stumbled forward and braced himself on the stone wall. “Th’nks luv.”

The warm ball of energy pulsed inside his chest, making him smile just a bit.

Whoever thought a sentient castle could be such a *mom*?

Hogwarts’ energy gave him another push and he was shuffling along again, feeling as if his spine had been slowly eroded away at. He rubbed his heavy eyes, displacing his glasses. And weren’t they just a pain sometimes, his glasses?

“Hadrian?”

Blinking like a sleep-deprived, half-delusional owl, he looked at the blurry figure that stood up from the chair by the fire. But it had Abraxas’ voice so… “Mmm? I- I think… I got—... she said I should…” He was making no sense, but his brain was mush so he supposed that it couldn’t really be helped.

“Harry- why are you here? Did someone bring you here?” Stronger hands wrapped around his wrists to keep him steady and standing.

_Thank god for this cousin of yours, dealing with your pathetic shit- you shouldn’t be burdening him like this._

“Harry, you’re shaking…”

“Oh... ‘M tired.” Fuck almighty was that an understatement.

One of his knees wobbled and he grabbed onto the boy in front of him, laughing a bit when he was just barely stopped from collapsing by the warm hands holding onto him.

Hogwarts pulsed worriedly, obviously wanting him to lay down.

He snorted slightly and muttered a sarcastic, “Ma’am yes ma’am,” to the prod from the sentient building. Feeling a bit like a newborn doe, he jerkily made sure his legs would support him, before moving slowly to a large leather chair by the fire that looked comfortable as *sin*.

However- _after_ collapsing into the chair like a pile of Harry goo- he found that the seat was otherwise occupied and he had just poured himself into someone’s lap.

Fun.
Patting his head and cursing when he couldn’t find his glasses, he blinked at the fuzzy blob sitting before him and absentmindedly put his hand on their face as if hoping to find out who it was by touch.

A soft huff of some complicated emotion that he didn’t have the energy to puzzle out and the person’s hands made short work of moving his heavy limbs into a less sprawled-out position, pushing his hand away from the person’s face and laying it at his side.

He wasn’t sure, but that seemed as good an invitation to fall asleep as any.

“Th’nks…” His voice was thick, heavy with lack of sleep and he turned his face to be buried in the shoulder of said mystery person. “I… owe…” He yawned tiredly, barely muttering out, “you…” before falling off that rocky precipice into the waiting arms of morpheus.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks Bells for being wonderful (and tell me if you're gonna call in that pledge to you skeleton army to take over the world) <3 I'mma go back to sleep.
See you in three!
In Which Harry Does A Big Dumb

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Stumbling over his irritation/dislike? for Harry, Tom orders a hit on Professor Dalton, the three that had accosted Harry and one outlier accepting the mission to 'remind the man of his place'. Meanwhile this is going on, Harry is not having a fun time, mind still reeling from the thought that he had possibly messed with the future and taken credit for something that was not his. Sleep deprived and having trouble thinking straight, Harry ends up in the Slytherin common room- in someone’s lap.

Chapter Notes

BIG BIG THANK to @bellachrome, for being so awesome as to deliver us such amazing Tom scenes- Please send her ALL the love, as she's the most amazing co author and beta ever ^-^
With that, please, confirm your suspicions! \(^{-^-}\)/

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Who did this child think he was?

The tension in the room was thick enough to be cut with a knife. Around him, his followers, his chosen snakes, stood tense, waiting for him to make a move, to tell off Abraxas or curse Hadrian or something.

After all, who was the youngest Malfoy to take such liberties?

Who, indeed.

Tom looked down at the child curled up in his lap, face buried in his shoulder, fast asleep. He didn’t know how Hadrian had come here, to the Slytherin dorms- much less gotten into them- but he was here now.

And this… this was an opportunity Tom couldn’t pass up.

How long had it been that Tom had been wanting to get closer to this boy? To pick his mind apart, take him to pieces with his words and fingers, figure out how he worked? To understand how someone so small could be so foolish, so fearless, so… so likable.

And here he was, as if Hogwarts herself had deposited Harry into his lap.

Ignoring his followers, relishing in the tension in the room- Abraxas nearly asphyxiating with terror- Tom smoothed Hadrian’s hair out of his face. The boy made a small snuffling noise and buried himself closer into Tom.
Well. That settled it then.

“IT appears that our meeting must be adjourned rather early tonight,” Tom said, his voice light and carefree. Let them think this was another whim of his. Let them think he was being capricious. Let them wonder. “I appear to have Abraxas’ younger cousin asleep in my lap.”

Abraxas jerked forward. “My liege, if you let me, I will gladly-”

“No,” Tom waved him off, his eyes not leaving the boy’s sleeping form. “He’ll stay.”

Hadrian would stay with him.

Abraxas hesitated. “But-”

Tom looked up at Abraxas and gave him a smile that could cut glass. “Do you doubt his safety in my presence, Abraxas?”

Abraxas flinched back. “No, of course not.”

“Then leave him with me.” Tom relaxed into his throne, his gaze back on Hadrian’s sleeping form. The boy was stunning in the daylight, definitely, but here, fast asleep, the firelight playing across his face- he looked otherworldly, some foreign deity here to grace them with his presence for a time.

And Tom was captivated.

“You are all dismissed,” Tom said imperially. “I will contact you all as to when we will meet next. Go.”

They all left, hastily bowing and exiting the common room, just smart enough to realize when they should leave his presence or risk getting hexed.

Tom sighed softly in relief when the last of his followers left, Abraxas, glancing over his shoulder and looking for all the world as though he would like to sweep Hadrian off of Tom’s lap and spirit him away somewhere safe. Ridiculous. The boy was safest with Tom.

Really, Tom’s minions were mildly irritating even at the best of times. But the itch of their presence was nothing compared to Hadrian.

The child was still utterly infuriating.

But- well. Tom’s lips curved into a slight smile as he watched Hadrian breathe, small puffs of air escaping his lips as he slept deeply. Perhaps he didn’t mind as much as he once thought he did.

Harry woke up slowly. Having not had a single nightmare and warmer than if he had been sleeping in his own bed, he wondered in the back of his brain where he was.

He remembered… wandering. Then the common room- but-

_Oh no…_ he was in the Slytherin common room. In some stranger’s arms. Moving to rub at his eyes, he blinked a few times, vision blurry but not as bad now that he wasn’t delirious with a lack of sleep.
“Here.”

Harry’s heart lurched painfully.

Even without the glasses being pressed into his hand he knew that voice... and now he almost didn’t want to put on his glasses because- what was worse: Falling asleep on the lap of your fated archenemy, or waking up to find said archenemy staring down at you?

When his glasses were on, eyes blinking, he found himself staring at the amused face of the King of Slytherin, Tom fucking Riddle.

His voice was a horse whisper. “Bloody fucking hell … not you. ”

There was a flash of irritation in those red-flecked brown eyes, but the boy’s voice was a soft purr. “Who else would you wish to be holding you?”

In a flail of limbs and none of his usual grace, he extracted himself from the boy’s presence, feeling a bit of sickness turning his stomach.

*Here you are... in the arms of your enemy. In the arms of the man that killed everyone you loved, the man that tried to kill all your little friends, the man who made your life-*

“Shut up.” His voice was a mutter, rubbing at his temples. His head was pounding.

*Why? Deep down you know that he can’t be saved, that he’ll always be the same murderer-*

His voice was a vicious whisper, hands coming up to cup his head as if he could squeeze out the voice. “He’s not going to kill anyone!” The voice in his head snickered at him and he froze, realizing he’d said that out loud.

Green eyes met assessing maroon ones, neither of them moving.

Before the boy could even raise his wand, Harry was running. Blood pumping, heart racing, he was running for his life. Riddle- oh Riddle would surely try to kill him if he was caught and he couldn’t let that happen, so he ran.

Footsteps followed him, but he was too scared and he knew this castle too well, and soon enough he was in his dorm room behind the latent wards and runes he’d set up to not let anyone that would harm him close.

No.

No, no, this was *not* how his morning was supposed to go, this was *not* what he had planned-

Tom sat, frozen in shock, for those precious few seconds where Hadrian scrambled away from him. He leaped to his feet as soon as Hadrian ran, but too late- just a few seconds too late-

He took it back. The boy was utterly infuriating *and the boy infuriated him.*

He snarled, head whipping back and forth like a snake searching for its prey as he came to a cross in
the hallways.

No!

Infuriating child, insolent boy- Hadrian who slipped through his grasp the moment he tightened his fingers- where was he?

He had no way to discover which direction the boy had taken, and he needed to get back to his rooms to prepare for the day. He couldn’t let himself be seen like this, disheveled and on edge- oh, Hadrian, the lengths you take me to.

Where had the child gone? Infuriating boy- he needed to see him today. Find him. Talk to him. Question him. Ask him what he meant.

“He’s not going to kill anyone!”

He? He who? Kill anyone?

Who was this boy? Or, what was he?

Such surety in his tone, such pain in his gestures, his words- what did it mean? Something twisted in his chest at the memory: Hadrian, gripping at his skull, his eyes distant and distressed, his mind so far gone- where?

He didn’t want to dwell on the possibility too much, didn’t want to heighten hopes where there was almost no possibility that he could be... but… was he a seer?

Tom had to know. If Hadrian was a seer- if he knew the future - the things he could do, the knowledge he could provide- Tom had to have him.

And he would have him.

Harry felt hunted the rest of the day, keeping his head down at Breakfast and Lunch, and not even Dumbledore’s piercing gaze was enough to distract from Tom’s scorching one.

Though… it did shine a bit of perspective on Professor Dalton’s behavior.

Staying after class as was the usual on Wednesdays, Harry walked up to where the man was turned, staring at the chalkboard as if he could see right through it.

“Professor? Are you being... harassed?”

The man jolted at the question turning around, a fake smile on his lips. “What? No of course not- why would you think that my boy?”

Wanting to punch the man for calling him that disgusting nickname alone, Harry took a deep breath. They were both on edge. It was okay. “Can I- May I try something sir? It’s not harmful, but it just lets me see if you’re under any spells.”

There was that hesitation, but the man nodded. “Yes… alright.”
With a smile, Harry did the spell wandlessly, not saying a word (he was still feeling the guilt of using those other spells so carelessly). A parchment materialized and the Professor leaned over to look at it.

It was riddled with a few darker charms and spells, with a few compulsions (though he knew they were from someone else), and the man beside him sucked in a long breath.

“I-… thank you for doing this…” Dalton looked a bit pale. “How-... Can you fix them? I mean you aren’t a healer yet and I probably should go to Merrythought or- or Dumbledore, but-”

Smiling softly, Harry nodded. “I can. Not to worry, I have a bit of experience breaking nasty curses and charms.” At the man’s visible relief, he backed a few steps away and looked at the man seriously. “If I do this, you cannot tell a single soul what happened here today or about the healing spells I used out on the grass the other day.”

The Professor nodded. “I understand. I promise.”

Only after feeling the magic of the promise settle around both of them, Harry reached down, pulling the Elder Wand out of a hidden pocket in the bottom of his robes. Ignoring the man’s slight gasp, he breathed in and pointed the ancient wand at the professor, taking a long moment to tune himself into the magic of Death’s tool before fixing his eyes determinedly at the professor. “Finite Incantatem!”

His magic, magnified through a normal wand, might have been enough to break one or two of the nine spells on the professor. But with Death’s wand in hand, the Master of Death was at his full power.

Harry knew what was coming. “Close your eyes!” Before he could see if the man had done as he asked, the room filled with a white light so brilliant and vivid he could see the whiteness even though his eyelids and his hand. Slowly the room faded and he blinked away the spots in his vision.

“Professor? You okay?”

“I-...” The professor groaned, blinking. “What was that?”

Before he could answer, the door was thrown open and the Elder Wand was in his robes again, Professor Dumbledore striding into the room with a frown. “Who cast that?”

Both Harry and Dalton looked at each other, before both shrugging. Harry tilted his head to the side slightly. “Cast what, sir?”

“Your wand Malfoy. Now.” Dumbledore tried see what had been cast last from his Holly wand, only finding a simple cosmetic spell Harry had used in the morning to make his hair somewhat manageable. The blue eyes seemed to express the man’s displeasure, checking Dalton as well before stepping back and eyeing them both. “Very well… But be warned, if I see anything like that again I will go to the Headmaster! There will be no dark magic in my- in this school!”

Harry waited until the door was closed again to lean against a desk and shake his head with a giggle. “Old windbag.”

“Yeah…” Dalton smiled at him brilliantly. “I see what you mean, Dumbledore’s definitely one lemon drop short of a full marble set.”

They shared a smile, both laughing.

He knew there was a reason he liked the charms professor.
Grace had her hands in his hair, trying to braid it (which was a lost cause with how short and messy it was), while he slumped on Dominic’s shoulder with his eyes half-lidded in exhaustion. “That lesson with Professor Dalton must’ve really taken it out of you… you’re half asleep!”

“Shhh… ‘M fine.”

The girl laughed at him, moving her hands away even as he whined lowly at the loss of the soothing fingers, and she tilted her head to the side while chewing on part of her sandwich. “Does Riddle have the hots for you?”

Harry coughed, sure the grape he’d tried to eat was actively choking him but he couldn’t bring himself to care. “What?”

“Riddle.” The girl gestured to the Slytherin table and he could feel the boy’s eyes burning into his skull. “He’s always staring at you.”

Stephen blocked the line of sight to the mini Dark Lord as he threw his head back with a short laugh. “Gracie, if you’re measuring who likes Harry based on staring, then you’re missing a few people-like Dumbledore, Dalton, the other Malfoy, half the Slytherins, most of the Ravenclaws, Mooritch-”

Harry glared at the boy. “MoorVITCH.”

Stephan coughed. “Sorry, forgot you have some weird connection to the old crazy russian- MoorVITCH then.”

There were giggles throughout the group.

Pomona looking like she was coming to some horrifying conclusion. “No, but Gracie’s right! Riddle stares at Harry the same way the Gryffindor and Ravenclaw Prefects from last year used to stare at each other- and they started dating not soon after- they even got married last I heard!”

He cleared his throat. “I’m gonna fight him.”

The group all stared at him in visible suprise. When he started to stand, Cameron caught his arm. “Harry you can’t just fight a prefect!”

“Wanna bet?”

His friends watched, aghast, as he marched down the aisle between Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, then across the hall. Every step he took seemed to kill out a conversation and eventually his steps were the only thing making noise in the hall. He stopped behind where Abraaxas was sitting, eyes locking defiantly with Riddle’s maroon ones. “Fight me.”

His cousin turned, frowning. “Hadrian?”

Ignoring the question in the boy’s voice he sent his cousin a small smile before looking back up to the eyes that had been watching him ever since he had shown up at Malfoy Manor. “Tom Riddle, King of Slytherin... I challenge you to a duel on the behalf of a third party that your actions have harmed.” He extended his hand, letting a smirk curl his lips at the gasps around the hall.

With a similar smirk, eyes burning, Tom stood and clasped his hand. “I accept... on the terms that you tell me who you fight for.”

His throat closed even as the magic in the deal pushed him to answer. Not about to give the boy cannon fodder for Professor Dalton, he laughed bitterly. “Lily Evans, Hermione Granger, Colin
Creevey, Remus Lupin, Severus Snape… choose your pick. Noon. On the Quidditch pitch.” Then, with the magic of the challenge settling around them, he pulled his hand back and stalked back to the Hufflepuff table.

Dominic tilted his head at Harry. “Who are those people you named? They don’t sound like anyone I know.”

His grin was a sharp and bitter thing, flashing over his face for only a second. “That’s because they don’t exist yet.”

“How…”

The group all went quiet at the varied implication of his words and he just calmly drank down his refilled cup of coffee. He’d need to be on his best game- he wasn’t expecting Riddle to go easy on him and he hoped that the boy wasn’t expecting him to fight like some untrained second year.

Merlin it was going to feel good to knock the boy down a couple pegs.

Chapter End Notes

Extra long chapter today- because it's the 23rd of June!~ Why not!
Also Harry being mistaken for a seer is a trope you can pry from my cold, dead hands :)
Please, don't try to lecture me on why Harry wouldn't do what he did. I think any impulsive, hormone-imbalanced person would try to fight the person who killed most of their family should they be given the chance.
See you in three!
In Which Harry's Brain Has A... Guest

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Falling asleep on Tom's lap, Harry makes the mistake of saying something something that makes him look like a Seer- and caught in a panic- runs before Tom can catch him. Helping Dalton undo quite a few curses and compulsions, Harry then decides to do something that he still isn't sure if he'll regret later- Challenge Tom Riddle to a duel.

Chapter Notes

Before we start this madness... Thanks to @bellachrome for being altogether amazing and wonderful (and a bunch of other things that my sleep-addled brain is not able to fully put into words)- um- LONG LIVE THE SKELETON QUEEN!
There.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry was dressed in dragon-hide dueling pants, a simple white button up shirt, and the jacket of his Auror uniform (without all the badges and metals it had one held) and as he strode out of the Hufflepuff common room- with all of his house watching him with wide eyes- he found Abraxas lying in wait for him.

“Hadrian!” His cousin caught up easily, long legs taking advantage here. The blonde’s voice was a hiss- worried with a hint of incredulously- as the boy kept pace with him easily. “What are you doing ?”

Stopping short so the boy had to skid to a halt and look at him, he narrowed his eyes on the person he had started to consider his brother in everything but blood since reading the pain the boy had gone through at Riddle’s hands. “Did you know my mother was a half-blood? That they were shamed into running away and that was why they died? Because I didn’t- and to be honest I didn’t care!” He could feel his hands shaking, knowing they were attracting a crowd, but not giving one flying duck about it. “Zac raised me to heal and cast the killing curse in the same movement! To kill what I needed to eat, but always spare a few tears- and then I came here and- You’re all so backwards, you wizards! You think that blood will save you but then you’ll die out from inbreeding! You condone dark magics, but then forget that the killing curse was first used to put dying patients out of their misery!”

Abraxas gaped at him and he realized that he’d never said this much to the boy in one sitting.

Taking a long, shuddering breath, he called on that same steel backbone that had made him the youngest Head Auror in the history of the Ministry. “I’m doing this for my mother.”

And as he stalked away, he wondered what Lily Potter would think if she saw him now.
The whole school was on the Quidditch pitch.

It wasn’t every day that the Slytherin King was challenged by a second year Hufflepuff that was always seen as easy to make friend with ((and that half the school had a crush on)).

Though he was sure that his Hufflepuff side had scrambled away as soon as he’d put on these combat robes.

Thanks to Anne’s wonderful knowledge in sewing and fitting spells, his favorite auror's coat had been fitted to his small, baby-bird like stature (gods above he hated being a child so much) . There was a dark stain on his shoulder where he had gotten hit with a severing spell that had almost taken off his whole arm during a raid, and the bright red and gold had faded to a rusty brick color, but he loved the robes more than his ex-wife ( wayyyyy more ) to the extent that they were like a second skin to him.

He was ready for battle.

Casting a familiar spell to slick back his hair (it would only last about an hour before his hair would break it, but it was good for raids or dueling), he pushed a bit of his magic into his eyes to temporarily correct his vision, cursing not having gotten an eyesight potion when he was in Diagon. Carefully taking off his glasses, he set them to the side and moved to roll up his sleeves, ignoring the mess of scars standing out all along his golden tanned arms.

Piercing eyes watched him, bone white ash wand twirled though long fingers- Just like in the graveyard.

Harry tried to shake the voice away.

Are you ready? You could very well end this- end it now, kill him and it would all be over- you could have a life, a family, and never feel guilty again...

With a deep breath, Harry picked up his wand, sparing only a second of thought on that subject. No… He couldn’t- and yet- the lives that could be saved… Rubbing at the bridge of his nose, he stepped forward. “Riddle. I see you accepted my challenge.”

“As if I could ignore anything you asked of me.”

Startling a bit at the words, not to mention the glint in those deep brown eyes, he gripped tighter on his wand. Riddle was just trying to throw him off balance, make him lose his composure. “You-” He shook his head, clearing his throat.

He murdered your parents. Tried to take your godson and your best friends from you, even killed your godfather.

Right. That was why he was facing down Riddle in the middle of the- and what was the boy wearing? Painted on dragonhide pants? What the actual fuck? Why did this bloody fucking asshole have to look so damn good in black-

Focus, you fool! Merlin's beard!

Forcing himself to sneer, he dug his nails into his hand to focus himself. “Well then. Let’s negotiate. If I win- you give me one unbreakable vow of my choosing- to be set at another time… and what do you want if you win?”

Tom Riddle stared at him for a long moment. “Then it is only fair to ask you for the same if I win.”
Harry stared down the boy for a long moment. It was unlikely that he’d lose, but still, was he willing to comply to those terms? He was asking a lot for his win and it wouldn’t be a proper duel if the price wasn’t met.

 Damn all your honor- just kill him!

He nodded. “The terms are agreed upon then... Let the duel commence.”

Both raised their wands in front of their faces, bowing, and Harry felt the sting of a mild cutting curse slash at his arm. Blinking slowly, he only saw the intense gaze of those brown eyes get stronger as if the boy had guessed he’d let him draw first blood.

However, the next stunning spell sent his way he just batted to the side with his hand as he moved to stow his wand away in his arm holster.

No need to end this too soon.

Tom sneered, and then the battle really begun. Curse after curse flying his way, Harry moved, weaving through whatever he could, and blocking the rest before a particular purple spell caught his eyes.

Catching the spell and furrowing his eyebrows as he contained it within his hands, he ran a quick diagnostic charm, feeling his face turn red when he saw it was a disrobing spell. Pouring his own magic into it, he ignored how his shoulder was dislocated with a spell, and flung the new violet spell back at the boy like a frizbee.

Riddle was clearly not expecting that- a light violet light encased the boy- leaving him in loose pajamas with small rubber ducks on them.

Harry snickered, casting a protego to shield him from the boy’s rage while he let himself laugh, head thrown back and stomach aching. Catching his breath, he wiped at his eyes which were slightly wet, smiling brilliantly at the boy. “You look lovely darling!”

The boy seemed to falter for a second, before the scowl hardened, and with a burst of light Harry’s shield shattered. “Fight me for real, Malfoy!”

You heard him Malfoy… fight him for real, make him pay.

And suddenly, Harry froze. That voice in his head- the very same one that he’d heard when he wore Slytherin’s locket- he was a fool, an utter fool for not remembering the cunning and conniving voice sooner.

Merlin be damned, somehow he was a horcrux again.

I knew you were smart.

Showing a metaphorical gag on the horcrux and locking it the deepest parts of his mind, he looked at Riddle, standing in the middle of the field in silk pajamas with his hair all mussed up- looking the most human he’d ever seen the boy.

This was the boy he was here to save, not kill.

Deciding he was tired of playing defense and feeling a migraine coming on with how the horcrux was banging on his mind barriers, he ignored all the wounds and scrapes and blood that the boy had caused, closing his eyes and focusing on the earth beneath his feet.
This was Hogwarts.

His home, his sanctuary, and his best friend.

He would never fail on her grounds.

As two parts of a being- he and the golden magic pulsing excitedly in him- they reached out and the ground shook beneath Riddle’s feet. In an instant of the boy losing his balance, Harry apparated across the span of the field to sit lightly on the boy’s chest, wand pressed gently to the pale skin of his throat. “I think... I win.”

Those brown eyes were staring at him hungrily- but before the other boy could even open his mouth, Harry was being dragged up off the warm chest he’d been perched on and into equally warm arms, Cameron lifting him off the ground and spinning him around. “You’re amazing Pretty Boy!”

“That was BRILLIANT! You were like BAM! POW! Rubber ducks!” Gracie looked as if she was on the edge of hyperventilating.

His friends all chimed in, excitement taking over, and even Domonic moved to envelop him in a hug- but the wave of enthusiasm was broken when he hissed in pain.

Pomona narrowed her eyes. “Did you take those spells? Hadrian Malfoy I thought you were blocking all those spells- Don’t tell me you just LET THEM HIT YOU?!?”

Harry winced, shying back. There was Mamma Sprout, ready to fight someone for her friends. “I-... yeah I don’t really have an excuse, do I?…”

The girl was instantly by his side and he found his shirt practically being torn off, scowling but not bothering to protest. Then the hands froze, Pomona looking as if she’d seen the muggle version of a ghost.

Looking down at himself he saw the golden skin was marred with cuts, bruises, and what looked like a broken rib making the skin on his chest jut out weirdly. But he guessed that wasn’t the thing that was making the girl tear up.

You see- getting reborn as a kid was great and all (not)- but what if all the scars stayed?

All the severed limbs, open wounds, bullet holes, and curses… what if the marks from all your previous injuries remained no matter how much your body healed or turned back time?

“Malfoy I wanted to congratulate-” Riddle then was there, irritation in his eyes, but the boy froze and his face went cold at the sight that Harry made.

Moving quickly to wrap his shirt around him once more he smiled weakly. “I- uh- I can heal myself, I swear I'm fine, just- ah- yeah I think I'm gonna go take a bath.” Then before anyone could do a thing, he pulled on that familiar magic of Hogwarts, apparating to his rooms.

Grabbing his stuff, he quickly made his way to the prefect’s bath, cursing his fate.

Chapter End Notes

Okay. So the Horcrux will be explained in more detail next chap (and Riddle will have
a minor fit, but then again what's new?) :) Yes, all the scars Harry has stay with his body, no matter that he goes back to his seventeen-year-old body ((because I'm evil)). I need sleep... um- feel free to pose any questions or suggestions or just comment something nice ^-^ And do try to understand if I don't answer questions about upcoming plot, as I don't wanna spoil anything.

Cool. See you in three!
In Which Harry Takes A Bath With A Snake

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Meeting on the Quidditch field, Tom and Harry face off. With the thoughts in Harry's head growing more and more violent, he realizes that he has once more become a horcrux to the boy facing across from him. Pushing that revelation aside, the battle begins (with the price of winning a unbreakable vow to be asked at a later time) and Tom quickly finds out that Harry is both no stranger to pain and is more than an expert dueler.

After Harry wins via coordination with Hogwarts, he is pulled aside and the group of Hufflepuffs are outraged to find that he had not been blocking half of Tom's curses. Shirt ripped off so the damage can be assessed, it is seen by the small group (and Tom) that Harry has been collecting scars from every wound or life-ending encounter he has even been though.

Chapter Notes

A round of applause for my lovely co-writer and Tom Riddle expert @bellachrome, who makes me fall in love with this tormented, denial ridden character with ever scene she writes <3
((This chapter will include nudity but there is nothing of sexual nature about any of the actions either of the characters take))

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Static.

Tom’s mind was static.

This didn’t happen to him often. With a mind as intelligent and bright as his, usually he could process and understand information set before him with startling speed and clarity.

But when he couldn’t…

Well.

His ears were white noise, the rushing of howling wind- his sight was tinged oddly with the force of his rage- his hands trembled slightly as he pushed himself up off the ground.

Static.

He wasn’t upset that Hadrian had won the duel- of course not, how could he be, Hadrian was a work of art, a divine omen, a being from a higher plane sent to guide him, show him where he failed and where he must grow- the shine in Hadrian’s eyes when he fought, the way he moved, treating Tom’s attempts as if the two of them were playing some sort of game and not flinging dangerous curses at
each other*- he must have him - and strangely, for reasons even Tom could not yet pin, he wasn’t angry about the unbreakable vow that Hadrian had forced him to promise to swear.

Perhaps it was the soft look in the boy’s eyes just before he pounced like a lion to finish the fight, perhaps it was the way that Hadrian had found him and no one else to fall asleep on that fateful night, perhaps it was the way the child drew everyone too him with his magnetic pull, his easy smiles and cheerful presence and the safe blanket of his magic… but Tom could not conceive that Hadrian would use the vow to hurt him.

Oh, the fear was there, yes, of course it was, he knew nothing but fear - whispers through the noise and static- he will hurt you, he will bind you, you will be powerless, you will be less than nothing, you will return to the dirt you have tried so hard to rise from - but.

For once Tom let himself ignore it.

He had- other things to focus on-

Hadrian, precious child, what had they done to you?

Tom carded his hands ( still trembling why were they still trembling ) through his hair, sweeping it back, and perfunctorily dusted off his robes. He took out his wand, steadied himself, and cast several cleaning and healing charms. That would do until he could get back to the dorm.

His mind felt like storm clouds. Infuriating boy, putting him off balance like this.

Did Hadrian not know how to take care of himself? Did that vampire Lord (oh Tom would have words with that undead creature ) not know how to heal him? But most importantly: who had hurt him?

The static in his head took shape, his hearing and gaze clearing and his frame ceasing to tremble as his mind found the end of the tangled yarn it had followed and the storm clouds focused into a lightning point of purpose and rage.

*He would find whoever had hurt Hadrian and he would rip their throats out.*

Humming to himself, Harry moved a hand though the bubbles.

It almost reminded him of when he’d come home, blood-stained and weary, and Andromeda would put him on Teddy-duty. And with soap splashing all over him, a tiny blue-haired child trying to get him as wet and bubbly as possible, he would feel more human than he ever did during the Auror firefights.

Remembering the spell, he waved his hand, and the bubbles floated up to make a crown on his head. He giggled like a child. Maybe bubble baths did have some merit after all- Though Teddy would probably just roll his eyes now, having done something so awful as ‘grown up’.

*Yes, well, not all of us can be idiot children.*

Oh right... He knew he was forgetting something.
Harry sighed, forgetting his wonder at the bubbles in turn of leaning back and closing his eyes, delving into his mindscape.

~

He stood in the middle of the Hogwarts courtyard in his full Auror robes, his mind making him the age he preferred most, which made him look to be somewhere around 30.

In front of him was a young Tom Riddle, wearing plain Hogwarts robes, but the boy only gaped at him. “What- You’re not- Who are you?!”

“I’m Harry.” He offered no explanation, as the soul shard was the one to unknowingly and uninvitingly entered his mind.

The boy’s eyes narrowed. “No you’re not. Harry’s a child. Only twelve at maximum.”

He hummed. “Thirteen actually, Dippit placed me in second year because he doubted my education- but yes- My body is that of a thirteen year old. It’s actually quite annoying, can you imagine? It’s all awkward and going through puberty is going to be-”

“How?” The boy looked ready to curse him (and probably would have, if he had a wand). “How is this possible?”

Harry tilted his head. “I’m the Master of Death, so I can’t die. I took a potion to come back and save you from creating too many horcruxes and going insane-... well- from that and Dumbledore’s meddling. Old coot.”

Tom Riddle’s soul shard (that was a long name- he’d call him Riddle version 2 or something), gaped at him. “You- you mastered Death? How?”

“Jeez, do you know any other question?” He muttered, before rubbing the back of his neck. “Well I guess it had something to do with collecting the Deathly Hallows, but dying and coming back seemed to make it worse so… I don’t actually know.”

Again Riddle v.2 gaped at him.

He fidgeted slightly, not liking that awed gaze from the horcrux. “Anyway- you never told me how you got here- in my mind, that is.”

Blinking, the boy looked at him for a long moment before shrugging in such a graceful pureblood-esque manor it made him want to cry. “I sensed another host that I could transfer to and, well, here I am.”

“That shouldn’t be possible.”

The boy sneered at him. “You shouldn’t be possible, yet here you are.”

He sneered back. “How did you feel that I would be… compatible or whatever?”

At this Riddle v.2 seemed to pause, as if actually thinking about it. “Something… about your magic. It seemed to call to me, so when it brushed up against me, I latched on.”

Harry groaned. “Of course this all has to do with me letting out my magic to heal Nott... Of course that’s what started this mess.” He took a deep breath, before sighing. “Well, whatever. I’m guessing that I can’t exactly get rid of you if you don’t want to go, plus you’ll be gone when I inevitably die
next, so feel free to do whatever you want.” With a wave of his hand the parts of his mind he had shut off when he had locked down on the horcrux opened.

“...Thank you.”

He paused, looking back at the boy, who looked pained at even having to say those words. “Sure. Just try to be a little nicer about the memories you drag up, okay?”

~

When he blinked next, he was in the hot water of the Prefects Bath again.

Shaking his head, he went back to humming and making the multicolored bubbles into little animals that would float around in the air, glad that he’d healed himself and remembered to wash off the blood before he got in.

Blood and bubbles didn’t mix very well.

Tom stalked down the halls, his focused stride and notable presence clearing his way for him. The students moved out of his way as he walked, as they should; he was more powerful, more intelligent, and more determined than the plebeians that surrounded him.

He needed a place to relax, to unwind, to process what he had just seen; his mind shuffled, rearranged, gears clicking and turning, data shuffling and refiling and reorganizing itself to accommodate the recent events and the shift in his worldview.

*Hadrian was his.*

In hindsight, Tom thought he should have realized sooner his possessiveness over the green-eyed child extended far beyond that of a predator faced with new and curious prey. Hadn’t he been obsessed with the boy since Hadrian fell into his arms for their first meeting?

Tom pressed his lips together, stifling a sigh. He needed someplace where he could relax, and think, away from the crowds of Hogwarts students who... *graced* the castle with their presence. He needed to clean himself off after the duel, change his robes, make himself perfectly presentable again, as he should be.

He needed a bath.

Mind made up, Tom headed for the prefect baths. Muscle memory guided him through familiar halls to the correct set of doors. He pushed them open- and stopped.

*Hadrian.*

The boy startled at the sound of doors opening, whirling around in the bath, his eyes widening in surprise. Tom stared at Hadrian, unclothed and waist-deep in the water, scars wrapped around his slight frame, bubbles surrounding his head like a crown. Around him, various bubble animals floated, and Tom’s breath caught in his chest at Hadrian’s display of wandless magic. Childish, yes, but *stunning* nonetheless.
And the tinge of Hadrian’s magic in the air-

Tom stepped into the prefect baths and closed the door behind him.

Hadrian held out one of his hands immediately in warning. “Stay back,” he demanded, lifting his chin and his eyes flashing in challenge.

Tom held out both his hands, palms up. “I’m not here to hurt you.”

Hadrian hesitated, unsure. “How do I know that? You seemed fairly okay with hurting me earlier…”

A smile tugged at Tom’s face, and he just knew he had failed at repressing it. “If I recall, you were the one who challenged me to a duel, Malfoy.”

This boy, so infuriating- and yet strangely, infuriated was the farthest thing from what he felt right now.

Hadrian- Harry- tilted his head as if considering something, before the honey-colored skin glimmered, the scars disappearing. “I hope you like bubbles.” The boy turned, edging farther away and his small hands scooped up a handful of the multicolored bubbles, blowing on them gently. Wiggling like a baby animal learning to move, a small dog formed, prancing through the air to join the rabbit, dragon, lion, and otter that were already moving around in the air.

As if he had a choice as to whether or not the bubbles stayed. His lack of choice in the matter had everything to do with his wanting Hadrian to be more comfortable around him and absolutely nothing to do with how the boy looked surrounded by the products of his magic.

Tom smirked, swiftly pulling off his outer cloak. He saw where Hadrian put his clothes and finished disrobing, folding his own garments and placing them by Hardian’s. Then, he slipped into the baths himself.

Hadrian watched him warily.

Tom looked over him again, the intensity of his stare sharpening as he observed the flawlessness of Hadrian’s glamor. “Did you go to the hospital wing before coming here, at least?” he asked quietly. “You should get some sort of help for your wounds- I didn’t exactly go easy on you during the duel.”

“Oh- I… I find it’s easier if I just heal myself. Less questions and all…” Green eyes darted to him and then away quickly.

“You heal yourself?” Amazing. Tom bit his lower lip lightly in a show of deliberation. “Are you sure you don’t need any help?” He held his palms up placatingly. “I don’t want… well.” His acting fizzled out as he glanced to the side uncomfortably. “That is, I didn’t want to duel you in the first place, and I would hate there to be... lasting effects.”

With a smile that would have blinded most, the boy just shook his head slightly. “I’ll be good as new with a few hours sleep. I tend to heal better than most.” There was something funny to the boy in his own words, but as an inside joke it passed over Tom’s head.

And yet his scars- his scars- Hadrian, sweet child, how badly did they hurt you?

Tom decided he had another dimension to add to the word infuriating.

He watched the boy shape another animal from the multicolored bubbles surrounding him with keen
interest. Such power in such a small frame. Such grace in such a young person. Hadrian caught Tom
looking at him, and tilted his head at Tom in a silent question.

His eyes were the color of sunlight shining through forest leaves.

Tom looked away.

His questions, though many, could wait.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is mostly Bells' brainchild and as such, all praise and adoration should
rightfully be dedicated to her (^.^)
As always any questions, comments (see ^^this^^ for reference), or long laments of
deep appreciation for Bells' writing are appreciated.
See you in three!
In Which Harry Unknowingly Starts Rumors

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Tom is very not pleased by Harry's scars, and after a conversation in Harry's mindscape that revealed the former ring horcrux had latched onto his magic when he had healed Nott, the two meet in the Perfects baths by accident and end up sitting in silence while surrounded by magical bubbles.

Chapter Notes

Thanks @bellachrome for putting up with my whirlwind plot happenings and cracky moments ^_^
(While this chapter might contain nudity, the behavior or actions the characters display are not sexually motivated.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There was something almost easy about the silence.

Gods know he should be freaking out- and he had at first- being this close to the person that had effectively ruined his last life. And yet… even under the piercing gaze, he felt nothing but the warmth of the water and the nostalgia that came with seeing the small animals that he used to make for his friend’s kids (and by part, his kids- he had mostly raised them after all).

“I wonder what it would be like to live a boring life.” He sunk into the water until it was touching his chin, glancing over at the other boy for a second and shaking his head. “Not that I mind the craziness that seems to follow me, but… maybe it would be nice to live in a house, alone, and not have to deal with other people.”

Tom hummed quietly in response. One of the bubble animals had taken to running around him in circles, and the boy twisted as if trying to follow it. “I think…” He shot a glance at Harry, and his eyes glinted with quiet amusement. “I think you would like it for about a week. And then you would get terribly bored.”

Yes, that would be what Teddy always told you when you whined about going into the woods and surviving off mushrooms, wasn’t it?

Harry felt his lips twitch at the memory the horcrux had mentioned, bringing a soapy hand up to ran through his hair, disturbing his bubble-crown. What a weird life when two versions of Tom Riddle were both talking to him without casting a crucio first. Given, one was in his head, but still… “Maybe.”

Then he was sinking in the water, eyes closed and breath contained, the warm water enveloping him like one of Hermione’s warm hugs.
He just existed here. At peace with the silence.

Oh how Marian and Silas Malfoy had pitched a right fit when they’d first found him at the bottom of the pool, motionless and deep in thought, and they didn’t even let up on him when he merely told them that there was no way he could drown if he didn’t breath the water in.

He’d tested it before in the Black Lake, even devoting a few days to learning the basics of Mermish.

But before he could really get to that place of true focus and relaxation, strong hands were dragging him out of the water. “What do you think you’re doing!”

Blinking wetly up at the boy (that he had honestly forgot about for a second), he hummed. “Right. Forgot that you’re opposed to me dying... It’s definitely a new thing.”

Tom stared at him, and Harry couldn’t decipher the emotion in his eyes. With a soft and somewhat pained sound, the boy gently pushed him toward the bench. “What were you going to do, drown yourself in the prefect’s baths?” Noting Tom’s insistent gaze, Harry sat down. Tom relaxed slightly and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Merlin.”

Harry honestly hadn’t been planning anything of the sort. He’d gone under to get his hair wet and then- well he’d gotten distracted- sue him. “I- uh- I won’t drown that easy…” Offering up a slight smile, he tilted his head. “It’s part of the whole ‘healing quickly’ thing.”

“And please, enlighten me- how exactly do you know that?”

Oh- that probably wasn’t the best question that he could have been asked… scrunching up his nose, he decided to just go with the truth. “Well... long story short, I- uh- decided to try to drown myself in a lake when I was a... kid.”

“You are a kid.”

Harry scowled at the reminder, the horcrux laughing at him in the background of his brain. “Well yes, but, I mean when I was more of a kid. Anyway- to get to the point- instead of drowning I learned to speak Mermish.”

Maroon eyes stared at him.

Trying not to fidget, he nodded, feeling as if this was the appropriate time to maybe leave as he’d said more to this young version of the Dark Lord than he’d even spoken to Voldyshorts in all of the many years the man had been trying to kill him. “Right. Well I have double potions in less than an hour so...”

The other’s gaze didn’t waver.

Huffing at feeling embarrassed about being naked, even after living with Draco (who would randomly interrupt his baths to ask him questions), he wandlessly summoned his towel and climbed out of the bath. Removing the glamour so he would dry quicker, he wrapped himself in the fuzzy towel and padded over to where the pile of clothes were.

Knowing he’d already sent his glasses, bag, and the Elder Wand up to his room with a house elf, he squinted at the pile of clothes that were slightly a blur in the dim light.

Muttering a few curse words under his breath, he quickly pulled on his pants and trousers, a shirt that looked right, and the smaller of the two robes. Using the towel to dry his hair messily, he tucked his wand behind his ear and moved out of the room, fastening the small silver buttons as he went. “See
you around Riddle."

Before the boy could answer, he was out of the room, hands relaxed in his robes as he walked to his dorm to get his bag and glasses.

Chapter End Notes

Harry: *in the bath humming*
Draco: *crashes though door* Hey are we- stop screaming it's just me- Are we out of ice cream? Hermione's at the store and was wondering if we needed more.
~
^.^ This whole chapter is a Big Mood and I love it. Extra thanks to @bellachrome <3 Please understand if I don't get around to answering all your comments- but please feel free to comment anyway because when I do see them they make my day!
See you in three!
In Which Harry Is Oblivious (More Than Usual)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Ending our bath scene, Harry and Tom and Riddle v.2 all had a very deep conversation on Harry's inability to stay out of trouble— which then had the mood ruined by Harry deciding to try to sit under the water (not drowning) and Tom fishing him out exasperatedly. Deciding he'd caused enough trouble, Harry then picked up some clothes from the pile the two had made and exited stage left :)

Chapter Notes

All the love to @bellachrome for the Tom scenes! I personally love them and hope all of you do too!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tom stayed in the prefect baths for… longer than he would like to admit.

It was hard to leave, what with the impressions of Hadrian still left in the room— wisps of his magic in the air, the remaining bubbles still swirling around him, traces of his scent in the air. It was hard to leave, when Tom had so much to think about— so much about Hadrian to unravel, spread out across the chalkboards of his mind, and attempt to piece back together in some semblance of an understandable history. Every time Tom thought he knew something about Hadrian, the infuriating boy provided him with more information, and he had to undo all his previous ideas to fit the new data in.

Tom wanted to figure Hadrian out, to grasp how he worked, to know what made him tick and how to take him apart.

But, well, he needed more time to do that than what he could get in the prefect baths. So finally, after what may have been too long soaking in the water and letting Hadrian’s bubbles slowly dissolve around him, Tom finished bathing and pulled himself from the water, walking over to his clothes. He knew his clothes wouldn’t be fit for another wear, after the duel he had, so he needed to- wait.

That wasn’t his shirt.

Tom picked up the offending item, turning it over and inspecting it. Bringing the cloth up to his nose, he inhaled— and oh. Oh .

It was Hadrian’s.

Tom lowered his hands and stared at the shirt.

He knew if he kept it he would be moving almost entirely into creepy territory, which is not how he wanted to come across to the boy. But on the other hand...
He brought it up to his nose again. Sunlight, earth, laughter, magic, and something uniquely Hadrian that reminded him of a lightning storm. Truth be told, it smelled amazing. Just like the boy himself, he supposed.

It wasn’t as if Tom didn’t have an excuse for keeping Hadrian’s shirt, per se; Hadrian had taken Tom’s shirt first. And… all excuses and reasoning aside, he wanted to keep the shirt.

Tom had never been one for denying himself what he wanted.

Mind made up, Tom folded the shirt again swiftly, then called a house elf to bring him a change of clothes.

Making his way to double potions, bag slung over his shoulder and hair still damp, Harry smiled at a few Ravenclaws in the hall only to get wide eyes in return.

Strange.

Yes, well, you are a strange child.

Harry sent a mental prod at Riddle v.2 and snickered slightly when the horcrux hissed out a few rather explicit curses in parseltongue. Focusing back just as he opened the door to the potions classroom, he smiled at Slughorn, moving to sit by Stephan who he had been helping scrape by with an okay grade in the class.

The boy’s eyebrows wiggled at him. “Had some fun with the snakes?”

He laughed slightly. “What, other than kicking the King’s butt? Nah- I went to take a hot bath.”

“Whatever you say Pretty Boy.” Stephan shook his head and briefly Harry was wondering if he was missing something, but he brushed it aside in order to correct the boy’s disastrous attempt at collecting flobberworm mucus.

After his body felt once again dirtied by the stench of potions and the grime that he swore a normal scourgify would not take care of, he rolled up the sleeves of his robe and dipped out of the classroom before the potions professor could catch him to try to kiss ass.

Yawning lightly as he plopped down on the bench next to where Grace was already sitting, he leaned on her heavily, putting his arms around her and laying his head on her shoulder. “Save me Gracie… Slughorn is always trying to kiss my ass.”

The girl choked on her drink, sputtering. “He what?”

“He’s always trying to get me to join his little merry band of sycophants, go to his stupid parties while he regales them with tales of his famous friends.” Groaning he pretended to swoon on Dominic. “He’s always like: What marvelous green eyes you have Hadrian, are those from your mother? I bet she was an excellent witch- and most talented if what I hear of your achievements is to be true… I hear that you spend time with Professor Dalton, would you consider extra lessons with me sometime?’ It’s all I can take to not scream sometimes.”

Lucy and Cameron were in fits across the table at his over-dramatized rendition of Slughorn-on-ice
and he grinned widely.

“And would that interfere with our lessons?” Professor Dalton smiled down at where he was still laying dramatically over the larger boy.

Feeling his face heat up at the man seeing him acting like the age he was currently in the body of, he sat up and straightened his robes, smiling sheepishly. “No sir- I wouldn’t miss your laughter when I set fire to the books in your classroom for the world.”

The professor grinned, moving to ruffle his fluffy hair. “Brat.”

And- Oh.

That was who the professor reminded him of. Remus fucking Lupin. His favorite defense teacher since fake-Moody had turned out to be a murderous bag of crazy (Barty had lost some serious points for trying to kill him).

“How?”

He hummed, still looking at the professor’s back in what he was sure was a mix between pain, awe, and fondness.

Pomona cleared her throat. “You done staring at Professor Dalton?”

Harry’s head snapped to the girl. “I wasn’t-” But something like that was a denial that no one would ever take seriously, so he just sighed. “Yeah.”

“Then can you pass the bread?” The girl smiled sweetly, earning her a similar smile back.

_Hufflepuffs. Disgustingly nice._

He gave Riddle v.2 a mental middle finger.

Harry was falling asleep on Dominic when someone cleared their throat. Startling, he had his wand out before anyone could move, back rigid.

The girl in front of him, two boys at her sides, stared at him. “Mr. Malfoy, I mean no harm…”

Blinking, he grimaced, stashing his wand away quickly and giving the girl a hesitant smile. “Sorry Heiress Fawley. It’s… a reflex.”

The girl that would later become the woman he’d known as Augusta Longbottom didn’t outwardly show any sign of surprise other than the slight widening of her eyes. “It’s no issue. I was the one who woke you from your… nap.” The girl smiled friendly. “Please call me Augusta, and these are my friends, Heir Potter and Heir Weasley.”

Harry’s eyes were on Charlus Potter, his grandfather, and for a second he felt tears in his eyes before he cleared his throat and blinked them away, smiling at the two. “Call me Harry. All my friends, enemies, and lovers do.” The joke that usually earned him a laugh at ministry functions fell flat here and he felt himself turn a bright red.

What is it with you and blushing like some damsel in distress?

Coughing, he extended his hand. “Sorry, sometimes I tend not to think before I speak.”
A redheaded boy grinned at him, shaking his hand. “No worries Harry. I’m Septimus, but call me Sep.”

“Charlie.” The man (HIS GRANDFATHER) extended his hand and he shook hit with a wide smile.

Augusta leaned in, her piercing grey eyes the same as the old woman that had rivaled Narcissa in mothering him after the war. “So Harry… what are you planning?”

He was sure that he looked as confused as he felt. “Um... planning?”

“One does not challenge Tom Riddle to a duel without reason- those names you mentioned aside- so what are you planning? A coup of the throne? A hostile takeover?”

The glint in the woman’s eyes just reminded him of why Monopoly was banned in the Malfoy Manor. He swallowed thickly. There were only a few things he was afraid of and Augusta Longbottom was practically the entirety of that list. “I- uh- just really wanted to punch his face… but y’know, wizards don’t do as much hand-to-hand combat as the Vampires so I decided to challenge him to a duel instead?”

The girl looked at his eyes as if she could try to suss out if he was telling the truth though his occlumency barriers before nodding and standing back up straight. Then an amused smile broke her face. “Well we’re always here if you’re plotting any type of revolution to overthrow Riddle.” With a wink, she and the two boys made their way back to the Gryffindor table they’d come from.

Harry looked to Dominic with wide eyes. “Do you know what just happened?”

The boy grinned, all teeth and hidden Slytherin viciousness. “You, Pretty Boy, just became the hero to every person in Hogwarts that has anything against Riddle... So about 40% of the castle.”

Nodding slowly, he decided that it would take longer than a meal to comprehend that, shaking his head and turning back to his food.

He needed more coffee.

Chapter End Notes

Harry: *gets up to interact with a boggart*  
Boggart: *transforms into Augusta Longbottom*  
Other Students: Oh I get it... he's afraid of getting old *pretends to comprehend something*  
Harry: *having flashbacks of Monopoly*  
Sure.... That's definitely what I'm afraid of....

~

10/10 love a good oblivious Harry.... He probably even took off the shirt later that night and was like 'oooh I like this color green, I should keep this' *insert oblivious smile here*  
Riddle v.2 is just inside his head banging his head on a bookshelf...

~

It's good. It's fine. I just have way too many feelings about these idiots :) Feel free to add on your additionally loving, frustrated, or exasperated feelings in the comments!  
See you in three!
In Which Harry Adds Fuel To The Fire

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Tom indulged his obsession with Harry by both basking in the products of his magic and by taking the shirt the boy had left behind—something that Harry didn’t realize he’d done. Meanwhile, Harry was becoming the subject of increasing rumors and trying to accept the fact he saw too much of his mentor-figure (Remus Lupin) in Professor Chandler Dalton's personality. After being propositioned to move against Riddle by the girl who Harry knew as Augusta Longbottom and her allies, Harry was left in stunned contemplation.

Chapter Notes

We stan @bellachrome in this house- for not only being the amazing Skeleton Queen, but for being my crack sounding board, Tom's executive wrangler, and having gotten really good at making me write ^-^ <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He had noticed the Slytherins were acting weird around him, but they were just mostly staying out of his way so he didn’t mind much—though he still saw a few of the boys that had attacked him earlier glaring at him—and he didn’t expect there to be another attempt on Professor Dalton.

He knew what they said about stupid snakes not learning new spells (or something like that) but seriously? They had to pull this shit when his body had been dumb enough to get sick?

~

Harry sneezed, his focus breaking, and the padlock that he had been trying to cast his Alohomora spell on shattered to pieces.

“Well…” Dalton moved to his side, smiling in amusement. “It would have unlocked the door…?”

He sneezed again, groaning when a book to the side of him bust into flames, shoving his stubborn Holly wand into the other man’s hands. “Take it. It’s being unusually good at channeling my magic, but only when I sneeze.”

The man looked a bit surprised—Wizards usually were very protective over their wands—but chuckled and slipped in carefully into his own wrist holder. “It seems that lessons are on hold until you stop sneezing then. Anything you want to do?”

“Dunno.” Rubbing at his nose with the sleeves of the robe he’d stolen from Cameron (it was just the right amount of big on him to be cozy and warm), he moved to curl up in a chair. “Any’thing fun?”

The professor seemed to brighten. “I have a game! I used to play it with my brother’s kids when they
were little.” Waving his own wand at a few quills the man had on his table, he started to stack the blocks on top of each other in a way that was vaguely familiar to Harry. “You have to pull the block out of the tower without knocking it down- because if you do it has some harmless but funny side effect- like turning your hair green!”

Smiling, because this was the type of thing the Weasley twins would have loved, he moved to pull out the first block. Finding a loose one, he started to pull it out when a sneeze jolted him just enough to knock over the whole tower.

Rubbing at his nose, eyes still closed, he whined lowly in contempt for the sickness infecting this stupidly small body.

Dalton snickered quietly. “Y- You should- should go to the Infirmary.”

Moving to look up, he saw nothing but an inky mess. His hair. It was covering his face. Hands coming up, he pushed his hair out of his face, feeling his eyes widen when he could SEE THE ENDS TOUCHING HIS SHOULDERS.

The professor laughed harder.

“What-” He looked at the wavy hair hanging from his hands. “Why…”

Finally getting over his fit of giggles, the professor stood, moving around his desk. “Must- must’ve cursed your hair to grow out. Want some help tying it back?”

He glared up at where the man was grinning. “Can’t we just cut it?”

“Nope! The curse’ll stay for at least a few days- plus, you look good with long hair! You should keep it!” Chuckling, the man waved his wand and the long hair gently moved from Harry’s hands, weaving itself back into a braid.

Huffing, he eyed the makeshift jenga blocks. “I think we may have to take a raincheck on-” He paused, frowning at the prod of Hogwarts’s magic and moving to shove the professor behind him, calling his wand out of the man’s holster and pointing it at the doorway of the classroom. “Come out where I can see you!”

There was a moment of silence before two familiar Slytherin boys moved into the classroom with an air of confidence and smugness. “Oh, so now the Professor’s getting girls to protect him?”

Bristling at the insult to women (growing up around strong powerful witches had squashed any type of doubt that women were anything but badass before it had ever existed), he narrowed his eyes at the boys. “I thought you two would remember the mudblood that beat your ‘King’ in a duel, but I guess not.”

Very nice. Now curse them until you draw blood- that tends to remind people who is more powerful.

He ignored Riddle v.2’s violent suggestions.

Both boys paused, looking at him closer. “Malfoy?”

“Dimwits?” Harry gave his best Draco Malfoy-approved sneer as he mocked the boys back.

That seemed to push both boys over the edge, raising their wands at him. Macnair scowled. “With how you embarrassed him, I’m sure Riddle won’t mind if you’re caught in the crossfire.”
Before either boy could do a thing or throw a spell, a stern-looking Professor Dumbledore walked in. “And what is going on here?”

“Malfoy drew his wand on us!” Travers blurted out.

Dumbledore was almost looking excited by this prospect at being able to punish him, when Dalton stepped forward. “Actually Albus, Mr. Malfoy was confronting these two in their plot to curse me... If needed, I can provide memories?”

_I like this pet teacher of yours more and more every day._

The transfiguration professor frowned slightly. “A weeks detention and twenty points from each of you.” Blue eyes gazed at Dalton disapprovingly. “And Mr.Malfoy’s detention will not be served with you, Chanler. Teachers need to be _above_ favoritism.”

“I will take ze detension, Albus.” And like magic, Moorvitch ambled in with a wide smile. “I am always ‘appy to spend time vith ‘Arry.”

With a noticeable clench of his jaw, the Dumbledore turned on the other two students. “You will be helping clean up after the Magical Creatures with Professor Kettleburn! Now go to class!”

Both boys scrambled out, Dumbledore giving the three of them a stiff nod before stalking out.

“Thank you Stella.” Dalton smiled at the older witch. “Albus seems to have some strange animosity for Hadrian and I would hate to see what he would have done if you had not stepped in.”

The eccentric Russian woman smiled, putting a hand on Harry’s shoulder and he had the strongest feeling of two parents talking right over the head of their kid. “It’s no problem.”

Clearing his throat, he ducked away from the hand and the two adults, sending a cheeky grin to both. “Yes, well, thank you both but I have to get to lunch.”

He quickly made his way out.

Sneezing, his hair came loose from it’s magically-tied braid, falling around his ducked head. Muttering a few curses, he tossed the hair over his shoulder, accidentally rounding a corner and crashing into someone.

Falling on his ass, he hissed slightly and glared up at where a certain prefect was looking bored. “You should watch where-”

“What in Merlin’s name do you have with knocking me down?” Ignoring the way startled maroon eyes widened, he picked himself up. “I thought we had made some real progress after the duel Riddle, but from the way that all your snakes seem to be out for my blood _yet again_ - maybe not.”

Riddle’s eyes narrowed. “What happened?”

Scoffing, he brushed past the boy. “Just know next time I’ll hex them, whether Dumbledore’s there to be a meddling old _coot_ or not.”

Stalking to the Hufflepuff table, he ignored the stairs, sitting down with a huff next to Lucy. “Lulu?” His voice was almost begging, puppy dog eyes out in full effect. “Can you help me with my hair? It’s cursed to be long for a few days thanks to Dalton.”
“Professor Dalton?” Stephen leaned in, eyes lighting up at the gossip.

Lucy smiled moving behind him and starting to put his hair up. “You look so pretty like this Harry! And it’s so soft! Gracie feel his hair!” Grace and Pomona moved to run their hands over his hair, the boys joining in until he felt more like a puppy than a kid.

“It’s so fluffy!”

Cameron poked his cheek. “You look like a pretty girl now! We’ll have to change your nickname!~”

He pouted, crossing his arms and feeling like the kid that his body was aged to. “Great.”

“Malfoy?”

He tilted his head back slightly, looking at where one of the Hufflepuff Prefects had stopped, the boy’s eyes wide. Blinking, he worried at his lip- hopefully this wasn’t about losing the house points… “Something wrong Walker?”

Seeming to startle at the fact Harry knew his name, the boy seemed to flush (maybe it was hot in here- Harry wouldn’t be surprised with how sick he was). “Most people just call me Christopher, but please, it’s Chris.”

Harry smiled at the boy, turning a bit more now that Lucy had finished and tied his hair off. Holding out his hand, he looked up at the boy. “Hadrian- but um- everyone just calls me Harry.”

The larger hand shook his hand (the muggle way - Riddle v.2 hissed), the prefect smiling down at him. “Nice to meet you Harry.”

“You too Chris!” Harry turned back to his friends when the boy walked down to his normal group of friends, smile faltering slightly at their faces. “W-what?”

Stephan leaned in. “So… the Prefect now? What happened to the Slytherin?”

“What Slytherin?” He tilted his head.

The boy raised an eyebrow. “The one who you took a bath with the other day.”

Harry blinked. “Riddle?” Then at the shocked faces he raised an eyebrow. “What- you’re surprised that it was Riddle and not that I knew how to get into the prefects baths?”

The group gaped at him more (if possible).

“Oh. You didn’t know that either… did you?” He frowned. “Wait- then how’d you know I was bathing with a Slytherin?”

“You were wearing a Slytherin shirt the whole day after the duel!” Lucy hissed. “You mean to tell me you took a bath with Riddle?”

Brushing a stray lock of hair behind his ear, he smiled thinly. “Yes?”

The group stared at him for a long moment, before seeming to (reluctantly) accept this. Stephen let out a low whistle, but just moved to look at his plate with a head shake.

Harry blinked. Had he missed something?

Yes. You missed almost everything, you clueless moron.
He mentally pinched the horcrux.

*Bloody infuriating brat.*

Chapter End Notes

Harry: *trying to figure out what to do with waist-length hair*
Harry: Help... downing... in hair...
Lucy: *grins and starts to do his hair*
*there is a amused silence as Harry comes out of this with little pointy buns like cat ears keeping the hair out of his face*
Tom: *across the hall choking on his food*
Harry: Cute. I should have grown out my hair earlier... but I don't think my wife would have let me.
Tom: *getting ready to kill someone*
Harry: *laughs humorlessly* Kidding.
(He wasn't kidding.)

~

Because of reasons, Harry from now on will have long hair (in case your mental image needed updating). Fight me.
Always lovely to ready all your musings about the story ^_^
See you in three!
In Which Tom Wishes People Weren't So Stupid

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry gets sick and because of his magically destructive sneezes he and Dalton decide to take a break from their lessons for the moment. After a failed attempt to play Jenga that resulted in making his hair grow out, two of the three boys that had attacked him earlier chose that moment to try to curse Dalton. Before a single curse could be cast, Dumbledore enters stage left and tries to blame Harry- Luckily because of Dalton's word, the two other boys get the brunt of the punishment and Moorvitch steps in in time to take Harry's detention.

With an offhand comment to Riddle in the hall about how the 'snakes seem to be out for my blood yet again', Harry fuels the rumors by confirming obliviously that the person he was bathing with was indeed a Slytherin- the King.

Chapter Notes

WHOOO TOM SCENES! MASSIVE KUDOS TO @bellachrome!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tom sunk lower into the prefect baths with an irritated huff.

Infuriating boy, leaving his imprint everywhere- he couldn’t even bathe without thinking of Hadrian, now, remembering how the boy looked in the water, surrounded by bubbles, drenched and- and-infuriating.

Tom decided he didn’t want to think about what other word he could have used to end that sentence.

He let out a low groan of annoyance as his train of thought reminded him of earlier today, when he ran into Hadrian- literally - again. And to his surprise, the child had his hair long.

He thanked magic no one had caught him staring after Hadrian as the boy brushed by him. That would be nigh impossible to live down. Usually he was in more control of himself- more in charge, more disciplined- but Hadrian, the fascinating, infuriating boy, existed to test him, try him, make him impulsive and emotional and disgustingly human.

And yet strangely he found he could not mind it.

How Hadrian looked with his hair long, hair tumbling over his shoulders like spilled ink running off a table’s edge, eyes flashing with annoyance, and then twirling away from him with his hair fanning out behind him like some kind of film star ... It wasn’t fascinating in the slightest, definitely not- it was completely and utterly infuriating.

How dare Hadrian be so beautiful as to drive him to distraction?
With another huff of annoyance, Tom climbed out of the baths and picked up his towel. He’d spent enough time ruminating over Hadrian and how the boy was both irritating and captivating in turns.

Though he did have to… discuss Hadrian with his snakes. The boy’s parting shot when they had run into each other earlier had left him uneasy. He didn’t like the insinuation that something was going on in his house behind his back, and, though Hadrian was utterly infuriating... he liked the idea of that something being detrimental to Hadrian even less.

Tom decided he didn’t want to think about why he didn’t like that idea, either. After all... he had a house to check up on.

“How many times must I repeat myself to you incompetent dimwits?”

Tom sat upright in his chair, the throne he had made for himself, yet still exuding the confident grace that kept him separate from the inane masses of students in this backwards school. Around the room, pale green orbs of light that he himself had cast hovered imposingly, casting the common room in shades even more eerie than usual, held up by his magical power, which filled the room oppressively. All- yes, all of his snakes gathered around him, the youngest to the oldest, and they all smelled of fear, fear for him, king of the snakes and most powerful of predators.

And he revelled in it.

“Well then.” He lifted his chin in haughty demand. “Macnair, Travers, Nott.”

Nott was the first to step forward, his steps sure but slow, and the other two boys followed him, looking decidedly more guilty.

A small, disdainful snarl curled Tom’s lip. Of course they were. “Well then.” He looked back out at his subjects, assembled before him, hanging onto his every word. “Macnair, Travers, Nott.” He lifted his chin in haughty demand. “Come forward.”

Nott was the first to step forward, his steps sure but slow, and the other two boys followed him, looking decidedly more guilty.

Reaching him, the first of the three buffoons, Nott, bowed slightly in respect. “My Lord... I have not had contact with the youngest Malfoy since he healed me.”
“Look at me when you address me,” Tom snapped. “Do you have no spine?”

Really, it was so that he could skim the boy’s surface thoughts and emotions better. Nott looked at him, and a quick assessment showed Tom plainly that the imbecile, though much beneath him in intelligence level, was telling the truth.

Tom inclined his head slightly to the younger boy. “Very well, Nott. I hear no lie in your words. You may go.” He turned to the other two useless piles of flesh and bone before him. “Well, Macnair, Travers? What have you to say for yourselves?”

Looking as if they would soil themselves, the two looked at each other before looking at the floor-dumber than he had previously assessed if they thought doing so would let them get away with lying to him- Macnair muttering out a shaky, “My King, with how the boy embarrassed you in the duel… Well we thought that you wouldn’t be protecting him still…”

Tom stared at the two, truly and utterly baffled. Imbeciles. He was surrounded by imbeciles. He wished to Merlin he could sit next to Hadrian and listen to him expound on magical theory for an hour. Maybe that would cure his sudden, crippling headache.

“You are telling me that, despite all previous behaviors and habits of mine demonstrating the contrary, you two think I am the type to give up on a course of action I have decided on because of a minor setback?” Tom asked. “Or perhaps you are also telling me that you two think I am incapable of defending myself and extracting my own retribution, in my own time?”

Both dimwits had gone pale as ghosts, as if realizing their words. Travers floundered. “He- he put you in muggle pajamas!”

“Yes, and it was a stunning move of power and precision… unless you did not realize the magical aptitude such a move requires, or the amount of mental skill and tactical brilliance of making such of move instead of, say, throwing a hurtful hex or curse?”

The boys shuffled their feet awkwardly.

Tom closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose in despair. “I cannot believe there are members of my house with such low intelligence. How you two got into Slytherin instead of Gryffindor is beyond me.”

“We- we were only trying to get to Dalton! He was in the way!”

“Then you should have waited for another chance to strike!” Tom snapped, absolutely done with their inbred limited mental capacity. “How is it that two pureblood snakes have forgotten every value the Slytherin house holds dear? Cleverness! Cunning! Resourcefulness! Subtlety!” He swept his hand out in a passionate gesture. “These are the traits that make us great. And the two of you left behind all of them in your blundering attempt to get revenge on an underdeveloped second year.”

The two boys cringed in the face of Tom’s fury, but it only incensed him more.

“Starting now, the two of you will be at the bottom of the Slytherin house hierarchy, below even the first years. Any Slytherin is allowed to practice hexes and spells on you, with or without your knowledge. Any Slytherin is allowed to demand you to fetch something or do something for them, regardless of their year, gender, or blood status. And any Slytherin is allowed to punish you as they see fit if you step out of line and disgrace our house again.” Tom stared down at the two, the finality of his decree showing in his marble gaze. “This will continue until you have learned your lessons and will once more behave in a manner befitting and upholding the Slytherin legacy.”
Macnair and Travers bowed their heads in assent, paler than parchment and shaking like leaves in the wind, but somehow—miraculously, given their limited mental capacities—managed to stay upright.

Silence stretched through the room as Tom surveyed his assembled snakes one last time. It appeared that his messages had been delivered well—not only the one about the two imbeciles before him, but also the reinforcement of the power he had over the house. He, and he only, must be obeyed.

_Good_.

With a flick of his wrist, Tom put out his floating lights and stoked the fire back to blazing, the common room returned to its usual state once more. “Dismissed.”

Chapter End Notes

Harry: *sneezing*
Harry: *bumps into Dumbledore, turning his robes a reasonable color* Hm. Looks like I did my good deed for the day. :)
Dumbledore: MALLLLLFOYYYY!
Harry: *running now* Worth it :))))))))

~

This whole chapter is due to @bellachome’s awesome Tom-wrangling skills, so please direct all love to her— I was just the mango to post this chapter and had almost no part in the actual writing.
<3 you Bells!
See you in three!
In Which Harry Finds A New Moon

Chapter by PurpleMango

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Tom had a bath first- irritated with how much he was thinking about Harry- and then went to confront his house. With some awesome visual imagery of Tom Riddle being the KING he is, the boy made it explicitly clear to the Slytherins that Hadrian Malfoy was NOT to be touched or harmed.

Chapter Notes

AHHHH WE GET TO MEET MY FAVE OC!!! I'M SO EXCITED!!!
Okay okay okay- Calm down Mango- So this chapter is shorter (sorry, don't kill me) but know that soon enough much more exciting things are on the way!
Thanks to @Bellachrome being my amazing beta and the sounding board for all my crack ;}

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sitting with his head resting on the cold stone of the astronomy tower, Harry jolted slightly when a cool hand found his forehead. “Wha-”

Moorvitch clicked her tongue. “Vat do zou zink zat ‘ou are doing? Zou’re ‘aving a fever running!”

Harry felt as if his blood was molasses, slow and syrupy even as he burned something bloody uncomfortable and the stone- the stone pressed against his forehead was so blissfully cold… “’m fine.”

You are most certainly not fine, idiot.

“’m fine!” He protested louder, trying to bat away the hands that moved to pick him up like he was a sack of potatoes.

Moorvitch snorted. “I vill take zou ‘o de invermary and zere is no’zing you can zo to stop me.” Her accent was thick, sharp steps pronounced against the tile.

See? She’s smart, unlike you- ignoring your sickness- what are you, a child? I DON’T THINK SO!

He mentally kicked Riddle v.2 in the shin for yelling, snickering slightly when the horcrux cursed him out. “You-re... funny…”

“And zou ‘r zick.”
Harry blinked slowly.

He knew those ceiling tiles. Hearing soft footsteps, he smiled fondly but slightly sarcastically. “Y’know, if it’s the money that’s keeping you from putting my name up on the wall I’d be happy to lend you a few-” He looked over lazily, but froze when he saw not Madame Pomfrey but a slender girl with dark hair and a Slytherin uniform.

"Sorry to interrupt." The girl’s voice was friendly, and for some reason he immediately liked her. “Professor Moorvitch told me to wait with you.”

He blinked, before it fully sunk in and he melted back into the bed with a soft groan. “I-... I forgot for a second where I was…”

“Yes- sometimes altering your surroundings like you did can be greatly hard to accept… Though something tells me you already have changed much in your time here.”

Harry looked over, eyes narrowing before suddenly widening as he realized who the girl reminded him of.

Luna.

The soft voice, the look in her eyes as if she already knew all that he had been through and would go through, the teasing smile curving on her lips. He sat up, reaching out and as if she knew what he needed her hand was there, wandlessly throwing up the strongest privacy wards he could. “You- you’re-”

“Cassiopeia Black, at your service my little Master of Death.” The girl smiled knowingly.

Watching her for a long moment, he debated how to ask what he wanted. “I- I heard… from a relative of yours… that you never had kids, and yet, I find that hard to believe.”

The girl that he now noticed had those same eyes as Sirius, laughed, the sound tinkling around them both. “Well, I believe that in your time I had a child in secret- as a gift to a friend who could not have one- but this time around… well who knows? I can not see into my own path or that would be cheating.”

It only confirmed what he has guessed of Luna’s bloodline all along- those grey-blue eyes of his ravenclaw friend had always bugged him. And if this woman was his sister-in-everything-but-blood’s grandmother… “You have… the gift?”

Those eyes he was so fond of sparkled in the dim light. “Indeed.”

He was out of his bed, the girl standing up to meet him halfway in a hug that they both knew he needed. “I-...” His voice cracked and he swallowed thickly. “I miss them.”

“I know… Trust me. As your prophet I have seen your life in all it’s painful detail and as glad I am to have you with us, I am deeply sorry for what you had to lose.” Warm arms wrapped around him. “Do not worry my little Lord. I am here to guide you now.”

After a second of just composing himself, face buried into the robes that smelled like sage and rosemary, he looked up with a weak smile. “Prophet?”

The raven-haired girl only smiled. “The Master of Death has his sword, his shield, his knight, his prophet, and his equal. The five points of his star, the five bound to him. The one to attack, the one to defend, the one at his back, the one in his ear, and the one at his side.” The smile flickered. “You
would have had your five… and yet your equal suffered fate’s manipulations before you could come into your power.”

He thought about her words for a long moment. Draco would have been his sword, Hermione his shield, Luna his prophet, and Neville his knight… so that meant-

“Tom?” He gaped at the girl. “You’re kidding.”

Giggling slightly, she patted his head. “I fear not, little Lord… though you may want to lay back down before Moorvitch ties you to your bed. She was quite upset- such an influential Lord collapsing on her.”

He looked at her with wide eyes.

“Oh, did I not mention? She’s a shaman. It's like a Russian version of a seer without the future sight-though her soul sight is startlingly accurate.”

Harry gaped at the mention of the magic he’d only heard about in rumors, the ability to see someone’s soul… the things they had gone through, the color of their magic, the abilities they possessed. “So two of you know that I-...”

Cassiopeia pushed him back onto the bed softly, tucking him back under the covers. “You are still sick, little Lord. Sleep now.” Before he could protest- he felt a sleeping spell cover him, the magic comfortable and caring as it wrapped around him.

Chapter End Notes

Cassiopeia: A galleon that it takes him less than a semester to completely capture the attention of his equal.

Moorvitch: *side eyeing her* I do not bet with seers.

Cassiopeia: ...three sickles that he does something to really piss off Dumbledore by the time the next year starts.

Moorvitch: By the end of the year.

*they shake hands*

Cassiopeia: I thought you didn't make deals with seers?

Moorvitch: I thought you knew 'Adrian's impulsive behavior? Might check the future again. *laughs and saunters off*

Cassiopeia: *visibly concentrating, eyes glazing over*

Cassiopeia: *softly* Shit.

~

Can we talk about how much I LOVE my smol seer? Like- yes- she's my favorite and I love her so much ^.^

Anywho- See y'all in three!
In Which Harry Decidedly Does Not Get Poisoned (Somehow)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry, getting sent to the hospital wing for ignoring that he was sick (idiot), meets Cassiopeia Black; Hogwarts’ resident seer and all around awesome Slytherin who was related (cough cough it’s was secret) to Luna Lovegood.
After a super snazzy prophecy- “The Master of Death has his sword, his shield, his knight, his prophet, and his equal. The five points of his star, the five bound to him. The one to attack, the one to defend, the one at his back, the one in his ear, and the one at his side.” -Cassiopeia then puts Harry to sleep with the news that Moorvitch is a soul-seeing shaman.
(so a normal Wednesday, right?)

Chapter Notes

MANGO IS LATE- LATE FOR A VERY IMPORTANT DATE (sorry sorry please don’t kill me I was v sick yesterday)
As usual, @bellachrome is off wrangling Tom while somehow running a very effective skeleton army AND helping me not sound like a fool in my writing! Way to go Bells!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had taken a day of potions that Harry had downed as quickly as he could- Cassiopeia joking about his lack of a gag reflex (she’d only giggled harder when he’d winked at her scandalously)- before he felt a little bit better.

Harry’s friends had been a bit suspicious when the fourth-year Slytherin girl had sat down next to Harry at lunch, but after hearing them banter for a bit they all seemed to relax a bit. Though Dumbledore and Riddle were both staring at him again as if trying to out-glare each other by both glaring at him.

“I feel as if my ‘equal’ would rather kill me than stop to think of joining me.” Muttering his complaint he leaned heavily on the taller girl, her earthy smell reminding him so much of Luna that he wanted to just hug her forever.

She just laughed, running a hand through his long wavy hair comfortably. “Yes… he might take a while to come around to the idea. Though hopefully the sword will help you get closer to him.”

He closed his eyes tiredly, but tucked the hint away into his brain.

Infuriating boy--
Tom strode through the halls, robes billowing behind him intimidatingly, other students scurrying to get out of his way.

_Can’t even bother to take care of himself properly. That much magic and he just goes and gets sick, like a Squib, idiot that he is._

He tapped out the password to the Hufflepuff common room with irritated speed—though he always looked down on the lack of security in this part of the castle, sneering at the Hufflepuff idea of “friendship” and “hospitality” keeping them safe, he had to admit that this once the house’s lack of a proper password came in handy—and pushed the door open. Striding purposefully into the Hufflepuff common area, he blatantly ignored the several stunned and somewhat terrified Hufflepuffs inside, heading instead for the boy’s wing. Hadrian would be... there.

Someone attempted to ask him a question. He pointedly ignored them and headed to Hadrian’s room.

He pushed open the door gently—it wouldn’t do to wake him if he was sleeping—and noted with an emotion embarrassingly close to glee that the beds were all empty… save for Hadrian’s. The boy lay fast asleep, curled up beneath the covers. His glasses were on the side table; without them, fast asleep with his magic resting as well, he looked… startlingly childlike.

Tom realized he was staring. Shaking himself, he walked over to Hadrian’s bedside, kneeling next to the boy and brushing a lock of hair out of his face with surprising gentleness.

Hadrian was so captivating for someone so young.

Tom bit back a sigh and instead rested his hand on Hadrian’s forehead. No fever. Good. He wouldn’t have to go plead with the nurse for more medicine for this infuriating boy.

Hadrian snuffled softly in his sleep and moved towards Tom’s hand. Tom held his breath, begging Merlin and magic that he wouldn’t wake up- and he didn’t. Hadrian settled, letting out a sleepy sigh, an inch or two closer to Tom than before.

Seeing how deeply the obviously exhausted boy was sleeping, Tom relented- slightly- and ran his palm lightly over Hadrian’s hair.

_So soft._

A noise in the hallway outside startled him, causing him to snatch his hand back in alarm. Right. He couldn’t linger here. He’d, ah, bent enough rules already.

Taking two pepperup potions from his robes and setting them on Hadrian’s side table, Tom scrawled out a quick note to Hadrian, charmed it for privacy, and left it with the potions. Then, turning, he schooled his features back into his mask of composure and strode purposefully out of the rooms.

A few students huddled waiting for him as he entered the Hufflepuff common room again. Seeing him, they turned to him as one, questions tumbling out over each other, all pertaining as to what he was doing here. Tom held up his hand, ceasing the interrogation.

_Calmly, Tom replied, “The nurse remembered that she had forgotten to send a few potions with Hadrian, given the speed at which he extricated himself from her office earlier. She asked me to bring them to him. That’s all.”_
Harry winced at the headache- he’d slept too long- hand fumbling on his bedside table for his glasses...

Blinking, headache shoved to the back of his mind, he looked at where his hand was resting on two vials of what looked like Pepper-up potion. Making a noise of befuddlement, he picked up the small white slip of parchment that was leaning against the vials.

**Do take better care of yourself next time.**

There was no signature, no magical residue, but even so- he knew who it was from. He’d know that writing anywhere. That writing had kept him company when no one else would in his second year and twelve years old was quite the influential age.

Looking from Tom Riddle’s handwriting to the vials, he set the note down and moved to hide under his covers once again.

Maybe another few hours of not dealing with that wouldn’t be so bad.

There was a soft knock on his door, but the person came in right after, more of an announcement of their presence than anything. “Sleeping more would only give you a worse headache. You would do better to just take those potions.” The bed dipped as the girl sat down to his side.

“They’re probably poisoned.” His face was smushed against the pillow, but she could still hear the amusement in her tone.

Cassiopeia laughed lightly. “You don’t know that. Just because he is King does not mean every one of the snake’s actions is born of his word, right? If it was, I would not be talking to you.”

Scowling into his pillow, his voice came out muffled. “Whaddaya want?”

“Moorvitch sent me.” The weight on the side of his bed disappeared. “We’re having tea- or as she’s calling it now- ‘detention’.”

Snorting softly, he rolled back over, eyeing the potions for a long second before grabbing them and putting them in his pocket with a huff.

The grey-blue eyes sparkled at him.

“Not a bloody word.” Not caring he was barefoot, in the robe that he’d borrowed from Cameron because it was warm and big, he tugged his hair out of it’s messy bun and stalked out. Making a crude gesture at Dominic when the boy wolf whistled, he pulled out a vial and downed one of the potions.

His headache subsided and he sighed. Maybe they weren’t poisoned after all.

One does not poison the potions they brew for their own personal use, idiot.

Harry almost tripped over his feet, glad for the calm grip of Cassiopeia to steady him. Since when did Tom Riddle give out his personal stash of potions?!

Maybe it's an apology- or knowing me- it's probably the want to get closer to a prospective 'seer'.

That made him nod a bit. He could believe that more than Riddle actually caring.
Is that soft Tom Riddle I spot?
Hey sorry again for the day-late update, to get back on schedule I will be posting in 2 days instead of three (because I already marked the update days in sharpie on my calendar and... well there's no going back now).
So see you in 2... Bi!  :} :} :} :}
Harry was studying in an abandoned classroom when he felt the wave of magic and the sound of a fight, looking out into the hallway, his eyes widening. Nott - the boy who had looked the most reluctant to treat him like a weak Hufflepuff - was getting attacked by three older Gryffindors, barely holding his own though Harry could tell he had some real talent.

Drawing his wand, he cast a powerful shield in front of Nott, walking slowly over to stand in front of the Slytherin boy defensively. “Excuse me, but should you not pick on someone your own size?”

The boys looked at him skeptically, assessing what to do, as they had probably seen his duel with Tom.

_When did ‘Riddle’ become ‘Tom’! You still call me Riddle version two and I’m in your head!_

He was distracted enough by the comment that the stunner a boy sent at him hit him in the chest, though the spell was only absorbed, and instead of stunning him they made him feel as if he’d been punched. The three boys gaped.

“Now that was just _rude_.” He pushed his magic out, letting his pupils expand until his eyes were completely black, his teeth looking more like jagged points from the mouth of a shark. It was a helpful trick he’d pulled on before to unsettle his opponents - drawing on the shadows of death magic that surrounded him to make the opposing forces see their worst nightmare - but in this case it seemed to work too well.

The three boys scrambled back, one yelling out in fear.

Feeling Hogwarts poke at him, he let the death magic dissipate just as Dumbledore rounded the corner, the female Gryffindor prefect at his heels. “Mister Malfoy! What do you think you’re doing!”
Lowering his wand, he smiled thinly at the man that he honestly just wanted to skin and feed to the sleeping basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets. “Professor- I was studying in a nearby classroom for Defense class and I heard fighting. It seems that this boy-” He glanced at where Nott had moved to lean against the wall, cradling his arm, “-was being attacked by these three so I went to defend him, like any good Hufflepuff would do. Three against one is hardly fair.”

Dumbledore looked ready to jump into defending his lions, but a familiar voice rung out from beside him. “And what do you have to say for yourselves? Higgins? Smith? Vane?”

Harry almost choked at the younger (but still as stern) Minerva McGonagall who was glaring at the boys.

Ah. Yes. Minerva. She’s quite the by-the-rules girl. I’m less than surprised she grew up to be the head of Gryffindor in your time- I always did find her one of the few lions I could stand.

Ignoring Riddle v.2, he watched the still shaken boys practically fold in on themselves. “We... he was walking alone and- well- we just wanted to get back at Riddle for showing us up in class-”

“So you attacked a boy- and not only that- but one younger than you and who you outnumbered!? You’re cowards.” Minerva’s eyes flashed. “Come with me you three.” Dark eyes found him, softening a bit. “Thank you Mr. Malfoy, for standing up for Mr. Nott. Twenty-five points to Hufflepuff.”

He dipped his head, ignoring Dumbledore’s piercing gaze. “Thank you Prefect McGonagall. I’ll get Mr. Nott to the infirmary and then to the Slytherin common room.” And before he could be stopped he tugged the taller boy up, putting his uninjured arm around his shoulders and starting to move quickly, hissing at the boy. “Move unless you want to get multiple detentions for just breathing.”

They moved quickly, the taller boy staying mostly silent.

But when they started directly for the Slytherin common room Nott looked torn, speaking up quietly. “My arm, it-”

“I’ll heal it, but we need to get somewhere safe and as much as I loathe to admit it, Slytherins protect each other and Dumbledore hates the snakes enough to not come after us.” He pulled the boy along, the common room door disappearing for him with just a light brush of Hogwarts magic.

They hobbled into the common room and he shoved the boy into the closest chair he could, hissing and feeling his temper urge to break free and destroy the room. “Those bloody lions! I ought to skin them! Hang them from the damn staircases! How low has Godric’s children sunk to attack a younger year- one alone at that!”

“Harry- Harry dear, breath though it…” The familiar smell of sage and rosemary enveloped him as the taller girl moved close, hands taking his shaking ones in hers.

He could feel himself shaking, eyes closing as he took a deep breath and coiled back up the magic that had escaped in his rage. “I just- Merlin, i’m so disappointed. So so very disappointed and seeing that old wanker about to pardon their actions- I just want to rip his head off!” Snarling, he moved to clench his hand, shoving a ball of energy at a nearby chair and watching as it shattered to pieces before he sagged into the girl. After a quiet moment he found enough humor to mutter, “Nev would have been so disappointed I broke a chair... He always hated when I broke chairs.”

The girl snickered- covering her mouth. “Do that often? I thought you were more fond of breaking tables?”
He rocked back on his heels and they locked eyes, both knowing they were talking about how mad Neville had been that Harry had not only had sex on his favorite table, but broken it in the process. Biting his lip to try not to smile, he watched her grin before they both started laughing. He wiped his eyes, smile still on his face. “Yeah- yeah he was pretty mad about that, wasn’t he?”

“Harry?” Turning, he saw Abraxas frowning at him. “What- what are you doing here?”

Snapping, he looked at where Nott was watching him. “Right. I almost forgot in my moment of loathing everything that is the Hogwarts Houses why I came here in the first place. Okay Miss Moon- diagnosis?”

“Broken wrist and lacerations to the upper arm.” Cassiopeia looked pleased at her nickname.

Humming, he moved to the boy’s side, giving him a chiding look as he moved to messily tie back his long hair. “Did your Head of House never tell you snakes to move in groups? There’s a reason that you’re in the dungeons- and it’s not to be dramatic- it’s actually because Salazar thought it the best place to defend his students. Slytherins may be the most ambitious, but by nature you’re all also the most bloody paranoid- or did you not get that trait?” Shaking his head and muttering about foolish snakes, he held out a hand. “Cassie did you get what I said I would need?”

A warm hand pressed a roll of bandages into his hand.

The girl had convinced him to keep up the guise of being a ‘seer’ (because apparently some of the students thought he was one or something) and had started to help him with little tips to use to his advantage. Like assuming Cassie would have his back no matter what.

Tucking his wand into his knotted hair, he set the medical supplies to the side. “This might hurt.”

“What are you-”

Before the boy could finish, Harry shoved three tendrils of magic into the wound, a few others holding the boy down as he jolted in pain. “I know. I’m sorry, but I have to re-break it or it won’t mend currently.” Finding the broken bone with his magic he broke it with a sickening snap that made the boy howl, before holding it in the right place and placing his hand over the wound. Muttering lowly in Gaelic, he felt his hand heat up, the boy making a wretched sound before passing out from the pain. When he pulled back, he was sweating, but the large gash was only a thin scratch.

“He-... he needs some milk.” Harry’s giggle was tired and he felt his vision spotting with the amount of magical energy he’d used all at once.

Cassie laughed, moving to his side so she could finish the medical treatment by making the boy swallow the potion and wrapping the wound. “Hadrian?”

Eyes closed, he huffed, before pulling himself up and sighing when he swayed slightly. When he opened his eyes, he saw a glass of apple juice had appeared on the nearby table and he grabbed it, sinking into an unoccupied chair. “Mmmm… Nothing like a challenge to make life interesting.”

Drinking down half the apple juice, he felt his eyes getting heavier, setting down the glass and curling up in a nearby chair. “Give me an hour or so. I’ll be fine after that.”

His eyelids feeling like lead, he sunk into a recovery sleep, core working overtime at both trying to contain his power in such an underdeveloped body while also trying to keep his magic stable.
Tom closed his eyes and leaned back in his library chair with a sigh. Finally. He was as certain as he could be that Professor Dumbledore assigned him a disproportionate amount of homework. Oh, he was sneaky about it, of course— but it was in the way he gave instructions such as “six to nine inches for this essay!”, accepting six from his lions but not accepting less than eight and a half from the snakes. And of course, out of all the snakes, the dundering oaf detested him the most.

The feeling was mutual.

Tom gathered his things and returned the books he had been using, stopping for a short conversation with the librarian before he left. He needed to be on good terms with as many of the, ah, authorities, if he must use that term, in Hogwarts as he could. And furthermore, the more the librarians liked him, the more likely he was to get away with accessing books from the restricted section.

Tom walked swiftly back to the Slytherin common room, chin high and steps sure. Though he knew most of his snakes required a buddy system, of sorts, to keep themselves safe, he had long ago established that anyone who touched him would find themselves... incapacitated.

The Hogwarts motto is, after all, *never tickle a sleeping dragon.*

Giving the password to the portrait—snapdragon, how appropriate, considering his recent musings—he entered the common room- and paused.

Hadrian?

The infuriating child was just, *there,* fast asleep on one of the chairs. Curled in on himself, he looked small, and fragile. Next to him, Nott sat, looking some combination of stunned and completely out of his depth, and Cassiopeia stood, a silent guardian keeping watch. And Abraxas, his most faithful, who rose to greet Tom as he entered. “My lord-”

“Abraxas,” Tom cut him off, a greeting and a command all in one.

Abraxas fell silent. Tom turned to Cassiopeia, expectant.

She turned her luminous eyes to Tom as he entered. “Hello, Slytherin King.”

Tom set himself, making sure he looked every inch the ruler of his house, and awaiting her explanation.

“It was my fault.” Nott broke in, looking pale as he held a place on his arm that was bandaged in white gauze. “I was attacked and Hadrian- he saved me from a group of Gryffindors.”

“Malfoy saved you from a group of Gryffindors? What were you doing that would involve you with them? Where were your friends?”

Nott looked down. “I was studying late and the others left without me... the- the group were mad at you and- well I guess they saw me as the next best thing- some snake alone in the hallway.”

“And here I thought that even the slowest of my snakes was still smarter than the best of those idiot Gryffindors,” Tom snapped. “You are not to go out alone again. You are to keep someone with you at all times. You were lucky Malfoy was there to save you from the rabid lions.” He sighed. “I will have to call a meeting for the entire house to reiterate this, it seems. Not even halfway through the year and they are forgetting the rules.” Tom turned back to Cassiopeia, who still held him in her luminous gaze. “Hadrian may stay- my gratitude for his saving one of my snakes.”
Cassiopeia merely smiled at him, as if she had expected this answer already. “As you wish.”

With an inaudible huff of exasperation, Tom placed himself in his chair at the front of the room, pulling out homework that was, thankfully, not assigned by Dumbledore.

He was not there to keep an eye on the infuriating green-eyed boy, to make sure he was okay.

He was not.

Chapter End Notes

I'm in a bad habit of not tending the garden of my comment inbox it seems, so sorry about that :)
Hopefully I can get to that soon... Maybe.
Give your ever-loving love to Bells tho! She's the best!
See you in 2!
(I pinky swear, I won't be late this time)
In Which Harry Dreams of Dying (Pt. 1)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
While studying, Harry stumbles upon a duel between three Gryffindors and Theoden Nott, smoothly interjecting himself in the middle of the danger (like always) and then helping Nott heal. After exhausting himself healing the Slytherin, Harry falls asleep in the Slytherin Common Room yet again, taking Tom by surprise.
With Tom making far too many animal metaphors, like usual, the mini Dark Lord settles down to TOTALLY NOT watch Harry sleep.

Chapter Notes

So my Brain Co-pilot (who is the devil, thank you for asking) decided not to keep me to my obligations for the last like six days and so I've been growing a fine layer of moss in my bed. Dying. Because of this (thanks you big dumb demon) I am posting late. Again.
{Any rotten fruit is accepted. Except tomatoes. They suck. Though pelting me with blueberries might be fun.}
Much love to the infamous Skeleton Queen and Tom-wrangler @bellachrome!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The air was soft around him, summer sun’s heat broken by the cool breeze that played with his messy hair.

“Must we always meet out here?” Even though her words were displeased, her tone was only tired and the blonde sat down smoothly next to him in the grass.

He didn’t look over, knowing that it would only make the normally so put-together girl shy away from him, in her loose muggle clothes and mascara-stained cheeks. “Maybe not... but I heard that this is the only time you leave your house, so isn’t it my duty as your ever loyal knight to make you get some sun?” Unshrinking the picnic basket that he’d pulled out of his Auror robes, he began to use his free hand to set up all the food that Narcissa had shoved on him when she’d heard he was coming to meet the girl. “You know, if you don’t like it here, you're always welcome at the Manor.”

The snort was harsh, wet, and when he glanced at the girl’s reflection in the silver plates he saw she was crying again.

This was the way they were: One crying too much, the other not able to shed a tear- or feel really anything anymore.

“I’m never going back.” The whisper was shaky, with anger and spite lining every word. “Not ever. Not with what they did.”

Harry just nodded slightly. He’d expected that answer, though he still asked every time he saw her.
There was a long pause as he fiddled with the plates and deciding to just throw caution out the window, he looked up at sad eyes. “Daph… we miss you. Draco and Narcissa think of you as family and Hermione misses your conversation and- well- you can’t think she’d want this for you…”

Daphne Greengrass narrowed her eyes, voice a cutting hiss. “Do not pretend to know what she would want, Potter.”

“Sorry. Sorry I… I shouldn’t have said anything.” Again he looked down, taking a deep breath and reaching for the wine, pouring themselves both glasses.

They both watched the flowers of the meadow around them sway in the breeze.

He didn’t look at her again- not wanting her to storm off as she’d done before. “May I fix your makeup?”

A shuddering breath, another sip of wine. “Fine.”

He touched his wand in his holster, knowing that a gentle cleaning charm would have wiped away those thick black tear tracks.

“Thank you.”

Harry nodded, reaching over to pick a small bluebell, rolling the stem in his fingers. “I hear you’re writing another best seller. I read the last one and I have to say- your grip on the fictional idea of magic is quite nice, and easy enough to understand in a way that doesn’t out the Wizarding World.”

His glance at the silver spoon told him that she was smiling softly. “I assume that the muggles like your books as much as the family does? By the way- Teddy wanted a signature.” He pulled a book from the basket, setting it down between them.

Daphne reached for the book, a pen already in her fingers as if it was habit, pausing when she picked it up and he knew she could see how worn it was- which it should be as it was Teddy’s favorite book at the moment. When she spoke, it was fond. “How is the Teddy-bear? And- and David?” Her voice broke slightly in asking about her nephew, who Narcissa had taken under her wing.

Letting his lips quirk up slightly at his godson’s nickname, he shrugged. “They’re always in trouble, but both good kids with smiles that would sway even the sternest of them all. I would know. Minerva complains about it far too often to me.”

The woman next to him cracked a small smile, but they fell back into silence.

“I miss her.”

He almost breathed in the wine he was drinking, trying not to sputter as he lowered the silver goblet that Narcissa had insisted he bring to dine with the witch. It was rare that Daphne ever was the one to bring up the subject, so he just stayed silent, knowing how painful it was for her to speak of their loss.

A rough inhale, seeming to catch on a soft sob. “She… I- I wish it was me…” He pursed his lips in a slight pause to collect herself. “I know you feel the same- I can see it in your eyes and that’s part of the reason I come to sit with you… Wouldn’t you give everything to bring them back? To save them?”

His mind caught on a mental image of two witches sitting with Hermione, laughing and talking about books- the Greengrass daughters had always been like family to the Malfoys before…
“I would trade myself for her in a second, given the chance.”

A darker-haired girl, younger than Daphne but with the same soft voice and lovely eyes, lying- pale and shuddering- in a hospital bed in St. Mungos.

Rubbing at his face to try to ease the urge to scream at the sky that it wasn’t fair- that life was cruel and he wanted to be able to let the people he loved be happy for once- he let out a long breath. “You know I would have done anything. That I w ill do anything.” He’d do everything in his power to protect the ones he cared about.

That was a given though. That was just who he was.

Daphne sounded so broken, so tired. “I miss my sister Harry. And because of that, I can never return.”

The whole family had been shattered at Astoria’s diagnosis- a rare blood curse that skipped generations- but even with multiple influential families trying to do whatever they could… The Ministry had long since banned blood magic and the fear from the war was still so high that they could do nothing but watch the vibrant girl die.

Harry balled his fists at the memory. “I promise if there is a way…” He didn’t finish. They both knew that they would forever carry the death of Astoria Greengrass on their shoulders- a reminder of how their society had been corrupted with fear and idiocy.

A reminder why so many of their misshapen, war-torn family had left for the Muggle world.

The girl nodded, wiping her lips daintily with the napkin and standing. “Till next time. And try not to stain Narcissa’ blanket.” With a turn of her heel, the woman was gone.

Harry looked out across the meadow- the one that the two of them shared to hide in when the outside world got to be too much, the one that alerted the other when either showed up- and took a deep breath, laying back in the grass.

Raising his hand and looking at the red blood dripping from it, slick and warm, he let out a long sigh. He knew that wine would have only made the wounds that he was slowly bleeding from worse, but he couldn’t bring himself to care.

Shuffling to the side with a wince (Narcissa really would stab him if he got blood on her blanket) he watched the clouds pass as he slowly bled out, knowing that he was past any healing that Draco would have attempted if he’d gone from the botched raid to the Manor.

Plus, Teddy would not have been a happy godson if he had to watch Harry die again.

He was glad Daphne showed up when he had, rather than when they had been planning to meet later- it was always pleasant to have some light conversation before dying.

Harry woke up, a shuttering gasp on his lips and he instinctively moved his hands to where he’d been bleeding out but… No- no that was a memory, he wasn’t there- he wouldn’t have to die alone again like that, feeling so empty and cold.

He’d save them.

He’d save Astoria.
Raising a shaky hand to his mouth, he squeezed his eyes shut, voice shaky as he clutched at himself. “No- no, I'm- I'm not there. No… no blood...”

Hogwarts’ magic spread out through the room before wrapping around him, warm and soothing, and he felt his breathing come back to normal instead of where it had been teetering on the edge of a panic attack.

The warm of magic covered him like a blanket, like one of Narcissa’s hugs, and his breathing slowed.

Harry felt all the tension leave his body slowly and he slumped back into the chair, curling tighter into a ball, eyes heavy even as he felt tears on his cheeks. “Promise… to save… them...”

The warm magic of his home keeping away all the bad dreams, he fell back into his sleep, not noticing how his own magic had unwound from it’s tight confines and made itself into a thick blanket the color of the killing curse.

Chapter End Notes

Harry: So I got cursed in a firefight... and if I make it home like /now/, I might not die...  
Harry:  
Harry:  
Harry: Who's up for a picnic?!  
Daphne: *unfazed, but looking super tired* Why are you like this  
~  
Some good quality angst right there *makes the 'it's okay' hand symbol with all five of my hands*  
And now... onto the next chapter!
In Which Harry Dreams of Dying (Pt. 2)

Chapter Summary

Previously: Harry recalls a memory while dreaming in which he goes to visit Daphne Greengrass (while bleeding out, can't forget that) and it is revealed that not only the girl had retreated to the Muggle World to become an author, but her younger sister had died due to a rare blood curse carried though their lines. Waking in a panic, Hogwarts barely calms Harry down and he once again falls into sleep.

Chapter Notes

Thank you to my wonderful beta, @bellachrome! <3 <3 <3
Here's part two! Enjoy!
(or y'know cry or something... *shrugs* I'm not the one in control of your emotions)

Cassiopeia moved to sit on the arm of Hadrian’s chair, wand in hand, resting on her thigh lazily but open enough to be a threat.

Nott’s looked at her from the boy at her side, trying to stand on unsteady legs, eyes betraying his worry. “Is he-?”

“Harry is just fine.” With a flick of her wand, the boy was shoved back into the chair.

The room watching them tensed.

She had not found the power plays of the house to be very useful when she could very well pass by unnoticed, waiting for her green-eyed Lord to need her before she came into the limelight, and yet she still was in the ‘middle class’ by her blood and heritage alone.

Technically Nott was her equal in the Slytherin court, but then again he was also part of Riddle’s group, no matter how low in the ranks.

However this mattered not to her- not more than the safety of her little Lord. “With such a large magical core, Harry’s malnourished body must work tirelessly to keep his magic under control, and breaking down his carefully constructed barriers to heal someone so deeply while not taking care of himself… well, his body is weakened, relying on that same unsteady magic to heal him.”

“Why would he-...” Nott was looking at the boy- who, as if feeling the eyes of the room, flinched violently- and the older Slytherin looked as if he had been gutted (which was a far cry from his normally impassive mask).

Cassiopeia smiled at the thought of the she’d been seeing in her dreams since she was a little girl (her first childish crush and the boy who she now saw as a little brother) being anything but a hero and a warrior. “Because if he didn’t, he wouldn’t be Harry.” She could feel Riddle rising from his seat, but
she turned away from the room to look down at the boy just as he jerked awake, eyes wide and a broken-off gasp on his lips.

Harry’s eyes were far away as if unseeing of the room around him, something so haunted and raw in them it hurt her own heart to see. A shaking hand seemed to clutch at his stomach before raising in the air as if to check for blood and after a pause the hand covered his mouth, barely covering a small heartbreaking sob. Those vibrant eyes closed tight, voice soft, it’s pain clear in the silent room. “No- no I’m- I’m not there. No… no blood.” His body tensed, soft wounded sobs coming out alongside the harsh sound of the small boy hyperventilating.

Even as the room tensed around her, she hummed softly, smoothed a hand over his silken midnight hair. “It’s alright little Lord… You’re safe here. Safe in the hands of your mother- the home that will always love you so very much- listen to her soft voice now and let yourself rest…”

The cold and dusty fireplace roared to life, the room flooded with a warm breeze that had each of the surrounding students gasping- it was alive and warm, the raw magic that she knew was Hogwarts herself.

Gasping softly, the boy seemed to melt back into the chair, curling around himself like a wounded animal. There were tears running down the smooth cheeks and she smiled sadly as the boy’s voice came out in an aborted whisper, promising things to long lost friends that would never know him again.

With a shimmer, vibrant green tendrils seemed to grow out of the boy’s body- one moving to brush against her cheek in an affectionate gesture- before weaving together to create a visible shimmering blanket enveloping the boy.

Cassiopeia looked up at the Slytherins who were all visibly shaken, by both the power the boy had casually displayed and the words he’d spoken, letting steel line her grey eyes as she tightened her grip on her wand. “Should anyone lay a single finger on this boy… there will be a line of people waiting to cast the first curse- and in case anyone should read my intentions wrong- I, Cassiopeia Vega Black, swear on my magic that I will retaliate swiftly against anyone who causes Hadrian Aurelius Malfoy any type of harm, no matter their rank or standing in the Slytherin court.”

Again a tremor shook the common room.

She had been decidedly neutral, utterly unflappable in being content to stay out of any type of in-house politics even as every available party had come looking for her- as she was in the top of the school in her studies (second only to Tom Riddle and now her darling Hadrian).

And by making this vow, she’d essentially declared herself under a separate leader than Riddle, apart from the Slytherin court.

A traitor- as that was the name she could almost hear the room screaming in their minds.

It was seconds before the first curse was fired her way, one of the more overzealous of Tom’s subordinates making the first move, but yet- a shield sprung up in front of her and Hadrian, dispersing the malicious magic.

Tom stood, wand in hand, face impassive. The room seemed to hold its breath, waiting tensely to see- would anyone else fire a curse?

A few moments passed in tense silence.

As nobody else stepped forward, Tom lowered his wand, and looked out over his subjects. “Let her
be,” he said. “She is of no use to us here. And if the little Malfoy becomes a threat… well.” A slow, predatory smile spread across Tom’s face. “Everyone knows the Hogwarts motto.”

Cassiopeia grinned as well, teeth glinting in the firelight, and upon reaching down to stroke the small boy’s hair she moved to slide her wand back in her holster easily. “A word of warning- I would stray from deciding to try to hurt me too much, because as much as I will protect Hadrian with my last breath… He’s very particular about people touching those he deems as ‘his’-” The Slytherins, already shaken by the night’s events, flinched back at the dark gleam in her normally vapid eyes. “And we all know how children get when someone touches their possessions.”

Only Tom Riddle held onto his stone-set mask of indifference, but even then she could see the desire to possess lingering in his eyes and she wondered how long her little Lord would make his equal suffer in his obliviousness.

Then again, only she knew that the real child was not the frail boy at her back, but the budding Dark Lord hiding in the shadows next to her.

Yawning behind her hand slightly, she picked up her bag carelessly, nodding to Riddle even though he wasn’t her king anymore and starting for the stairs. “Oh-” She paused, glancing back. “Harry wanted me to pass along word that he’ll be out of the common room by morning and not to worry- he doesn’t know the password.”

Theoden Nott was nothing if not determined.

Determined to do well in his studies so his father would be proud, to rise in the ranks until everyone forgot that his mother had been of distant muggle birth, to marry well so he could have an heir that would give pride to the tainted Nott line… And yet every time he looked at the small boy that had shown up out of the blue so suddenly, he was forced to rethink all his goals.

With a mind that never seemed to ever be challenged, as if he had just up and absorbed a whole library, the green-eyed half-blood Malfoy was slowly breaking every expectation set for him.

Nott was determined to find out what made this boy so special.

Why he cared- he couldn’t figure out just yet- but he’d never wanted someone to be proud of him as badly as he wanted the younger Malfoy to be.

He blinked blearily, the fire still going, and waited. He and Riddle were left- even Abraxas sleepily said goodnight a while ago in exhaustion- and as much as Riddle had denied any type of care for the boy, he seemed to be just as determined as Nott was to stay up.

The silence was past thick, verging on ‘uncomfortable’, and he didn’t dare look over to meet the other boy’s eyes.

“Mmm-” The soft, pained groan had both sets of tired eyes shooting to the wingback chair where Malfoy was curled up. The boy shifted, voice coming out rough but clear, seeming to be muttering to himself. “Sweet Circe- dying hurts less than this…”

It seemed the boy was trying to get out of the chair, limbs working like that of a baby deer, and Nott’s eyes widened when the boy fell out of the chair in a tangle of limbs and a squeaking sound of
surprise.

There the boy lay for a long moment, before heaving a long sigh. "‘M never going to use my magic again- I swear this time I’m going to eat mushrooms in the woods like a hermit, war or not."

Nott felt his eyes widen.

War?

Just who was Hadrian Malfoy?

Chapter End Notes

[In case you were wondering, Riddle v.2 had some... choice words for Harry falling on his face :D]

(@bellachrome) Bells gets all the credit for all Tom-based lines, scenes, and/or interaction so a round of applause for that!
I will be posting again soon!
(and will also try my very best to get back on my schedule- even if it means tuning out my lovely co-pilot)
<3 :D -Mango
In Which Harry Swerves Dumbledore (For Now)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Cassiopeia declares herself under Harry’s rule instead of rule of the Slytherin Court-something unheard of before this- and Nott questions the meaning of friendship while Harry sleeps semi-peacefully. Waking with a startle, Harry falls on his face and then mutters bitterly about ‘the war’ confusing both Nott and Riddle.

Chapter Notes

Look at that! Mango is back on schedule!
All hail the Skeleton Queen (my beta/Tom extraordinaire), @bellachrome, who I owe my lasting sanity to <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry lay on the cold floor, limbs heavy and aching, and heaved a tired sigh.

_get tired of being an idiot, old man? Maybe you should look up once and awhile._

Scoffing slightly, he unconsciously did as Riddle v.2 suggested- and found Tom standing over him, crouched slightly, offering him a hand up.

“Oh.” Blinking, he took the hand, letting the taller boy help him up. “Thanks.”

“Oh, of course.”

He let his hand drift to the place where the pouch still hung around his neck, and upon finding the familiar material, let himself relax. “ Didn’t think anyone would wait up. It was clear Cassie wasn’t going to...”

Both Riddle and Nott watched him as he shifted his weight uncomfortably.

Seemingly sensing an opportunity, Nott spoke up. “Thank you. For healing me. Without you there-”

“The Gryffindors will pay.” Riddle’s voice was sharp in the cool night air.

Harry took a moment to try to figure out what Riddle’s angle on all this was, before giving up on trying to figure out the mini-Dark Lord and instead smiling softly at the other boy. “It’s no problem. I- uh- Zararias always said I had a bit of a hero complex... But, well, since you’re up can I check on your wound?”

Nott blinked, before holding out his good hand. “I owe you my name at least then. Theoden Nott, at your service.”

Barely suppressing a loud laugh, managing to compress it into a few soft giggles that he tried to
smother behind his hand, he grinned as he took the boy’s larger hand. “Well met, Lord of Rohan… I have no need for your service, but thank you for the thought.”

Shaking his head at the fact that Theodore Nott’s grandfather carried the same name as a character in Lord of the Rings, he moved to step in between the boy’s legs, nimbly pulling his arm up so he could unwrap it.

Frowning at the yellowish tint to the wound he huffed angrily. “Gryffindors. They cast the spell so it would infect- Dray would be having a right fit had he been given the chance to see this.”

“Who-”

He poked at the wound, allowing the boy to cut himself off with a sharp hiss, not wanting to touch the subject of his past life with a ten foot stick made of space-time paradoxes. “Looks like it’s fairly early stages. Be glad I woke up when I did or you would have been in for a nasty infection.”

Nott looked slightly hesitant in even asking. “Can you… help?”

Harry pulled out his holly wand, twirling it though his fingers, making the boy look slightly pale. “Course I can. Now hold still.” Focusing on the wound, he lightly dragged his wand down the open cut, ignoring the boy’s noises of pain as he drew out the infected pus. Pulling away, he focused intently on the ball of gooey yellow grossness, and with a flick of his wrist the infected material was landing in the fire, causing it to flare up briefly. He met the other set of (red-tinted) eyes watching him with a conspiratorial smile. “Like I said before- craziness just finds me.”

“It seems it does.” Riddle’s eyes flickered ominously in the light of the fire.

Casting a tempus, he wrinkled up his nose. He’d need to get back to Hufflepuff- he only had a few hours before morning was upon them and with Yule coming up so soon he wasn’t looking forward to taking midterm exams.

Quickly gathering up the bag that had been tucked under the seat, he nodded to the two older boys, fond exasperation flickering in his chest at their continued gazes. “Go to bed. If I forget anything- well- I won’t.”

Shaking his head, he quickly strode from the room.

Hadrian left, the common room door swinging shut behind him. Nott, resident buffoon that he was, made his excuses and left shortly after. Tom was left alone, lounging in his throne, watching the fire.

What a fascinating creature.

That boy- infuriating in his contradictions, fascinating in his complexity, captivating in his mystery- every time Tom thought he had something figured out, pinned down, explained away… it turned out the opposite.

Blood. A war. Extreme healing abilities. Magical power beyond what his small frame could handle. For every question Tom had answered about Hadrian Malfoy, he obtained three more.
But it was late, the night only continuing to inch towards early morning. Regrettably, Tom had yet to throw off his mortal flesh, so he was tired. And he had class in the morning.

Perhaps tonight was not the best time to dwell on the confusing puzzle that was Hadrian Malfoy. It wasn’t as though Tom wouldn’t be thinking about that infuriating boy tomorrow, after all.

“Mr. Malfoy, can you tell us five uses for Reparifarge?”

Stifling a yawn behind his hand, he leaned back in his chair and met Dumbledore's blue twinkly eyes wearing the cool mask of a typical pureblood. “Normally it is used to undo partial transfigurations, sir, but I guess in combat it could be useful to trip up your enemy-”

The gaze sharpened on him. “Don’t you mean opponent, Mr. Malfoy?”

He shrugged. “I guess. Either way, as I was saying-”

“Ten points from Hufflepuff for dismissing a teacher like so, Malfoy.”

Harry could feel his jaw clenching, magic shifting, begging to lash out at the other man. “Three other ways to use the spell would be-”

Dumbledore waved his hand. “Your answer was unsatisfactory so I took points, Malfoy, stop pushing my limits or I will take more points.”

With a long suffering sigh, Harry stood from his seat, packing up his bag.

“And where do you think you're going?” Those sharp blue eyes narrowed on him.

Smiling cordially, even as they both knew that it was hiding the fact his temper was wearing painfully thin, he slung his bag over his shoulder and dipped his head. “I am going to go ask Headmaster Dippet if I may take my transfiguration NEWTS so that I don’t have to ever be taught by you again, sir.” And as he stalked out, he admitted that though the move was based wholly in his rash Gryffindor thinking, that it would make ripples.

Just to think- the school’s favorite, adorable Hufflepuff getting so tired of being bullied that he was forced to test out of a whole class to avoid a certain teacher?

It would be news by the time he actually talked Dippet into even considering it.

Standing at attention in a way that reminded him of the Auror corps, he met the eyes of each of the NEWT examiners that had been intrigued enough to give him a chance. He would guess the news that had made the papers about his return to society and how he’d been raised by the elusive Vampire Lord (his ‘aunt’ was basking in the spotlight like the snake she was), was enough to warrant some of their curiosity.

“Mr. Malfoy…” A man with sharp eyes looked over him with clear curiosity. “What do you think you possess in terms of talent, as a second year, that we should give you your NEWTS for?”
Smiling thinly at the small panel of adults, he conjured an armchair, making himself comfortable even as the group gaped at his casual use of high level wandless transfiguration. “May I have a vow to keep the… fine details of what I do in this room between the seven of us? I do not wish to have the media questioning me on the extent of my magical ability.”

With silent looks at each other, the group nodded, each vowing to keep the explicit details of the exam secret.

Harry nodded when that was done, letting himself seamlessly change into the small bat that was his animagus form, leaving the group in shock. Animagus transformations were not usually able to be done before at least fifteen, hence why the minimum age of registration was 17, when students graduated.

“Amazing…” One of the women breathed. “And your change back?”

Shifting back, he found his hair had come undone, reaching up to tie it back once more. “From a young age Zacarias taught me the more useful spells, so that should I not have a wizarding family of enough wealth to go to school I would be able to live without much concern… If you need any other examples?”

After half and hour more of questioning and demonstrations, the adults let him go.

Sitting down at the Hufflepuff table midway though dinner, he grinned widely, knowing half the hall was not-so-subtly watching him. “Guess who tested out of Transfiguration!”

The group all broke into sound, Cam and Lucy both giving him big hugs as Grace and Pomona asked him every question they could think of about the testing. Dom and Stephan were both cracking jokes about him being a ‘genius’ and Cassiopeia sent him a wink from across the hall.

“Mr. Malfoy.”

Looking up, he met the eyes of the man who earlier had been the head of the testing board. Standing from his seat, he tilted his head slightly in curiosity. “Sir?”

With a thin half-smile the man extended his hand. “Adalbert Waffling.”

Harry blinked at the name he’d seen as the author of Magical Theory, the most advanced text on the in depth views of magical theory even when Harry had been a stupid Gryffindor. Blinking, he took the hand, dipping his head. “Well met Mr. Waffling.”

“Yes… it is.” The man’s lips curved up a little more, the hand squeezing his just briefly. “Should you ever need a recommendation for any position or someone to talk to that would understand the delicacies of higher magic… do not hesitate to write.”

Then the man turned on his heel, exiting the hall smoothly.

Shuddering slightly, he looked at his hand where a small slip of paper most likely held a note of contact information, and he tucked it into the pocket of his shirt. Looking back up at the doors of the Great Hall, he realized that maybe he should send a letter to Zacarias, see if his sneaking suspicion about the man held any weight. Turning back to sit at the table, he smiled brightly and pushed those thoughts to the back burner of his mind. “Guess I’ll have a free period!”

“Harry are you… are you going to stay at your- with the Malfoy’s for Yule or are you going to see your guardian?” Grace looked excited but nervous, as she always did at hearing anything more about the vampires.
Shrugging, he took a long sip of his coffee. “Probably the Malfoys. Zacarias has the Annual Conclave of Races for the whole Europe region during Yule, so I think i’d rather not go to that. They seem to have an obsession with green eyes, vampires...” He pursed his lips at the thought of the last time he’d gone to a conclave with Zac to see what the whole fuss was about- he’d had to leave, as distracted and touchy the vampires were getting. Shaking his head, he just winked at Grace. “Plus, this way we can plan to meet up at Diagon for tea or something!”

Chapter End Notes

Dumbledore: This cannot go wrong
Harry:
Harry: Oh really?
Thing: *goes wrong*
Dumbledore: I have made a mistake

Sending all my love (and yours, I'm stealing your love and sending it too, suck it up) to @bellachrome! <3 <3 <3
Sweet dreams, good memes, and happy halloweens! (yes, I know Halloween is not anytime soon don't @ me)
See you in three!
In Which Harry Visits His Extended Family

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry wakes and checks Nott before leaving to go get some sleep, while Tom remains, pondering the mystery of Hadrian Malfoy. After some of the usual antagonistic behavior from Dumblesnore, Harry decides that being around the man isn't worth it and uses his (abnormal) knowledge of higher-level spell to test out transfiguration completely.

Chapter Notes

@bellacrome is my fantastic and amazing beta (and Tom Riddle translator) and she deserves all your love!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Giving his all friends hugs, Lucy Grace, and Pomona all giggling when he pressed a kiss to their cheek while muttering about ‘damn pureblood families’, he watched his friends scatter into the crowd.

“And how are you going to sate that boredom of yours?” Cassiopeia smiled as she strolled over.

Leaning back against the frame of the Hogwarts Express and watching as kids raced to be greeted by their families, he shrugged slightly. “Want to invite me over? I hear the Black library has a hidden room with some awesome books…”

The girl grinned. “Are you inviting me to get lost in the bookshelves with you Harry? I think that your Aunt and Uncle might have some words about that.”

Harry looked up just in time to see the two ‘relatives’ of his emerge from the crowd with Abraxas and Riddle following them. “Hadrian, darling, who is this lovely girl you’re talking to?” Cordelia Malfoy’s eyes shined.

“Cassiopeia we have to-” A stern looking older couple appeared, a girl next to them that Harry had seen around. The woman looked between them, then focused on his Aunt. “Cordelia, what a pleasant surprise.”

Mrs Malfoy smiled thinly. “Violetta, Cygnus, how ever-wonderful to see you…”

He leaned closer to Cassiopeia. “Can we run?”

Like a whip, Violetta Black turned to her daughter, eyeing him nastily. “Cassiopeia I thought your father and I made it clear how we felt about… secondhand citizens?”

Oh. Right.

Sometimes he forgot how much it used to matter to Purebloods that he was a Half-blood.
Don’t make a scene, but show off your charm and you can make these snobby purebloods eat out of your hand. It’s fairly easy, all you have to do is-

Ignoring Riddle v.2’s lecture on manipulating people, he straightened, turning to smile at Cassiopeia. “Well then, my dear, this ‘second class citizen’ it seems forgot his own obligations- Zacarias made me promise to stop by as soon as I could so he could regale me with the tales of the underling vampires being incompetent.” He took her hand, pressing a kiss to it, grinning when the elder Black woman made an offended noise. “See you around.”

With a wink at Abraxas, he turned on his heel, and the familiar feeling of apparition took over.

It was always the balancing act of apparating that got him and since he was altogether a mess in this terribly tiny and useless body, he would have ended up in a tangle of limbs on the stone of the castle’s courtyard had it not been for a strong pair of hands.

“Thanks.” Pulling himself out of the arms of whoever had caught him, he found himself face to face with an older wizened vampire, who was looking at him as if he was a particularly interesting raw steak. “I- um- can I have my hands back?” Glancing from where he was caught in the vampire’s grip to where the courtyard was all now staring at him, his stomach sank.

If you get eaten, I’m going to haunt you.

“Hadrian!” A familiar voice and he was scooped up, set on tall shoulders easily. Annabell smiled up at him. “I thought you said you would not come?”

Grinning sheepishly, he shrugged. “Guess I missed not having to act like a mindless twelve-year-old?”

The woman raised an eyebrow at him, as if to ask if he ever acted like that, but moved on without question. “Come. As Master of Death you are always welcome to the conclave, invitation or not.”

Harry blinked down at her as she moved smoothly through the courtyard, ignoring the stares. “You know? Did Zac tell you?” He swallowed thickly. “Does everyone here know?”

The short haired redhead looked up with a smile. “Of course they do. You are the peacekeeper. Just as the wizards have their Chief Warlock and Supreme Mugwump, you are the balance between the different races.” When he gaped at her she raised an eyebrow. “Surely you knew this?”

“I- uh- only a few people knew in my last life…” Looking around at the different representative groups, he blinked dumbly. “Is that why I get along with so many creatures so well?”

The woman nodded. “It more than likely is.”

He hummed, not exactly sure how to process this new information.

Harry found the best way to make friends with people in positions of power was to be polite but treat them as if they were just another ordinary person.

He was just glad that it worked on the various races that he’d never had the chance to speak with before.
It turns out the fact that he could speak multiple languages, parseltongue and mermish included, was highly respected and he had a very in-depth lesson on the basics of many different languages he’d never heard before.

By the time the sun was sinking he had so many books on the different languages and customs that his favorite feather-light expandable bag was straining to it’s limit.

When he fell asleep only to awake in the arms of a very touchy vampire countess that wanted to play ‘dress-up’ with him, he called it a day and respectfully said his goodbyes, hugging both Zacharias and Annie and promising he would spend at least half his summer at the castle.

Stumbling out of the floo, he tripped and was glad when he landed on the couch. “I hate floos.”

“And they seem to hate you just as equally, Hadrian.” Septimus Malfoy shut his book, smiling softly, and Harry could see where Draco got his fonder side that only family and close friends ever saw. “I apologize for my wife’s behavior. She cannot have another child and so to have you in our lives… she is very apologetic if she caused you any offence or distress, as we are not used to dealing with a young man of your talents.”

Sitting up more, Harry let the childlike facade that he usually wore drip away like melting wax, back straight and eyes understanding. “There is no need to apologize for being excited, Mr. Malfoy. I know I am not the most… easy child to take care of, but I find the less you try to make yourself believe that I am anything like that of an innocent child, the better we will get along.”

The grey Malfoy eyes watched him and he allowed himself to be studied. “You do not hold blood in the same standards as everyone else, even your friends are mixed statuses as social classes… Can you tell me your reason behind that?”

Harry snorted. Typical Slytherin, thinking everyone has ulterior motives.

Don’t you? You aren’t just going around making yourself public nuisance #1 for fun.

Lips quirked up at the truth in Riddle v.2’s words, he looked at the man in front of him. “There will be a muggleborn that one day goes to Gringotts and out of curiosity, will do an inheritance test. And do you know what they will find? They will find that they are the grandchild or great-grandchild of a squib, heir or heiress to lines that have previously died out.”

The room was quiet, fire flickering in the dim light.

“By ridding our society of squibs that cannot have magic because of magic’s inherent weakening, we then invite their descendants to bring in the muggle views of religion instead of educating them in the olde ways of our world, leading to the further decline of magic and more squibs. It is a cycle, Mr. Malfoy. One I intend to stop.”

The elder man seemed to absorb this, sinking back into his chair with intent eyes. “It is true? They say you are something of a… child genius…”

With a thin smile, he stood. “Do you know why your wife cannot have more children, Mr. Malfoy? It’s because your blood is anything but pure. It is so diluted with inbreeding, that without the fresh blood, magic cannot gift you more children… Think of that the next time you look at the families that you admire so much, like the Blacks. Do you wish for your children’s children to have that same madness they have?”

Strolling away, he wondered if the man would sleep at all that night.
Harry: Maybe I should put this lightly....
Harry: You're part of the reason magic is dying and your grandchildren will be insane
Septimus:
Harry:
Septimus: That was 'lightly’?
~
Big Thanks to Bells for reminding me that today was in fact a day and had not been
canceled due to scheduling errors!
See You In Three!
In Which Harry Is Certain That Tom Has Never Been More Domestic Looking

Chapter Summary

Previously:
On his way home for Yule, Harry meets Violetta Black, Cassiopeia's mother who has a less than pleasant view of him. Irritated, he goes to visit Zacarias, finding out that his unintentional claim as 'Master of Death' makes him the supposed peacekeeper for the races. After a long day at the vampire's castle dealing with the Conclave of the Races, Harry heads back home only to be surprised by his uncle, who he has an enlightening discussion with.

Chapter Notes

@bellachrome is in charge of managing Tom, so any and all interaction or scenes are accredited to her! Thanks hun!

Tom Riddle in this version of the story is much closer to Abraxas and the other boy basically lets him spend as much time at the Manor as possible (however Tom might be going back to the orphanage over the summer if just for a few weeks)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once again Harry found himself occupying the kitchen during his break and after a day of avoiding most of the household, he came into the kitchens in the early morning only to be greeted with the sight of Tom Riddle looking uncharacteristically domestic- drinking coffee while reading the Daily Prophet.

Pausing in humming the song that wouldn’t come out for many years to come but that had gotten stuck in his head, he shook his head at the sight the boy made and smiled at a nearby elf. “Ribbons, if I may, do you know what phase the moon is in?”

“Full moon Misser Little Master.” The little elf perked up a bit. “I can bes making hot chocolate and yous favorite chocolate cake?...”

With a smile that was dim in it’s usual vibrancy, he nodded. “Much appreciated Ribbons. I think caffeine will just wreak havoc on my dreams, so please keep me from my coffee.” When the elf scurried away to do as he asked, he moved to sit on the other side of the counter from where Riddle had put down his paper, rubbing at his face.

“You seem to be the topic of much discussion.”

Blinking up at the other boy, the newspaper was pushed in front of him.

By Penelope Salarina

Hogwarts stands a pillar of the British Wizarding Community, and yet, we as adults only know what we hear from our children- the life of our future generations hidden behind thick stone walls and ancient wards.

So when a panel of seven NEWT certified testers were called on to show up the Monday before the end of the Autumn term, it was a surprise to hear who had asked for the early testing.

None other than the boy with the emerald eyes that had been subject of many whispers lately: Hadrian Malfoy.

The youngest of the influential Malfoy family, Hadrian stumbled into our world when just last summer he had an inheritance test taken at the suggestion of his unusual guardian, the Vampire Lord Zacarias. Sorted into the house of the kind, the youngest Malfoy seems to have taken Hogwarts by charisma alone, and more than a few anonymous sources inside the school have admitted to falling hard for the brilliant gaze of his ‘gem-like eyes’.

With a trip to Gringotts, one can find something as equally surprising on the public records- Hadrian Malfoy was named Malfoy heir but abdicated the title to his older cousin, Abraxas Malfoy.

The youngest of the family gaining possession of the heirship is highly unusual and yet upon hearing reports of the boy’s overpowering magic- maybe not all that surprising in the end.

Either way, when the seven NEWT examiners went to Hogwarts, they were not expecting to give any type of certification to a twelve year old boy, magical prodigy or not.

The details of exactly what magic Hadrian Malfoy performed inside that chamber are secret yet, as the boy seems to have asked for a vow of secrecy, but one examiner was able to tell us of a display of magic that happened before the vow was spoken: The youngest Malfoy conjured an armchair to sit in- a spell of extremely high level that in practice takes adults many years to master.

We have to wonder, dear readers, what exactly else did Hadrian Malfoy do that he thought so important to require a secrecy vow?

This reporter is inclined to find out more on this boy genius that has co captured the attention of the Wizarding World.

More on the Malfoy Family, pg. 2

With a long-suffering sigh, he rubbed at his the bridge of his nose, displacing his glasses. It was no matter that Rita Skeeter wasn’t around, it seemed, people still wanted to gossip about him even without her brand of perverted lack of privacy.

Though- he had to admit- it wasn’t exactly painting him in such a bad light.

No, it was more that this was another piece in the timeline that tipped the scale towards the future not staying as it was. And as much as that was what he wanted, it also meant that he would know less of what would happen the more he changed.

Oh.
Breathing a sigh of relief that he had someone by his side that would surely guide him away from anything world-ending, he let his head fall to the counter with a dull thud.

“Do that too many times and you might lose some of that ‘genius’ the wizarding world seems to want a piece of.”

Tensing- because, oh right, there was a budding Dark Lord watching him- he shot the boy a glance though his dark lashes, trying to figure out what the boy’s motive for being here was.

Maybe he’s planning to poison you. Spike your hot chocolate like some amateur - No you idiot! He’s here because you’re an unknown variable and he wants to find out more about you!

Snorting softly at the Horcrux’s sarcasm, he pushed himself up, thanking the elf that set down a piece of chocolate cake and a mug of hot chocolate. Fixing his glasses, he took a bite of the chocolate cake, sighing in contentment. After a few more bites, he finally looked back up, meeting those dark brown eyes with flecks of red. “I like the color green.”

Tom blinked.

“I used to hate it, this one boy I knew as a kid wore it obsessively and I thought he was a prat for the longest time, so… but I find it’s not the worst color. Pink though-” His nose wrinkled up instinctively. “I hate the color pink with a vengeance.”

Looking at him as if he was a particularly interesting puzzle, Riddle tilted his head. “Why are you telling me this?”

Harry shrugged. “To break the silence. As much as I try to avoid the people in this house, I actually prefer to have company… I just find Cordelia too loud, and your minions irritate me- well- all of them but Nott and ‘Braxas. They’re okay.” He took another bite of mind-numbingly delicious chocolate cake, sighing slightly in contentment. “Though Cassie’s really my favorite out of all the snakes.”

“...I see.”

Drinking down a few sips of the hot chocolate that seemed to warm him from the inside out, he shrugged and took another bite of the piece of cake, letting it melt into his mouth before he washed it down with hot chocolate. “I didn’t have many people around when I was younger. In fact I was kind of a mess in general, but it’s okay, I’m better now.”

Deep red eyes stared up at him unblinkingly. “Are you?”

The question wasn’t accusing, but soft and strangely cajoling- almost as if Tom was actually interested in the answer.

Sliding off the stool, he put his plate and mug next to the sink, voice betraying none of the usual emotions that came with talking about this subject. “I’m not as self-destructive at least. Not anymore- I’m rather over that phase in my life.”

Tom tilted his head slightly. “I should hope so. If you weren’t…” He took a sip of his coffee. “I would have to intervene. And I doubt that would be enjoyable for anyone involved.”

Harry huffed at him irritably. “You were staring at my wrists,” he accused. Then, he turned to face Tom, flashing the best smile he could manage as he pulled down the sleeves of his jumper that had
ridden up. “So to answer the question you would have been thinking: Yes, I did hurt myself, but no, I have no plans to do it ever again.”

Then before the boy could say anything more, Harry took the opportunity of the lull in the conversation to scamper away to one of the other multiple hiding places Tom hadn’t found.

*You better not hurt yourself like that again. It would be a waste of such strong magical ability and I would fight you every step of the way.*

Harry just smiled, leaning back against the roof of the Manor, putting his hands behind his head in the picture of relaxation as he looked up at the clouds. “Hmmm… sounds like you almost care .”

*Ridiculous. I just think it would be a waste of potential- and I am quite against dying due to your self-image issues.*

Rolling his eyes before he let them slip shut, he tried to ignore the place where his chest ached at the words. “Right. I forgot about that part.”

And if he stayed on the roof well until the night sky was littered with stars and he was soaked to the bone with the remnants of a late thunderstorm- well that had nothing to do with the fact that he felt like his missing family and friends had ripped a gaping hole in his chest.

Plus, it wasn’t like anyone was missing him in the manor.

Even the voice in his head didn’t like him.

Chapter End Notes

We love saucy newspaper articles ^_^ they’re always such fun to write
Add in a bit of angst… and we have a recipe for a good chapter!
Thanks @bellachrome for being amazing!
See y’all in three!
Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry encounters Tom in the kitchens, and after blinking away the confusion a domestic Tom gave him, he found the boy was reading an article about him. Deciding that maybe telling Tom a little about himself, the other boy makes the connection about death the scars on his wrists and warns Harry off hurting himself. Later, on the roof, Riddle v.2 does the same and Harry decides his power was the only reason either wanted him alive.
(sad boi hours)

Chapter Notes

GUESS WHAT?
WE HAVE A BIRTHDAY! IT'S @bellachrome's BIRTHDAY! WHOOOOOO!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Insomnia. Tom really couldn’t see the problem with it. He may be up later than most, but during the long hours of the night, he could accomplish so much. Reading, homework, research, exploring the castle and discovering all of its secrets, writing of his own-

Or, at least, he could usually. Currently, he was pacing the length of his room in agitation. Several lumos lights in various spots around his quarters bobbed in the air currents he made with his pacing.

The topic that was keeping him up and disgustingly unproductive tonight? The unbreakable vow Hadrian had demanded of him.

The infuriating boy still had not told him what he wanted the vow to be. And that was going to drive Tom insane.

He stopped, pressing his fingers to his temples, raking his hands through his hair, forcing his body to draw deep, shuddering breaths.

He hated this. He hated the situation he found himself in. He hated that he had been ignorant and vain enough to agree to those stipulations for the duel. He hated his powerlessness, that he had lost the duel- duels were his specialty, Defense Against the Dark Arts his best subject- and yet facing Hadrian Malfoy, he had lost. And he hated Hadrian Malfoy for demanding the vow of him as spoils for the green-eyed boy’s victory.

Tom snarled and lashed out- his magic tore across the room- the mirror on the opposite wall shattered with an ear-splitting scream, shards of reflective glass exploding outward and littering the floor. Tom stood there, chest heaving, before walking over to the mess he made. He picked up one of the pieces, watching in fascination as blood welled up on his fingers and palm and dripped onto the floor.

It did nothing to appease the roiling angry mass of loathing in his chest.
Tom dropped the piece of broken mirror on the floor and watched as his blood followed its descent. This could not be allowed to go on. He would have to talk to Hadrian in the morning.

“Hadrian.”

Harry blinked at where Tom was again sitting in the kitchens watching him, brushing the loose pieces of his hair out of his eyes while also resigning himself to the fact that he’d have to take a shower after this due to the amount of flour covering him. “Yes?”

Tom looked at him for a moment too long, his hands unnaturally still in front of him, holding his wand. Harry’s own hand inched towards his own wand, just to be safe-- but then, “What do you want?”

Harry paused, startled. “What?”

“What do you want?” Tom repeated quietly, as if that would clear up Harry’s bewilderment.

Tilting his head slightly, Harry raised an eyebrow quizzically. “Well, if you mean for Yule… world peace would be a nice gift.”

The boy huffed in not-quite-laughter and Harry grinned at making the mini Dark Lord slip- but Tom’s blank mask was back within the minute, determination steeling his demeanor. “I meant… the Unbreakable Vow. The one you have yet to demand from me.”

“You mean the vow I won?” His lips quirked at the way Tom’s jaw clenched subtly, but he just shrugged. “I’m not really sure. I’ll have to think on it.”

Harry turned back to his cooking, effectively ending the conversation. Tom stood there for a second longer, then silently took his leave.

Harry did think on it. The vow, that is. Once he was reminded of it… well, the topic was never far from his thoughts.

He found himself once again on the roof, watching the twinkling stars instead of sleeping, wondering the possibilities of such a vow.

Maybe he could ask Tom to never spill magical blood? No, that would only hinder the boy in the event of a duel or a fight that he may need every tool in his arsenal… Could he ask that the boy never make another Horcrux?

_That would lead him to be suspicious of you for knowing he made one in the first place- and not even your position as a ‘seer’ would help you if he found out that the ring didn’t hold me anymore._

Humming, Harry nodded in acknowledgement to Riddle v.2’s point. “What about asking that he always listen to any advice I give?”
“No, that wouldn’t work.” Harry flopped backwards with a sigh. Having Tom make a vow to listen to him wouldn’t mean Tom would have to do as he said. And Harry couldn’t imagine taking away someone’s free will.

With a long sigh, he let his body go limp against the slope of the roof, bringing a hand up to rub at the bridge of his nose. “What about…” Not able to think up another idea he sighed again. “Any ideas? You are him for all extents and purposes.”

*Maybe ask him to spare a list of people- not to cause harm to them in any way or something of the like? You seem to care a lot about all your little friends.*

Harry made a noise of contemplation. “That might work. I could ask for one page and then use that to either write small or make it a longer page…”

The horcrux seemed to shrug. *I guarantee he will try to find a way around you granting more than twelve people that much power over him… But out of curiosity… would you include yourself on that list?*

“No… I don’t think I will.” His eyes found the twinkling ‘Sirius’ star hanging in the sky, the short huffed laugh he gave not holding any humor. “Who knows, maybe he’d be able to finally kill me. That sounds like something fate would do to fuck with me.”

*Your sense of humor is abysmal.*

Even as they both knew he wasn’t joking, neither decided to say anything about it, and when his eyes slipped closed there were warm tears hanging to his eyelashes.

Harry walked in the room, hands in his pockets, and flopped down in an empty chair with a long sigh. “Do you ever just want the sun to explode a bit faster so that you don’t have to live another meaningless day? Because I wouldn’t be opposed to being yeeted into a black hole right now.”

The room of Tom’s minions stared at him.

“What does… ‘yeeted’ mean? And what’s a… black hole? Is it different from a regular hole?” Abraxas tilted his head curiously.

Black Holes, Harry realized in a flash of horror, would not be discovered or made into a term until at least the mid 1960’s.

*Moron.*

Ignoring the brain leech he had that liked to insult him (*Who are you calling a ‘brain leech’!*) , Harry tried not to sink back into the chair like he so wanted, and instead just tried to ignore the light flush of mortification he was wearing. “I- uh- we’re going to ignore I said that whole sentence… I’m actually here, in the den you snakes keep, to answer a question posed to me by your evil overlord.”

Riddle raised an eyebrow at him, face carefully blank. “Alright.” With a flick of his wrist, he waved off his minions. “You all are dismissed until further notice. However, I suggest you remain close, as there is more I would like to discuss with you all after this business of mine with Malfroy is completed.”
Tom never took his eyes from Harry as the mini-Dark Lord’s minions quickly evacuated the room. Finally, when they were alone, Tom took out his wand and cast several silencing and privacy charms, reminding Harry of how paranoid Tom was, even in his youth.

*You know very well we couldn’t afford to be otherwise.*

Harry was about to inquire after what Riddle v.2 meant, but Tom interrupted his train of thought. “You have a request for the vow?”

“I want a vow that you won’t kill or harm a certain amount of people.” Glancing around the empty room to distract himself from the hope trying to choke him, he looked back to the boy in question and steeled himself. “I was thinking I get a page to write the names of-”

“Three.”

He blinked. “What?”

Tom Marvolo Riddle, the devil incarnate, smirked humorlessly at him. “You get three names.”

*Did you think we would let you off that easy?*

Snorting softly at the term ‘we’, Harry hummed, closing his eyes and sinking into his mindscape.

~

*Standing at the entrance to his mindscape of Hogwarts, Harry paced back and forth, Elder Wand twirling through his fingers. “I- I have so many people to choose from. My friends, my new family, my old family- I was expecting at least ten names!”*

Riddle v.2 was watching him from a stone bench, legs crossed in a mockery of relaxation, his eyes amused. “What are you going to do?”

“What about, say, Marian Malfoy?” Harry stopped, eyes lighting up. “If I did that then it would protect the lines that would inevitably birth Hermione and Draco, so that-”

“That won’t work.” Riddle v.2 shook his head. “Magic operates within constraints. Marian does not currently exist in this time and space, therefore cannot be said will exist in the future- after all, you are changing quite a few things.”

That made the hole in his chest ache, the mindscape seeming to dim as if a fog was rolling in. Riddle v.2 gave him a strange look and he just turned around, stalking for the exit. “Glad to know I can’t protect the only family I’ve ever known.”

~

Opening his eyes, he looked at the ceiling for a long moment, considering the names floating around in his head before he locked eyes with Tom. His voice was devoid of any emotion, chest aching, but he knew that there were three people he could *and would* protect. “Cassiopeia Black, Stella Moorvitch, and Abraxas Malfoy.”

If he had not spent his teenage years watching memories of the very boy standing in front of him, he would have missed the surprise that flitted across his eyes, but his cruel smirk covered it up quickly. “You are not going to include yourself in that?”

Harry snorted even as his stomach twisted. He was used to dying- and it would cause him no
detriment, unlike if he lost any of those three people. “To that would mean I have learned nothing from my childhood. No, I want those three names.”

The boy watched him for a long moment, eyes seeming to try to dig into him, but he kept resolute in the names he’d chosen. The two people that knew his secret and the one person that had led him to this time so far away from everything he knew. Tom nodded, holding out his hand. “Very well.”

Standing, Harry took the hand that was larger than his, voice soft. “Do you, Tom Marvolo Riddle-” The boy jolted but he held fast. “Vow that you will not hurt or harm Cassiopeia Black, Abraxas Malfoy, and Stella Moorvitch in any way?”

Dark eyes flecked with red seemed to narrow in on him, but his mind barriers were too strong and eventually the boy drew back from that, scowling as he gritted out, “I vow it.” A binding golden light settled around their hands and as soon as it was in place Harry tried to pull back. “How do you know my full name?” The hand tightened on his, those dark eyes narrowed to slits. “Who told you?”

Tearing his hand back, Harry darted to the door, only for it to slam closed. Spinning around, he raised his hands in a mock gesture of playing defense, even as both of them knew he was able to duel without his wand. “I just know it.” Harry shrugged in fake helplessness. “Just like I know a lot of things.”

I suggest you remove yourself from the situation.

Muttering ‘obviously’ under his breath, he was about to apparate to the roof and just compromise one of his hiding places (he didn’t trust Tom wouldn’t trace back the spell), when the door he was backed against opened.

Stumbling back, he was caught easily, the smell of sage washing over him. Cassiopeia grinned down at him. “Hey little Lord. Your uncle said that he saw you coming this way.”

“Cassie.” Relief sinking in, he drew her into a big hug. “I missed you.”

The grey eyes sparkled. “Cordelia told me that she wanted to have tea with me. Do you want to come with? I think she might try to marry you off to me, though I’m pretty sure with your heirships, you would be able to stop that in its tracks.”

“You gave up the heirship though.” Abraxas looked confused from where he was leaning against the wall outside the room, the three of them seeming to ignore the way Tom was sweating.

Cassiopeia snickered. “Did you not tell even them? I thought they would know- oh… you and your goblins hid it away, didn’t you? Sneaky little Lord… very Slytherin of you.”

He cast her a sideways glare. “I didn’t much feel like publicly announcing it, as we both know it would give Dumbledore even more reason to hate me. I’m fine with being a dark creature-loving, prodigal necromancer… but he would get even more obsessed with my untimely demise if I take that heirship, hence where my contacts as a Goblin Friend come in.”

“Goblin Friend, vampire raised, given the title as werewolf ambassador due to your dearest Teddy-bear, knighted by one of the fey courts for saving an influential fae from an insane wizard, considered an honorary merman, beloved by every magical creature you come across… and you think Heir of Slytherin is your most damning title?” The girl grinned wickedly, ruffling his hair. “Oh, sweet summer child, don’t you know literally half the wizarding community is waiting to file possible marriage contracts with you, Malfoy heir or not?”

Harry took a deep breath, pushing at the taller girl. “Come on, I’m not talking about this sober. We’re
going to tea and then I’m convincing Cordelia it’s a good idea for me to get drunk.” He waved one arm in dramatic emphasis. “I think: finally, I’m done with fame, and then guess what- Boom! Fate just fucks me over!”

Cassiopeia laughed brightly, going along with his pushing her towards the garden. “Just wait until they see you on a broom! You’ll have people salivating!”

“Hence why I am going to avidly ignore Quidditch tryouts.” He grouched, shuddering at the thought and pushed all the previous comments as they moved down the hall, the girl to his side just giggling.

Chapter End Notes

Harry: "Tom Marvolo Riddle-
Tom: //INSTANT KILL MODE ACTIVATED//
~
Please wish Bells a happy birthday because she's so very wonderful!
I am attempting to go through your comments and respond I swear <3 Thank you all for being so very wonderful <3
See you in three!
Chapter Summary

Previously:
Tom ponders the Unbreakable Vow, finally just asking what Harry wants from him. Harry thinks on this and asks that Tom not kill or harm a certain amount of people- Tom allows him three- Cassiopeia Black, Stella Moorvitch, and Abraxas Malfoy. Upon making the vow, Harry accidentally says Tom's full name and when trying to escape the situation, is saved by Cassiopeia.
After Cassie teases Harry about his 'titles' (see last chapter for all of them), they go to talk to Cordelia Malfoy.

Chapter Notes

All my props, kudos, and human sacrifices to @bellachrome for not only the lovely Tom scene, but for being a merciful skeleton queen (and an amazing beta) :) :) :) My co-pilot thanks you for being such an amazing co-writer and friend <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Infuriating, infuriating, infuriating, infuriating- !

Tom pressed his fingers to his temples lightly, attempting to beat back the growing headache. His… more violent mind and instincts howling for Hadrian’s blood, demanding he destroy this danger-opponent-predator before Hadrian destroyed him, and the rest of his mental processes demanding to take- possess- mark as his own, as Harry was strong and desirable and kind-

Tom shut down that last thought immediately.

Kindness was for those who were weaker, those who needed a handout or a pat on the head, those who didn’t have the strength or ambition to climb the social ladder and take what they needed for themselves, as he himself did.

But, the insipid concept of kindness aside, Hadrian was strong and desirable. His magical aptitude itself put him on a completely separate level from the entirety of the Hogwarts student body. Then, from there, his skill in battling, the diversity of his knowledge, his natural charisma and charm- so different from Tom’s own, that he had to work so hard for!- and his connections to the great families of the wizarding world. And furthermore, according to this new information from… Cassie, the bitch Hadrian saw fit to protect with the vow the infuriating boy demanded from Tom- well at least the peasant was good for telling him more about the small Malfoy- his status with the creatures of the wizarding world and the heirships he was hiding.

Infuriating boy, why would he hide his power, his aptitude? He could command multitudes with everything at his disposal.
Tom lowered his fingertips from his temples, his mind calm and resolved at last.

He wanted Hadrian.

Hadrian was the only one he could see standing at his right hand as he lead the wizarding world into a greater future. And Tom would have him.

Harry didn’t even have time to ask Cordelia about drinking (he looked to be twelve after all), as the woman had basically ignored them both from their entrance, just starting into an in-depth rant about how the state of the world was going to hell...

“All these mudblood wenches, seducing our young lords and sullying their lines!”

Harry glanced to Cassiopeia and she held up two fingers, pouring four shots of gin. With a snicker, he took two and at the girl’s nod they downed their shots in sync. Coughing slightly, he just smiled innocently when Lady Malfoy looked up.

“You okay darling?”

Coughing again, eyes tearing up just a bit at the taste in his mouth- as if he’d decided to drink lava- he wiped at his eyes. “Your enthusiasm brings me to tears Auntie, please, go on.”

Sending him a gooey smile the woman reserved for him, Abraxas, and the weddings of two purebloods apparently, the woman took a sip of her tea daintily. “Where was I… Oh! And then your uncle, my dear Septimus comes to me and tells me that Abraxas should think about marrying a halfblood or- or a MUDBLOOD !”

With twin grimaces, they poured a shot each.

“Can you imagine? My ‘Braxas marrying some mudblood whore ? She wouldn’t even know how to be a lady of standards for the Malfoy name! It would be insulting! Make us a mockery of society!”

Cassiopeia and him met eyes. One insult about blood status, two sexist insults and stereotypes- three shots. He leaned closer to the girl slightly, whisper hiding untapped mirth. “This might actually kill me. I’ve never tried to die via alcohol poisoning.”

You’re an absolute idiot. What are you thinking, drinking like this just because of a few comments! Stop this!

Ignoring the Horcrux that had been having a temper tantrum since he started drinking, he wiggled his eyebrows, downing the two shots and clinking the third against Cassie’s. “Salud!”

“Oh, dear me, I almost forgot... you two are courting correctly- aren’t you?”

Bending over in his chair to avoid getting gin all over his nice robes, he coughed, the shot having gone down wrong. When he could finally breathe again, he dabbed his mouth with a napkin and looked at his so-called ‘aunt’. “Sorry, what ?”

Cordelia smiled, waving a hand delicately to the glasses they had in hand. “Drinking together to celebrate your courting. It’s usually at a later stage in negotiations, but I don’t blame you two for not knowing-”
Harry cut off the woman right there, not about to listen to that nonsense- he’d had to help Hermione with figuring out what the fuck the courting process was and he’d be forever scarred at some of the more medieval ones. “I’m gay.”

The garden was silent except for the sounds of the animals roaming the premises and he wondered faintly if they had peacocks, or that was just Lucius’ flamboyant nature coming out to preen.

_The Malfoys are quite fond of their albino peacocks, though I quite despise them._

Ah. So Lucius was less of a sad pitiful man that he’d thought. Not by a lot... but still- it was a little.

“Excuse me?” Lady Malfoy looked at him, her eyes sharp, voice flat as if she was in shock.

“I’m gay. I like men. Guys. Blokes?... I’m not marrying Cassiopeia- _no offence Cassie_ - nor any other woman for that matter.”

The girl to his side just smiled. “No offence taken.”

Cordelia stood up, voice screeching as if she was a banshee. “Hadrian Aurelius Malfoy! You are not ‘gay’! You are a Malfoy and you are to marry a woman!”

Cassiopeia passed him a shot and upon downing it, he stood up, his eyes cold. If he’d learned one thing from Sirius before the man had been unfairly ripped from him, he’d learned that his sexuality was never someone else’s business and that he should be proud of who he loved. He’d taught Teddy that, and then taught all the rest of his kids that, and he would forever stand by it. “No. I won’t.”

The woman opened her mouth, but he held up a hand, stopping her.

His voice was that of the Head Auror that had been sent to hunt down and kill the infamous child killer, Fenrir Greyback, after the war. “I will not marry someone I do not love, and as I am not your child or your heir, you have no power to force me to. In fact- unless by some stroke of miracle- I will probably never marry, so if you have a problem with that then why don’t you have another kid and force your sexist, racist, homophobic ideals on them!”

The woman flinched back, as they both knew she was unable to have more kids (though not for a lack of trying). “I-...” Her voice trailed off.

“Great. With that settled, i’m going to get pissed while I marvel over the fact that you have _albino fucking peacocks_.” He grinned at Cassiopeia. “You gonna come with?”

Taking the gin bottle from his hand gently, the girl shook her head. “No little Lord. I unfortunately just stopped by to save you from a few awkward conversations. I have to get back to my family, but I’m taking this from you. You’re well on your way to being- as you so eloquently put it- ‘pissed’.”

Chapter End Notes

The Boys:
Tom *casually always down for murder* Riddle
&
Hadrian *chaotic bean* Malfoy

Thank you, @bellachrome for being amazing as always <3
I am attempting to go through your comments and respond, I swear <3 Thank you all for being so very wonderful <3
See you in three!
In Which Harry Gives Mini-Satan A Hug

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Tom had a mental breakdown ft. thinly disguised feelings, and Harry gets drunk enough to tell off his bigoted aunt (yeah... that's pretty much it)

Chapter Notes

Idk but I stan these boys so hard- thank you all for your wonderful comments and I apologize for not getting to my inbox as often as I probably should, but know that each and every kind word that Bells and I get just makes us more motivated to share our works with all of you.
With that, a round of applause for @bellachrome! (Oh and warning- we have some non-con hugging in this chapter)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry hummed a song that wouldn’t come out for another fifty years, laying in the grass with peacocks surrounding him.

You’re insufferable. Your brain is literally unbearable right now- it’s like wading through a cloud of a child’s multicolored crayon scribbles.

“M’kay… Grumpy butt.”

Merlin save me, I told you not to drink that much.

Harry snorted, finding this extremely funny for the reason that he was sure that no version of Tom would ever truly care for him- at least not enough to stop him from making stupid choices. “You sound… like you need… a hug.” His words slurred slightly as if his vocal chords were doing the macarena without his permission.

Dark Lords do not do ‘hugs’.

Blinking at that statement, he sat up slowly, muttering a ‘sorry birdie’ when he displaced the peacock sitting on his chest. “Whaa- wait…. You never- You never ever ever hugged someone?”

The silence from Riddle v.2 was long and suspicious enough that Harry realized he was right.

“Oh.”

Is that all you have to say, moron?

So they were back to insults- well fine. He’d just have to do something about this new and unexpected insult to the part of him that Teddy affectionately labeled ‘Dad Harry’, standing up
wobbling-ly and marching as best he could through the maze-like halls of Malfoy Manor.

Do not- stop that train of thought right there- you are not planning on- UGH!

“I’m planning to hug the man that killed my parents- don’t act like this is more painful for you buddy boy, you’re not the one who has emotions like normal non-psychopaths.”

There was a pause where Harry was sure he’d finally hurt Riddle v.2’s feelings, before-

Rude.

Nope, okay, they were all good. He looked down at the floor, stopping for a second, and then grinning and shedding his stupid shiny shoes.

What now?

“I’m having fun you big blue beach ball- ever tried it before? No? Then be quiet for a hot sec.” Steadying himself, he looked down the tiled hallway, before breaking into an all-out sprint. A second later, he stopped running and braced himself, whooping madly as he slid down the hall. Seeing where the end of the hallway was rapidly approaching, he flailed, and with a flick of his wrist-crashed into a cushion that he’d summoned to break the fall of his stupidity. Giggling, he steadied himself. “OooooH! I have a good idea!”

I get the feeling I won’t like this.

“Shhh, you party pooper- I’m having fun.” Waving his hand so the mattress disappeared, he shrugged out his outer robe, transforming it into a pair of roller-skates. Cackling at the vague sense of unease from Riddle v.2, he got them on somehow, and let a grin split his face. “Don’t worry. Teddy and I used to do this every Samhain- drunk off our gills on firewhiskey.”

Somehow, I am not reassured.

Snorting, he started skating as fast as he could, heading right for the end of the hall, and when he was just about to crash, he conjured a pole and swung himself around the corner, breathless laughter bubbling up from his lips.

Then a taller boy was just there and he was crashing into one of Riddle’s unidentified goons, both of them sprawling to the floor.

After a pause of silence he burst out laughing, laying on his back in the middle of the hallway. Hearing a groan, he sat up, head spinning. “Oh Merlin’s saggy tits, I- uh- didn’t see anyone… you good mate?”

“Why...” A boy with dark hair and silvery eyes glared at him. “Why in the gods were you- you-” He waved his hand at Harry’s roller skates. “Rolling around the halls like that!”

Harry just gaped at the Sirius Black look-alike. “Wow that hurts. Oooh pain- my heart is literally crying.” Standing up unsteadily, he reached out a hand. “Okay, personal hell of mine, are you hurt or not? Because I think I’m going to slowly die from grief if I have to look at your face a second longer.”

“You’re a real piece of work, Malfoy.” The boy took the hand though, brushing himself off and looking at him shiftyly. “Don’t expect me to fall for your ‘pretty big eyed’ act like everyone else, I know a bastard mudblood when I see one.”
Harry laughed, but it felt like it was being cut on the shards of where his heart had just shattered in his chest. Closing his eyes for a long moment, he tried to tell himself that the boy who looked so much like Sirius wasn’t actually him- that Sirius would never say that.

A nagging thought tugged on his brain.

What if because of the changes he’d made, Sirius Black grew up believing in all this ‘blood purity’ shit? Something in his chest tightened and he felt like he was going to be sick. Putting a hand on the wall, he ignored the traitorous wetness in his eyes, his voice shaking even as he wanted it to stay emotionless. “Well fuck me with a rusty spoon, aren’t you just a peach today, Orion Black.”

“Well fuck me with a rusty spoon, aren’t you just a peach today, Orion Black.”

“Are you- Malfoy are you crying ?”

“No.” He wiped at his traitorous-blasphemous-stupid eyeballs. “You’re just mean- and I’m- I’m either too drunk or not drunk enough to deal with you right now.”

Too drunk. Definitely too drunk.

“Shaddap you dumb flamingo.”

You’re not having fun at the moment- so technically I’m allowed to speak, as I am sharing this space as well.

The boy seemed to think the jab meant for Riddle v.2 was aimed at him. “How dare you insult me!”

Huffing at the boy in front of him who was apparently throwing a hissy fit- and not able to shut up the voice in his head, knowing the horcrux wouldn’t buy any weak excuse that “oh yeah my favorite godfather’s dad insulting me is super fun ”- he shook his head and started to turn around. “Whatever. I have a mission to do, fun to have, and stupid voices to show up.”

Orion Black’s eyes widened. “Don’t you dare- I’m talking to you!”

“Then stop talking.” He started down the hall, magic surging out to block a spell sent at his back, sending a hair-color changing spell back down the hall.

That was how, 15 minutes later (give or take half and hour of getting lost) he found himself outside the room Tom was supposedly staying in, hair having come out of it’s long braid, his shoes and outer-robe lost to the hallways of the Manor.

Knocking, he got distracted by tapping out the rhythm of Billy Joel's 'Uptown Girl', so when the door opened quickly he had to stabilize himself on the door frame.

“ What .”

“Good morning, do you have time to talk about our lord and savior, Albania Dumbleboor?”

Tom Riddle looked down at him coolly, red-flecked eyes narrowing in assessment. “You… aren’t sober, are you.”

Giggling, he shrugged, sliding past Tom and into the room. Looking around he wiggled his eyebrows. “Wow. I knew ‘Braxas was your evil minion, but giving you the nicest of the guest bedrooms, considering your blood status and the vile that my aunt would spill if she found out that you were getting better hospitality than Orion Black- that rusty melon muncher… You must have
some really talent at scaring the bejesus outta people.”

“...did you seek me out solely to insult me?”

Spinning so fast he almost fell over, he looked at the boy with wide eyes, holding up his hands. “I didn’t mean it that way!” Feeling a weeks worth of emotion that he’d been happily repressing hit him, he swayed slightly and tried his hardest not to cry, even as he felt his lips trembling slightly.

*Are you not a former Auror? Pull yourself together! You are not so weak as to cry- I will not be attached to a host who cries so easily!*

Ducking his head he sniffed slightly, clumsily pushing all those dangerous emotions to the back of his brain. Looking up he tried to smile. “I- uh- I wanted a hug.” The boy that, if he had any say in it, wouldn’t have any part in being labeled a ‘Dark Lord’ stared at him as if he was speaking in another language. “Oh Merlin...” He was sure he looked horrified. “You don’t even know what that means, do you?” Nodding resolutely, he started to move forward.

Tom stepped back, face cold and blank. “If you want a hug, go see your Cassie. I’ll not deal with you while you are *inebriated* like this.”

*Told you.*

Okay then. Plan B.

Letting some of those emotions creep out of that box, he felt his eyes tearing up. “I just- I don’t think anyone here likes me and I’m so used to my friends always giving me hugs-” He pulled the best pair of watery puppy dog eyes that he’d taught Calla so she could stay up later than her bedtime. “I- I thought since- since you’re kinda nice that...”

“That what, Malfoy? You’ve made it perfectly clear that you dislike me-”

But Harry’s arms were already latching around the thin boy like a limpet, head buried in the fabric of his robes, hugging him gently but firmly- like he used to do whenever Teddy would have nightmares.

It was like hugging a statue.

And wasn’t that even worse? It was one thing to see memories of Wool’s Orphanage, to see this brilliant but broken boy grow up so cold and isolated… but to stand here and really wonder if a single person had ever even had the common sense to show such a lonely child an ounce of kindness- Harry was sure that the tears in his eyes were out of sympathy as a kid who hadn’t known what positive touch was until he was eleven.

Heart aching for yet another thing he couldn’t fix, he hugged the taller boy tighter, realizing that he may have needed this as much as the other boy did. Sure, it was true that he tried to participate in the tactile nature of his Hufflepuff companions, but somewhere deep deep inside he was still that small eleven-year-old that flinched when people moved too fast or talked too loud.

So standing here, drunk up to his gills, emotionally exhausted, and now so blissfully warm… It was hardly any surprise that he fell asleep.

*Chapter End Notes*
Harry's such a drunk mood, honestly- fall asleep on your love interest after mistakenly insulting them? That's My Shit ^.^
All credit for Tom and Riddle v.2 goes to the amazing @bellachrome!
See you in three!
In Which Mini-Satan Has A Heart Attack

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Drunk Harry + feelings = fun times
OR
Harry snuggles some peacocks, Orion gets run over by a drunk (Harry), and Tom hates EVERYTHING.

Chapter Notes

What a wonderful day to be late for updating! *whistles and tries to act innocent* 
Oops, I- uh- am traveling at the moment and kinda... forgot?
Anyway! Thank you @bellachrome for being my muse, my beautiful beam of pure awesomeness, and the one thing keeping the devil from burning my house down!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

NO NO NO NO NO-
Tom's body refused to listen to his screeching demands to shove Hadrian away.

NO STOP NO-
Tom stood, frozen, tense and slightly trembling (Merlin why was he trembling he was stronger than this) as the petit boy- secretly sent to torment him, Tom was now sure- wrapped his small arms around Tom's larger frame and clung to him.

DONT TOUCH ME-
Tom thought hysterically that Hadrian could be the squid in the Black Lake for how tightly he gripped him.

NO DON'T TOUCH ME WHY ARE YOU TOUCHING ME-
Then Hadrian let out a sound suspiciously like a snore. Startled out of his spiraling thoughts, Tom looked down at the boy wrapped around his frame.

Hadrian was fast asleep.

Tom sectioned off the part of his mind that was still screaming- that wouldn’t be of any use to him, now, when he had to get the infuriating boy to somewhere more comfortable to sleep, lest he wake up.

Tom did not want to risk Hadrian waking up when the boy was in this state. Inebriated and... touchy-feely.
He shuddered.

Merlin, he couldn’t stand it.

He hated being touched. Loathed it with every fiber of his being. Perhaps the only thing he hated more was sentiment, the sappy, gooey, disgusting and weak emotions that ruled the larger masses of humanity. Tom himself had worked for years to overcome such baser drives, desiring to rise above the mundane inanity he found himself surrounded by for the many years before learning about the wizarding world.

Carrying Hadrian into his room, he flicked his hand to move back the sheets of his bed, and gently placed Hadrian there. Doing his best to ignore his negative illogical reactions to the situation in favor of the practicality of making sure the sleeping boy didn’t wake up, he gently tugged off the boy’s now-filthy socks that he would definitely have to burn— he must have been very drunk if he wasn’t even wearing shoes—and pulled the covers up over the petit boy.

Hadrian snuffled in his sleep, turning onto his side and curling the covers around him further. Tom paused, watching.

Hadrian looked so young in his sleep. When he was awake, it was easy to forget how small the child really was— he exuded the power and confidence ancient stories described of gods. But here, asleep, face unlined by weariness… he looked young, but not in the way of a sleeping child— in the way of someone of the legends of old, timeless and trapped in eternal youth.

Tom mentally jerked himself out of contemplation and turned away from the boy sleeping in his bed. With the way he was going on, one would think that he was the one that had been drinking.

He summoned his work from where it lay. Although he had gotten all his pressing assignments done, he was doing several extra credit pieces for various teachers, and while there weren’t any set deadlines on them other than the vague area of the end of the school year, he had access to the Malfoy’s library here and he wanted to use that resource while he had full access to it. Besides, it wasn’t like he was going to get sleep tonight, what with that infuriating child sleeping in his bed.

Tom lost himself in the rhythm of his research, refusing to let himself think of the infuriating and fascinating child before him, and the long hours of the night passed by as Tom worked and Hadrian slept soundly in his bed.

Warm— warm and wrapped tightly in blankets that—

Harry’s brain froze mid thought, pounding headache ignored in sake of the unfamiliarity. The sheets wrapped around him weren’t his silk sheets, the blankets too heavy—

This was not his bed.

The Auror part of him pushed aside the child and slowly he kept his breathing level, not about to alert whoever had moved him, whoever had pulled off his socks and shoes and outer robe that he was awake.

But the room was still and his head hurt and it was bright— with a wince, he cracked an eye open.

Just over the top of the heavy blankets cocooning him he could see a head of hair, bent over as if having fallen asleep. Moving, body achy and feeling as if under the effects of a cruciatus curse
especially contained just to his brain, he slipped from the bed to stand, feet bare.

The cold floor wasn’t even registered, his eyes instead glued to who was sitting in the chair across from the bed he’d been sleeping in.

Bent over a scroll of parchment, book in his lap and a spot of ink smudged on his pants from where his quill had dropped, Tom Riddle looked… for a lack of a better word, ‘serene’. Like when Harry would check in on his godson late after work, and find Teddy asleep over his charms homework, ink smudged on his face.

And wasn’t this terrifying? Harry was standing, smiling like a sappy parent over the mini Dark Lord.

Sentimentality. It’s your most exploitable weakness.

Sighing, rubbing at his forehead as if it could get rid of his headache, he moved to carefully ease the quill from the boy’s hand, setting it on the side table. Using a bit of levitation, he put the parchment and book to the side, smiling at the book that was the closest thing to alchemy that one could find without looking in the second lesser-known part of the Malfoy library (one of his many hiding places that had been found by Erik and Calla Greengrass-Lupin).

Tom was a smart kid, though that wasn’t all that surprising.

Don’t patronize me- or him.

Rolling his eyes at Riddle v.2, he moved the sheets to the side, waving his hand so the boy rose gently into the air and to the bed. Careful not to wake him, he slipped the shoes off, setting them by the bed and flicking his finger so the heavy outer robe moved to hang on a knob of the room’s dresser. Tucking the covers around the boy carefully, he stepped back.

Tom looked so… young.

Going over the night’s events in his head, he let his lips settle into a slight frown. This boy was the same one that had stiffened like he was being hurt because of a simple hug? The same boy sleeping with the face of an angel? No one had even tried to care- much less properly love this boy?

The headache got worse and Harry pursed his lips. That wouldn’t do. Not one bit. Not while Harry was around.

“Mipsy? Can you be quiet?”

An elf appeared, normal popping sound much quieter, looking at him worriedly. “Little Master is not in his room?”

He just gave the elf a soft smile. “Can you get me the book on alchemy from the trunk in my room?”

With a nod, the elf was back with the book he wanted. Thanking the elf and waiting until she had popped away, he moved to set the book down next to the one Tom had been reading, using the quill to scratch out a small note on a section of unused parchment paper.

~

Sorry about invading your room :)

Also- this book helped me quite a bit on understanding how metals and other materials bond
chemically and how to do some proper alchemy- unlike that flimsy stuff your other book calls ‘alchemy’.

Though I would stick to writing about your other book, especially if not wanting to draw attention from a certain transfiguration teacher… Old goat >:(

~

The book was one from his original timeline, a gift from Draco he couldn’t bear to leave behind and he expected that the little notes and scribbled writing in the margins might find the boy some kind of sense of humor- Merlin knows the boy needed one.

Tom’s first thought upon awakening was, what a bizarre dream.

His second thought upon awakening was, ah, apparently it wasn’t a dream after all.

Merlin.

He hoped Hadrian hadn’t woken up still drunk and gone off to do something stupid. He’d have to check to make sure the infuriating boy was okay. Tom rose and began searching for his shoes- the last thing he needed was socks as dirty as Hadrian’s- when he saw the book, that he definitely did not recognize, and the parchment on top of it.

Curious, he opened the parchment.

A note from Hadrian.

A small smile that he would never admit to anyone touched his lips as he read it. It appeared he didn’t need to go out searching for Hadrian after all. The boy was lucid enough to insult Dumbledore; he would be alright.

Looking down, he ran his fingers over the cover of the book reverently. This was something he would definitely savor reading.

Then he paused, and blinked.

He had definitely fallen asleep over his work. How had he woken up in bed?

Chapter End Notes

Tom: I am the devil, the epitome of all things evil. I have no emotion, no heart, I am the perfect killer, nothing fazes me.
Harry: *trips over himself*
Tom: *sobbing* so cute
~
Hay friends! I am dead inside from traveling! Fun!
See you in three (ish)! <3
In Which Harry Claims His Heirships

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Drunk Harry goes to give Tom a hug and falls asleep. Tom puts him to bed and then also falls asleep (totally not watching Harry sleep). When Harry wakes he leaves a short note and a book.

Chapter Notes

All hail @bellachrome, skeleton queen and empress of the betas <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You missed your mandated appointment!”

Hadrian looked up from his book, quite content in his lazy pursuit of knowledge, having not moved from the wonderfully comfortable armchair for what he was guessing was closing in on a whole day. He had no doubt that Tom would be up and lecturing his minions about how to manipulate adults or something like that, and the kitchens held no appeal at the moment, so he’d taken to his books about the customs and cultures of the death-based races (dementors, vampires, banshees, hags, and such).

His Ragnarok-appointed goblin healer, the one he’d met with when he’d come in with Zacarias- was standing next to Cordelia in the arches of the library, the Malfoy Matriarch looking as if she’d been sucking a lime. Putting his book down he stood, sinking into a low bow, hand in a fist over his heart. “High Goblin Healer, I apologize for any time wasted or gold lost- I must not have gotten your owl setting up an appointment.”

The old woman goblin huffed, eyes narrowed. “You did not receive the owl we sent to Hogwarts? I specifically stated that you were to come to Gringotts by today at the latest!”

Humming, a suspicion forming in his mind, he tucked the book under one of his arms, tilting his head. “Healer Habora, may we discuss this as we walk? I do not think that I would mind coming to the bank with you, as I had meant to have a word with Ragnarok before I went back to Hogwarts either way.”

“Only if you stay for a lesson in Goblin Law. Ragnarok has been eager to get you to the court for a day.” The healer’s eyes glinted, knowing that this would mean strengthening ties between the Goblin Nation and a powerful ally.

Chuckling, he grinned toothily. “I accept your conditions, as long as I can wield the sword.”

Cordelia looked startled. “Sword? Darling what are you-”

“Deal.” Both ignoring his aunt, they shook hands. “You may play as Damocles' Sword for this trial, little Lord.”
Sharing grins, he started down the hall, leading her to the nearest floo. Opening the door, ignoring the fact Tom and his minions were in the room, he bowed to the healer. “Lady Habora.”

The old goblin woman made a short choking sound he recognized as a laugh. “I should be bowing to you, Lord Goblin Friend, not you to me. Your kindness holds no bounds.”

He just shrugged, smirking. “You say such things about my kindness and yet you still let me play with sharp objects? I am starting to think you want to see me choke in front of the court, Lady Healer.”

Grinning at him sharply, she made her way through the room, passing right by Tom to stand by the floo. “I hold no preconceived notions, little Lord, only the facts. And the state of malnourishment you came to me in at the beginning of the year makes me think you will not be able to even lift the sword.” Cackling, the goblin threw down floo powder and was gone.

Sputtering, he flailed for a second, not even able to retort to the healer as she’d gone. “She—what—I’m perfectly capable of swinging a damn sword!” Huffing and turning to where Cordelia looked like she wanted to fret over him, he sighed. “I will be meeting with my account manager, Ragnarok, and then will be attending a trial under Goblin law. Please do not set a place for me at dinner, I fear that this will be quite a lengthy affair, especially if Habora tries to fix every broken bone I’ve ever gotten.” He rolled his eyes at that thought, turning to take a scoop of floo powder.

The Malfoy Matriarch made a noise of distress that he ignored. They still weren’t on good terms from their tea party in the gardens. He also ignored Tom's piercing gaze, attempting to weigh down on him with the intensity of his stare. He didn't have time to deal with the mini Dark Lord.

Stepping in the fireplace, he took a deep breath. “I despise flooing… Gringotts Bank Ragnarok's office!”

With the feeling of being sucked through a straw, he was spit out in a familiar office, stumbling a few paces so he could collect himself in a chair by the goblin’s large desk.

“Good to see you in one piece, little Lord.” Ragnarok grinned at him, seemingly amused at his dismal attempt at flooing, pushing a tray of tea foreword in invitation. “Healer Habora wants me to tell you that as soon as we are done you are to go directly to the infirmary.”

He nodded, sitting up when his head finally stopped spinning. “Very well. I would like to claim my heirship rings, as well as have a pair of boxes charmed for exchanging letters and missives. I believe that my mail is being intercepted.”

Ragnarok frowned. “Letters of importance would destroy itself when opened by someone that was not of your magical—” Understanding filler the goblin’s eyes. “Ah. I see. You think the letter did not get to you because it was intercepted and destroyed itself.”

Harry only gave a thin smile. “Hence the boxes.”

Nodding, the Head Goblin wrote a note on a slip of parchment, tapping it so it turned into a small animal and slipped under the door. Dark beady eyes studied him. “You know who is tampering with your letters and are asking for the heirship rings as protection, are you not?”

It was not a question he could avoid and it would be foolish to think it was.

So he just waved his hand, a tea cup being poured with a splash of milk before it and it’s saucer
floated over to him and he was leaning back in the chair. “Albus Dumbledore believes people either work for him or against him.” Taking a sip of the tea, he sneered, disgust and hate plain to see only because he was in a private room deep behind layers of Goblin warding. “He thinks creatures under him, usable by stepping on their heads only, and by choice I have made myself a target to him. The biggest target full of everything he hates, in fact. And although he cannot kill me… I would prefer to be able to not have to keep up a constant shield to his magic, hence my asking to claim the heirships before the usual age of 15.”

At Hogwarts he’d had to maintain constant vigilance, as the professor had tried to charm him with compulsions at least every other week, but it had been wearing him thin as his body was still not completely used to the strain of his magic.

“You know the heirship rings will record any attacks on you- report them to the lord of the family.”

It was not a question and he hid a viciously twisted smile behind a sip of his tea.

Ragnarok continued, airing his plans to the empty office that was known for being iron tight in keeping secrets. “But as there is no current lord, due to them both being dead bloodlines, you can keep the files secret and wait for the perfect time to strike.”

Harry’s chuckled. “I will release them after I first find evidence to more of the old man’s secrets. Then, when the wizarding world turns to ask me why I didn’t release them earlier, I will claim to being a scared child that couldn’t speak up when everyone still loved the man. This, I am sure, will bring out others to join in with their own stories.” The tea tasted like the victory he knew was so close within his grasp.

The goblin looked proud of his plan (or as proud as he’d ever seen a goblin look). “The light will fall and all its efforts to stay pure will be smeared over by the filth it’s been hiding for so long.”

Finishing his tea as another goblin came in with a tray holding four boxes, setting them on the desk before bowing and exiting again, he sat forward. Smoothing a finger over one of the charmed boxes, he looked up. “The price for both the boxes and my lesson in politics?”

“Thirty galleons.”

What? That is theft plain and simple!

Harry tilted his head, ignoring the horcrux. “And the enchantments on the box?”

Tell me you are not seriously thinking of this price!

The goblin opened one of the boxes, tracing the runes on the inside. “Blood protections to keep it sealed if from everyone but the owner, instantaneous travel, concealing charms placed on any letters passed along, and resistant to everyone but a goblin wardbreaker.”

“Twenty-two galleons.”

Riddle v.2 seemed to choke. Do you know how much money that is?

Ragnarok grinned, as it was a little known fact that Goblins loved to haggle. “Twenty-four.”

He considered this. They both knew that his offer of twenty-two was more than generous, but then again he had more money than he could ever need with his minimal lifestyle and the amount of investments he had written down in the blank pages of Abraxas’ old journal. “Twenty-three galleons and the name of one investment in trade for the boxes, my lesson, and an audit of the Hogwarts’
The Head Goblin nodded. "Deal."

Shaking the wrinkled hand, he smiled thinly and pulled out the green leather journal out of the pouch around his throat, taking a single piece of parchment from the back and storing it away again. "If future goes to plan, in 1959 the self-stirring cauldron will be invented- however… If I were to get 60% of all sales, I would hand the patent over now and let the Goblin Nation have the rest of the profit and full credit."

*Impressive... You are truly a Slytherin at heart.*

Riddle v.2 was smirking, he could feel it.

The goblin’s eyes widened, as this obviously more than was expected, Ragnarok gently taking the parchment from his hand that Hermione had written out for him neatly. “Pleasure doing business with you, Master of Death.”

Harry nodded. "As for the profits of that investment, please put half of my proceeds aside in a separate vault. I would like to eventually start up a home for mistreated magical children.” Not even blinking at the way the goblin stared at him, he looked down at where a small satin tray held two rings.

One ring glinting green under the light, the emeralds in the S reminding him of the eyes he saw every day in the mirror, the other ring a simple silver band with a stripe of black stone running down the center of the band.

Picking up the Peverell heirship ring first, he turned it in his hand, humming at the simple yet elegant design. Slipping it onto his left pinky finger, he felt a smooth wave of warm magic wash over him, almost like the magic of Hogwarts- and yet- there was something so oddly familiar about it. Like…

He looked down at the ring. Of course it would be…

*What is it?*

“It feels…” Harry struggled for words to explain, finally settling lamely on- “It feels like death.”

*Death? Why would death feel warm?*

He huffed softly, watching as the ring shrunk to fit his pinky finger perfectly. “When I die… I go to a field of flowers, one that only I and a friend had only ever seen. It’s always sunny and I-... I sit and watch the clouds, wait until I wake up again. It’s actually quite peaceful.”

The horcrux didn’t respond to that.

Shaking his head slightly to clear himself of the nostalgia, he reached out and slid the Slytherin heirship ring onto his left index finger. It was still and almost lifeless for a long moment before a cold wave of sharp prickly magic seemed to scrutinize him from head to toe to core. Finally, after it felt as if he’d been drenched in ice water, it stilled to settle like a coat of armour around his core.

*It does not seem to like you.*

Harry hummed noncommittally, running a finger over the surface, and shrugging just the tiniest bit. At least it hadn’t done more than give him a few shivers- with what he’d heard about family magic rejecting someone, it could have gone a *lot* worse.
Depending on school and the amount of stress that comes with feeling like I've been run over by five trucks, the uploading schedule might change- but for now at least it's going to stay at every three days.
(just a forewarning that college might kill me)
See you in three!
In Which Harry Carries a Big Sword and Walks Silently

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Realizing that he'd missed an appointment with the Goblins, Harry quickly apologizes and goes to rectify his mistakes. While he does, he takes up his heirship rings to have more evidence against Dumbledore- both Peverell and Slytherin.

Chapter Notes

Does anyone else hate sneezing or is that just me? Like- it's the most annoying thing in the universe- ughhhhh...
Ramble aside, Big Thanks to @bellachrome for being my lovely beta!
~Warning~
This chapter does have some violence and... gore (does that count for severed heads?)...
I would rate it at like PG-13 at most, but then again I do write some pretty sadistic stuff sometimes so-
Be careful, yeah?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Goblin Law had many things different from Wizarding Law, but most of them stemmed from one point- Goblin Law was created by an ancient and proud warrior race to punish those that crossed them.

Long and gruesome was the history of wars their race had gone through and come out on top. It was a pure mystery to Harry how the normal wizard didn’t see that. Even at eleven, coming from a standpoint of having the ‘freakishness’ of magic beaten into him, he knew to be polite to people he didn’t know- no matter their race or what they looked like.

So to be invited into the courtroom as a friend of the Goblin Nation and as an executioner no less… He was vibrating slightly with excitement.

The elegant stone walls, lit with the fire of torches, led into a large circular room made of the same grey stone. Sinking into the floor like an arena, the room was lined with goblins of all ages and trades, and the hall was silenced as they entered. Glancing to Ragnarok, who looked expectantly from him to the place where a very old-looking goblin was sat on a gold throne, he stepped forward and bowed stiffly with his hand curled in a fist over his heart. “Goblin King of the mighty Goblin Nation, I am Hadrian Peverell-Slytherin, Master of Death. I have been invited to come witness the proceedings of your court system, and may it please your Majesty, would like to sit in as the court’s executioner.”

There was the sound of dry cracking laughter from the king, a hand waved and his head tilted, before a voice the sound of rocks being ground together spoke to echo around the arena. “I know who you are, Hadrian Malfoy, and you are welcome in my court. As for your request- lift a sword worthy of a
goblin warrior, Son of Death, and you may play garroter.”

Dipping his head, he grinned at Ragnarok before hopping up onto the ledge of the area. Stepping forward, he used the wild and restless magic that he’d been neglecting all break to create small floating staircase of stepping stones, allowing him to get to the arena’s center.

A large chair made of iron, having chains lying around it in a pool (that he guessed would encase someone like a snake), sat in the center of the room and leaning against it was a long-sword over half his height.

But he made no move to pick that sword up, focusing on where he could feel the dim bond of Hogwarts’ golden magic laying like a sleeping cat next to his core. Question silent, the golden magic pulsed and he smiled as he felt his hands wrap around the familiar weight of the sword of Godric Gryffindor. He grinned toothily up at the king. “You did not name where I got it from, your Majesty.”

“Indeed I did not.” The King looked pleased—again, a weird expression on a goblin—and nodded slowly. “Very well. I now call to trial Melvin Pettegrew for crimes against the Goblin Courts.” As a man was dragged out and sat down in the chair, the chains wrapping around him, the King continued, naming the jury for magic’s approval. A parchment appeared, each name appearing with no problem, and the King looked back to him with curiosity written in his dark eyes. “As well, Goblin Friend Hadrian will be standing in on this trial as executioner.”

Ah. He is testing to see what titles the ancient magic gives you of its own accord.

There was a pause, the paper not moving, before a name was scrawled out slowly across the paper as if the ancient magics was amused by this. ‘Death’s Chosen and Fate’s Beloved will be substituting for executioner.’

Harry blinked. Those titles were different than he’d heard before…

Now you can’t complain about Fate not liking you anymore.

Mentally dunking a bucket of ice water on the horcrux, he instead directed his attention to the court proceedings. He couldn’t be sure with how he was standing away from the prisoner’s direct line of sight, but with the same sandy brown hair and fidgety demeanor, he would bet his left foot that man was the father or grandfather of Peter Pettigrew.

Seems you have changed more than you thought.

The King listed off a number of offences. The man had apparently gotten in deep with loans from the bank and when unable to pay them, stole from the Gringotts bank- injuring two goblins and killing another by happenstance- before turning around to try to pay off his dues at another Gringotts bank in France. Not only was he an idiot, but the Goblins were not happy.

Idly he wondered about his original timeline, if this skittish man in front of him had been a decent person.

But before he could fully muse over the strangeness of his situation, the King was banging his gavel and the court was silent. “Melvin Pettegrew, you are found guilty to the highest offence of crimes committed against the Goblin Nation, and by doing this are punishable by Goblin Law rather than the lenience of your beloved flimsy Wizarding Law .”

Riddle v.2 sounded amused. I would find the corruptibility and weakness of Wizarding Law just as
His grin could be easily mistaken for a response to the Goblin King’s words, but he felt the horcrux preen a little, as if proud to have made him smile.

“You will be sentenced to death.” The king’s sharp eyes found him once more, Godric’s sword resting on his shoulder lightly. “Master of Death, you may say a blessing before you dispatch this wizard... if you must.”

Nodding his head in respect, he finally stepped into view of the man’s darting brown eyes, which widened at the sight of him. “Please- please help me?” The man begged, as if not seeing the sword he was holding. “You- you’re a wizard! Please? Help- help me?”

Lowering the sword’s tip off his shoulder, he tilted his head, studying the man for a long second. “No.” Then he moved to lay the flat tip of the sword on the man’s right shoulder, ignoring his flinch, speaking the words that seemed to flow out of him as if from some long-forgotten memory. “May your soul be judged fairly before Lord Death, as your path has been woven by Lady Fate, and may the remains of the magic from your poor sinner’s soul be cleansed by Lady Magic’s warm hands.”

He then moved his sword to the man’s left shoulder. “Now as the Weapon of Death. I depart your soul from this life.”

“Please, you can’t-”

Taking a breath, he swung the sword, and as warm ruby liquid coated the sword- he released the air in his lungs steadily. A rush of magic washed through him, the Peverell ring seeming to warm up and vibrate just a little, but he didn’t let his thoughts linger on it. Calmly casting a cleaning charm over himself, he let his gaze fall, emotionless, to the head laying on the floor. “Do not assume you can tell me what to do.”

The crowd of goblins broke into cheer, echoing around the walls of the arena and the King could be heard closing the trial. With a wordless thanks to Hogwarts, the sword shimmered and disappeared from his hands.

I hope it still has blood on it when it reappears in the headmaster’s office.

As much as he tried to fight the smirk, both he and Riddle v.2 knew he silently agreed.

Hey all you fools and fool-ettes! (that’s proper English, just- just shhhhh)
It's lovely to read your comments and fun to answer your questions as always (and sorry if I miss your comment, for whatever reason I have no motivation to clean out my inbox... *shrugs*)
Have a lovely night/afternoon/early morning (wherever you are) and know that I, the Mango Queen, do indeed love you in all your wacky beauty.
See you in three!
In Which Healer Habora is Highly Unamused

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry gets invited to execute someone under Goblin Law by the Goblin King (not David Bowie, unfortunately) and that person turns out to be Melvin Pettigrew- an ancestor of Peter Pettigrew’s. Harry has no regrets.

Chapter Notes

Dumbledore: So I think this Malfoy boy is troublesome
Dippet: Interesting take... and why is that?
Dumbles: Well-
*sword of Gryffindor appears, covered in blood*
*both adults stare at it*
Dumbledore: I don't know how or why... But I blame Malfoy.
Dippet: *smiles thinly* Why don't we question the Hufflepuffs /after/ the Gryffindors, Albus
~
Big thanks to @bellachrome for being a lovely example of a human bean and also- My Beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Healer Habora eyed him when he sauntered into the infirmary, nodding to the healers he passed, most of them smiling back at him. However the older healer didn’t look impressed. “You are a very hard youngling to get time with.”

Sending the woman an innocent smile he knew she didn’t buy on bit, he hopped up onto the stone table. “I’m just that adorable.”

With a huff, the woman immediately reached forward- ignoring his instinctual flinch- to check both his eyes, pry open his mouth, look in both his ears and tug on his hair slightly. Frowning, but knowing the goblin had a reason for doing everything she did, he raised an eyebrow when she narrowed her eyes. “You are healing slowly. Has anything changed or have you done any feats of particularly strong magic recently?”

Harry grinned sheepishly. “Well I healed a laceration mid semester, acquired a horcrux, and then had to fix a boy’s shattered arm.”

“You acquired a… what?”

Have you finally gone completely insane?! Why are you telling her that?!

Wishing she could have missed that part, he sighed and tapped his forehead. “Apparently I have a brain leech. A horcrux. He talks to me sometimes- insults my choices mostly, he’s quite sassy.”
Beady eyes stared at him for a long moment before Habora narrowed her eyes and hissed in something he vaguely realized was irritation. “Stupid child! You have so much magic in you already that you are struggling to not explode and you took on another part of someone’s soul?!?”

As he was dispatched of his clothes and pushed down on the stone platform he wrinkled his nose. “Well technically he just kind of **appeared** after I healed this one boy, but sure.”

*I hate you.*

Rolling his eyes and sinking into the stone platform as Habora cast diagnostic charms, he took a deep breath in and then released it. The healer made that noise again and he resigned himself to not making it back to the manor for dinner.

~

*He was in the library part of his mindscape re-reading a messy scrapbook of casefiles, patents, and journal entries that came together to make a very scattered timeline- when Riddle v.2 looked at him from where the boy was sitting in a nearby chair. “Your healer is trying to wake you.”*

Glancing up, he put the book the side, standing and looking at where the horcrux was reading the other notebook he’d made of all his research into the darker dark arts. Lips curling into a smirk at the slight frown on Riddle v.2’s face, he raised an eyebrow. “Regretting your existence- or did you not get to the part where you can only be reabsorbed through regret- something that even I’m not sure Tom will be able to do?”

*Sneering at him, the boy ran a hand through his hair in agitation. “Don’t you have somewhere else to be?”*

~

He focused, blinking open his eyes to see Habora frowning. The goblin healer met his eyes, lips flattening into a line. “You foolish foolish youngling…”

Harry snorted softly, sitting up. “Wanna tell me why I’m a fool this time?”

“It’s not coming out.” A long finger tapped his forehead, Habora only frowning deeper when he flinched slightly. “I cannot remove it. Not even with you lowering your impressive mind shields.”

Rubbing at the place she’d poked his forehead- damn long nails- he wrinkled his nose. “What about *if- when I die?* I’m going to try my hardest to *not* die for a few years, but with my luck…”

The woman looked contemplative. “Maybe.” Moving to a table with potions lined on it, the woman held out a pain potion. “With wild magic like that, there cannot be an accurate guess. Now drink- we have to correct quite a few malunion fractures.”

Downing the potion and knowing the woman wouldn’t speak any more on the subject, he lay back on the table and squeezed his eyes shut.

*You have done this before- have you not?*

Feeling the cold analytical feeling of the goblin magic reach out to take hold of one of his fingers- the one that had always been a tad bit crooked from when he’d broken a teacup and Vernon had stepped on his hand- he did his best to sink back into the recesses of his mindscape.

~
The shelves of the library shuddered only a second of him sitting down, Riddle v.2 raising an eyebrow. “How many bones is she re-breaking?”

“Three ribs, a finger, two toes, and my left collar bone. Though the collarbone just has a hairline fracture, it’ll heal better if she actually fully removes it and lets it grow back to its normal shape.”

The horcrux didn’t look happy, glowering at him. “We are killing whoever did this to you.”

Harry didn’t want to touch that dark look in those brown eyes with a twelve foot stick. “No, we will make sure it never happens again.”

“Yes- by killing them.”

Turning back to where he was wondering over what he could do to help shape the future to his liking, he raised a shoulder and dropped it in a dismissive shrug. “If you want to kill them, do whatever you want.”

They both knew that he could do nothing- essentially a pretty talking trinket in Harry’s massive mindscape- as there was no way the boy’s comparatively feeble magic could overtake his mind barriers and somehow control him.


Stumbling through the floo, arm in a sling for another couple hours and pain potions numbing him considerably, he smiled cheekily at where Septimus Malfoy was sitting with a book in hand. “Thought I said not to wait up for me?”

The man smiled, but it hid a hint of worry. “The goblins are healing you?”

Harry nodded, hiding a grimace at the tone of the man’s voice. “I just am… surprised. I mean no offence, I only wonder because the idea of goblin healers is new to me.”

There was no hint of deception in the man’s face and he looked honestly curious, so Harry took a seat across from him. He needed to sit down anyways. “Do you know how many wars the Goblin Nation has been in?”

The older man smiled slightly. “At least fifty? I hear that is all the History of Magic teacher talks about.”

“I wouldn’t know. I self-study under a silencing charm.” Waving aside that trivial and off-topic fact, he pressed on. “284. The Goblin Nation has been at war 284 times since they first came together as one united group of goblins. Given, 68 of those times the wars were internal, between clans, but just think- How would there still be any goblins is there were not healers too?”

Septimus seemed to think this over. “They would have to be very good healers… all that passed down knowledge…” Grey eyes like that of a storm locked onto him, specifically the sling he was in. “And do you go to healers often?”

With a short laugh- because his whole family had mainly consisted of healers and teenagers that picked up the spells and such like sponges- he shook his head. “This is my second, and hopefully last, visit. I only saw them when Zac took me in for an inheritance test.” He made a face. “Though I swear my healer wanted to fix every single sprain and bruise, which would be impossible.”
“Well how about you wait until after the Gala tomorrow to injure yourself more?” The man shook his head, waving his hand. “Get some sleep Hadrian.”

Acknowledging he’d been dismissed, he stood, before lingering at the door. “People tend to fear what they do not know, but I find that as long as you greet the unknown with a smile, sometimes you will be pleasantly surprised and the unknown will smile back.” With a soft smile, he dipped his head. “Sleep well uncle.”

Chapter End Notes

Hot Take: I hate being sick
(yes, alright that's not really a hot take- but get this- /fight me/
Also just pretend as if I posted this three days ago :P
In Which Harry Questions: 'Can We Possibly Make This Gayer?'

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry mentions he has a guest in his brain that isn't paying rent. His healer frowns a lot and tells him she can't do anything about it, but that she is going to try to fix the rest of his shitty health. Septimus Malfoy once again gets a lesson from Harry, this time in respecting Goblins.

Chapter Notes

All the respects to @bellacrome- the queen, the meme, the legend- for being my beta and awesome co-creator! <3
(the first part of this is /good things/ and the rest... is mostly crack ^-^)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yule. The one holiday he equally loved and hated.

Cordelia had taken advantage of inviting Cassiopeia over, using the girl as an excuse to make him come to the ball, then proceeding to dress him up like an oversized doll.

Not that he didn’t love his hair- it was wonderfully manageable now that he could tie it back from his eyes and not have to worry about it getting in his face or looking like he was a human mop- but the amount of people that thought it was within their rights to run their hands through his hair… He was not above cursing the next to reach out for him like so.

“Harry, darling, don’t you look lovely?”

Looking at the mirror, he froze where he had been twirling his wand in his hand.

That fabric, brick red with gold stitching and yet... His voice came out short, clipped. “What did you do?”

Cordelia frowned at him though the mirror. “You were always wearing that horridly stained overcoat and so I went to a tailor. This one suits you much more than-”

“What did you do with my jacket!” He turned on the heel of his boot, eyes narrowed and voice sharp.

The woman looked taken aback. “I gave it to the elves to burn, but-”

Before the woman finished he was out the door.

Eyes burning, heart pounding, he cast a wordless point-me spell, skidding into the smaller of the rooms with the fireplace, eyes on the elf holding his coat-
“STOP!”

The house elf froze and he rushed forward, grabbing the jacket and hugging it to himself, sinking to his knees, breath coming out shaky. His lips were wobbling as he curled protectively around the familiar jacket. Worn in the shoulders, with the pin on the inside pocket of a smiley face (Grant Longbottom-Lovegood’s addition), and the faded gold stitching that Luna had re-done for him time and time again.

Just the thought- the thought of the one jacket that was his main tie to his family being gone- he shook with silent sobbing laughter. Sitting back against the warm stone of the fireplace, he laughed, tears on his cheeks. “Merlin. Crying over a jacket. Maybe Ginevra was right- maybe I have finally lost it.”

“I would cry if someone burned my wife… and didn’t you get married to that old thing?” He looked up to where Cassiopeia was smiling down at him softly, and a pale hand was extended to him. “Come on now, little Lord. You gave your aunt quite the scare, running out like that.”

Letting her help him up, he dusted himself off, apologizing to the elf. Back in his rooms, he ignored Cordelia until his trunk of Things He Would Not Lose™ was locked up tight and put under his bed, before turning to her. “I… I apologize, it’s just that jacket is all I have left from my family and… It would about kill me to see it gone, so even if you would prefer I don’t wear it, I would like to keep it.”

It was not a question. She was never touching it again.

The woman looked at him, before dipping her head in acquiescence and he moved back to the mirror. Thin dainty hands fussed with his hair in an imitation of doing something, before the Malfoy Matriarch spoke up. “Septimus was right, wasn’t he? He told me that you were not a child, and yet… I did not want to believe it.” The eyes of a Malfoy woman, the same look that Narcissa had and Hermione had learned easily, was now reflected in the cool blue eyes of his ‘aunt’. “How fast did you have to grow up, my dear child?”

Harry smiled at meeting her eyes, but it was bittersweet at best. “And how can you be sure I am still a child at all?”

“... I guess as a mother I had hoped...”

Reaching back to take one of the pale hands in his smaller, more tanned one, he moved to look at her properly, gaze soft but firm. “I will continue to live in this house, under your care until I turn 17, but do not be foolishly blind to the truth that you know deep down. I am not born of the same standing, and as much as I hate to admit it, everyone else in the ballroom tonight will be thinking the very same thing.” His hand was steady, even as her hand tightened. “As soon as I gave up that heirship to Abraxas I knew- I will never truly be a Malfoy- only the bastard child of one.”

As he was leaving, Cassiopeia’s silvery eyes watching him steadily, Cordelia’s voice stopped him. “You will always be a Malfoy.”

He turned to look at where the woman’s ice blue eyes were glassy.

“As long as you have our blood, we will always love you like family and that will never change- no matter what you do or… or who you love.” The woman stood tall, eyes alight in her determination.

The same determination that seemed to breathe fire into the bones of Malfoy women. The determination to do anything for family. The same determination Narcissa had held in her eyes in that
dark forest all that time ago.

This time his smile was genuine, as he dipped his head.

As they walked into the ballroom arm in arm, the bastard son and the pureblood bitch, Cassiopeia’s voice was soft even if her eyes stayed forward in a haughty glare. “You realize that as much as everyone here will hate it, as soon as they see the ring on your finger they will be licking your boots… Heir Slytherin.”

Harry’s split-second grin to her was wicked. “Ah, but Cassie- my dear love- don’t you think my shoes need shining?”

Her laugh rang out across the hall, bright and infectious as he bit his lower lip to hide a wide smile.

Harry and Cassiopeia were ignoring literally everyone in the ballroom, having already drained a glass of apple juice each while shit talking, they had devolved into waltzing smoothly around the ballroom and whispering snarky comments back and forth, trying to make each other laugh.

He’d already made eye contact with Tom, who he assumed was schmoozing up the upper crust of the pureblood society- but the boy, after locking him in an intense stare, had glanced at Cassie and looked away. (Maybe he didn’t like Cassie?)

“Hadrian!”

Looked up, his face curled into a smile as he saw the beautiful Veela ambassador stalk across the hall followed by Annabell and Zacarias. “Susanna… I didn’t expect to see you here. Or you either Zacarias, Annie.”

The tall woman with startling violet eyes and long shining blonde hair pulled him into a hug. “I missed you my dear! Countess Zafrina didn’t let me get a second to talk to you, that old hag.”

He mouthed a quick plea for help to the two vampires, Zacarias just grinning while Annie sighed slightly. “Ambassador Susanna, how about you and Lord Zacarias go greet the host? I’ll keep the little Lord company.”

The Veela reluctantly let him go, latching onto Zacarias instead. Harry watched her go with an eye roll, voice a mutter. “Veelas. They instantly fall in love with anyone strong enough to resist their charms.”

Annie smiled down at him playfully. “You say that as if it isn’t rare to be able to resist her.”

“One cannot expect our Lord to react to things normally though.” Cassiopeia smiled brightly at Annabell. “Cassiopeia Vega Black. It’s a pleasure to meet you, Countess Annabell.”

The vampire blushed slightly, as Harry had learned she was not used to people knowing her title or using it in public. “Yes, I see that you are just as stunning…ly- erm- knowledgeable as Hadrian said…” Annabell tried to fix her mistake, and he sent her a grin, letting her know she’d gone and exposed her gay thoughts. Turning red, Annie turned to hook her arm with his. “I’m stealing Hadrian for a dance!”

As she pulled him to the dance floor, he grinned. “You know how to dance?”

Her answering eyebrow wiggle was almost flirty (if either of them played for that team). “You
“You mean like 20’s swing?” He could tell he’d lit up, excited to try out dancing with someone other than Hermione- as they’d gone to many dance lessons upon Draco’s orders. Though it might be a bit awkward with the difference in his 5’3” wiry frame and her 6’ lean grace, he guessed that she could lead and that her extra strength would help out a bit.

“How else are we going to make a scene?”

Harry laughed, snapping twice. As if from the muggle stereo (that he had hidden away in his trunk), his magic reached out to the instruments that were being used to play a horribly slow waltz, taking control of them and starting up a fast paced jazz song that he’d practiced to many times with Hermione. Starting to move, he quickly matched the beat, feet and hands warming up and a smile on his face.

Annie joined him, catching his hand and swinging them around as their feet danced. She laughed, loud and bright- eyes looking down- “Nice shoes!”

He glanced down, grinning when he caught sight of the way his magic had turned his sleek black dress shoes to emerald green muggle converse. Looking up, he huffed out a delighted laugh when he saw Zacarias moving towards them. “Ah- we’ve been caught!”

Zac rolled his eyes. “Enough mischief you two, let the wizards dance in peace.”

Pulling his magic back in, he pouted, frowning down at his stupid shiny dress shoes. “Fun killer.”

The Vampire Lord just rolled his eyes and he was once again being pulled into social conversation.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Making Tom Stumble Over His Own Feet! (once- but still- it happens)
Much love @bellachrome- and we love to hear from all of you too- it really makes the whole writing process easier!
See you in three!
In Which Tom Stumbles

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry and Cordelia get into another tense situation in which Harry makes it clear that his jacket is Not To Be Touched. Then meeting Zacarias and Annie on the dance floor along with their companion- Susanna DeVen, Ambassador to the Veela Races- Harry decides to have a bit of fun and swing dance with Annie

Chapter Notes

Late late late!
College is kicking my ass, so sorry about the tardiness of this chapter, but I'll be posting another again later today so keep an eye open for that!
Thank you @bellachrome for sticking by my side <3 you're amazing and your portrayal of Tommy is 10/10 my favorite!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I saw you dancing with that redhead earlier. Who is she?”

Harry spun around, eyes widening at the sight of Tom in nice dress robes- he would think them strange, but then again Draco had many failings to get him a sense of fashion so to judge the fashion of another time period would be hypocritical - and smiled. Even without a sense of fashion he knew those robes were from Abraxas’ closet. “Countess Annabell, Zacarias’ lieutenant. She’s single?”

Tom stared at him, the expression on his face impossible to read. “Is that a question or a statement?”

“Statement.” He tilted his head slightly, looking over at where Annie was taking to Cassiopeia, raising an eyebrow at the light flush on her cheeks. Catching her eye he giggled when she winked at him. “And yet, maybe not for long...” He really hoped that Tom wouldn’t be too jealous of Cassie for taking away the attention of the tall redhead.

He doesn’t like her.

Harry poked the horcrux, sending it a mental reprimand that people did grow and puberty was a thing. He chanced a glance at Tom, and found that Tom was still staring at him, his gaze even more intense than before. Harry looked back at Cassie. What was up with the mini Dark Lord?

Every time I think you’ve reached the rock bottom of stupidity... you sink to a new level. Idiot.

Mentally swatting at Riddle v.2 this time, Harry steeled himself and looked back to Tom. “What?” he asked, a bit of his irritation accidentally leaking through in his tone.

“Dance with me.”
Harry blinked. “What?” he asked again, this time in complete astonishment.

Tom held out a hand to him. “Dance with me.” He tilted his head towards the dance floor. “You’ve been lurking on the sides for ages. It would be perceived as rude to keep from the dance floor for the entire night.”

“Did you miss my dance with Annie? I think I did fairly well.” There was that pride peeking it’s dumb head out- Hermione was a wonderful teacher thankyouverymuch.

A muscle in Tom’s jaw twitched. Was he clenching his teeth? “One dance is hardly sufficient, Hadrian.

Harry hesitated, but then glanced to where Susanna was looking ready to cling to him again and huffed. “Fine. I’ll dance with you, but only to keep myself out of her grabby hands.”

Tom dipped his head, his smugness showing slightly in the tension that leaked out of his posture, and took Harry’s hand, leading him out towards the dance floor.

“So what’re we dancing? I’m assuming not swing or salsa, maybe waltz?” He chuckled at the mental image of the Dark Lord salsa dancing, except in his mind he looked like a pale snake and had a rainbow suit on.

“That’s what they’re playing.” Tom placed his free hand on Harry’s waist and swung them seamlessly out into the dance, keeping perfect time with the dancers around them.

Trying to keep himself from tensing at the touch- Merlin this was a bad idea- he wrinkled his nose. “What they’re playing is boring. I do wish the music would start to improve.” Then again he’d gotten used to going to punk rock concerts with Teddy and he hardly could see the boy across from him appreciating that.

Tom huffed under his breath in quiet laughter. “This is a pureblood ball. You can hardly expect them to play Muggle folk songs.”

“Wouldn’t it be fun though? I think I should suggest that to Cordelia- square dancing… yes that would be perfect for whatever horrible party they are already planning to host for my birthday.” He grinned just slightly, lips tugging up.

Impossible.

Harry grinned wider. It was always a good day to annoy the voice in his head.

Tom’s lips tugged into a half-smirk, half-smile, breaking his usual composed expression. “You, Hadrian, are the only one I know who could possibly get her to agree to such a fracas.”

“Maybe…” He thought of the determination in her eyes, the pain that he’d ignored when he’d taunted her lack of an ability to have more children, the words that she’d committed to. Suddenly he felt guilty, sighing just slightly. “And as funny as I think it would be, I don’t think I could possibly cause her any more grief.” He glanced up, and gave a half smirk to the boy, knowing the emotions wouldn’t be understood. “I think I’m enough trouble as I am.”

“Trouble is the least drastic word I would use to describe you,” Tom replied snidely. They danced a few more steps, Tom keeping lead flawlessly, before the mini Dark Lord said, “But Hadrian- ”

“Harry.”
Tom missed a step.

The boy quickly found his footing, pulling Harry back into time with the other dancers. “Pardon?”

He looked up into the brown eyes, content to smile at the boy- *Tom, not Voldemort*- that he would save, one way or another. “Hadrian is a name that died with my parents. My name is Harry.”

Tom stared at the petit boy he held in his arms.

*Harry*.

The boy had given Tom his name, invited Tom to call him by his name.

Tom was not blind to the significance of that.

In his extensive pursuit of knowledge, reading through the Hogwarts library and the Malfoy library as well, Tom had read many faerie tales. Not the fairy stories that the workers told the children at the orphanage- *don’t think about that place* - but the true tales, the ones of fae, creatures of power from realms higher than those of man. At first he hadn’t seen the significance of such stories, but in studying pureblood culture, he had realized that these stories had impacted the formation of the way the families of high status lived and interacted with each other.

First and foremost being: Names had power.

(One of the many reasons why Tom was attempting to find himself a new name.)

And the boy had just invited Tom to call him by the name those who knew him called him.

*Harry*.

Tom couldn’t keep the small but genuine smile from his face- a seemingly small amount of emotion, but for Tom, it was the equivalent of beaming.

“Harry, then.”

A smile.

That-

That wasn’t like the smiles that he’d seen over and over played out like an actor rehearsing a script… that had been *genuine*. Honestly Harry could hear Silas Malfoy snarking about his ‘stalkerish tendencies’, but it didn’t matter. Tom was showing *emotion!* “And what do I call you?” He quickly realized just how badly that could blow up in his face and smiled gently. “Any name will do-”

“Tom.”

*Oh great Merlin.*

Mentally swatting at the Horcrux to shut up, he barely managed to not gape like an idiot.
Tom gave a lighthearted half-shrug and looked askance. “I don’t have any better.” He paused, then added, “Not yet, at least.”

_It appears I took all the rationality with me. Magic save us all._

Oh. Maybe… “Then may I call you Thomas? A nickname for a nickname?”

Tom twirled Harry out momentarily, then brought him back in close again. “As you like.”

_I need to gain a body and murder my other self for doing this. Never in my life have I felt so ashamed to share a soul with him._

Giggling a bit, he ducked his head, before looking back up with amusement and fondness curling at his chest. “Well then Thomas, thank you for pulling me out to dance. I feel the ‘social nicety police’ probably won’t kill me after all.” He snickered. “Shame. I was quite looking forward to that.”

Tom grimaced. “I’m afraid the matriarchs who run these events would do worse than kill you, Harry.”

And as they were nearing the edge of the dance floor, he dipped his head, smile wide and feeling lighter than he had all break. “I’d like to see them try… It’s been a pleasure Thomas, but I believe that I have a Veela to placate with sweet words or I’m liable to have a very grumpy Magical Guardian on my hands.”

Breaking with the boy slowly, wanting only to stay in the companionable snark but knowing he had other duties, he looked long at Tom Riddle, preserving in his memory when the boy looked almost happy, before giving one last smile and starting for where Zacarias was looking more and more sour by the minute having to listen to Susanna whine.

Chapter End Notes

Ahhhh such sweethearts!
We appreciate soft Tom- he's such a cutie!
See you in a little! (like five hours or so)
In Which Harry Makes a Scene

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry and Tom dance, exchanging nicknames, and Harry tries to commit the image of Tom smiling to his permanent memory

Chapter Notes

I'm constantly screaming- these two are so adorable but cute ^_^ @bellachrome is my favorite and I love her!
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You are- just absolutely… My dear, words don't describe…” The man babbled, one of the many idiots that Hadrian had to see profess his undying love for the woman by his side, Ambassador Susanna DeVen of the Veela races just smiling politely.

Even he could see the strain on her face from having to smile like this, scoffing loudly and drawing the eyes of the crowd. “Do you mean to insult the lady? She obviously knows she’s stunning.”

The man sputtered, eyes lighting up with indignant rage at the challenge to his masculinity in front of the woman. “Oh? And you think her not the most beautiful woman you’ve ever seen?”

“Yeah actually.” The crowd looked taken aback and he moved to take Susanna's hand, pressing a light kiss to it. “No offence my dear, but your beauty does absolutely dill for me. Your knowledge on obscure fighting styles though…”

Breaking into a real smile, the woman chuckled. “Hadrian dear, you sweet talker- don’t flatter me, your reflexes are far superior.” The violet eyes drifted to where Zacarias was lingering at his back like an overgrown shadow. “And the Lord you keep…” The woman made a sultry humming sound.

The vampire behind him chuckled. “Do you not mean the Lord I keep?” A large hand settled on his shoulder and Harry wrinkled his nose slightly at the overprotective-parent vibes, reaching up to try to bat the man's hand away.

“You- that ring!” The douche that had been previously trying to insult him had gone white and he looked at his hand blankly.

Right. The Slytherin Heirship. He’d almost forgotten about that.

Moron.

Harry tilted his head at the man, eyes innocent. “What ring?”

Another woman that he recognized as Violetta Black, seemingly drawn to the commotion involving
the strange guests the ballroom had been whispering over all night, gasped, her hand moving to
cover her mouth in a mock of what he guessed was supposed to be surprise but looked more like
horror. “You are the- the Heir of Slytherin? How?”

This ignited the room like a forest fire, the crowd pressing in to try to either get a glimpse of him or
try to talk to him.

Before he could pull away, try to run for the library or somewhere he’d be able to breathe, a hand
took his and pressed a warm mug into it. Cassiopeia smiled at him thinly. “I had extra hot chocolate.”

Dipping his head in a silent thanks, he leaned back into where Zacarias’ hand had curled tightly into
his shoulder, grounding himself with a long drag of the warm liquid. “Did you know that there are
more stars in the sky than grains of sand on Earth?”

The room quieted.

“Or have you never actually taken time to look up and really wonder at the composition of the thin
layer of gasses that keep this planet from being void of life? Have you ever wondered the distance of
the nearest glimmering star in the sky? Because I would like to say you know just about as much
about me as you do the stars you choose to name your children after.”

Violetta Black looked affronted. “I know what I need to about a mudblood brat like you! You
disgrace the very floor you walk upon! The Malfoys made a generous choice to take you in, and yet
you cannot even muster up the formality for polite society!” She sniffed. “They should have known
better than to think you could ever fit in with your superiors.”

Harry’s laugh was dark, bitter. “Merlin, you people really are so ass-backwards. Don’t you know?
One day the sun will die. One day the sun will combust into a black hole and this whole planet will
be sucked into a void so dense you will be crushed to bits, but you don’t care so let’s make this
relevant to you- In less than 60 years there will be a creature, one of the ones you stupid wizards feel
are so beneath you, that will get tired of it and will start to pick you fools off. One. By. One.” He had
seen it. So many times that he was so sick and tired- he was never going to be an Auror, not for these
blind and horrible people. Not again. “And you will come to people like me, like Zacarias, who can
speak to the races you’ve pushed away in your irrational fear because we have manners- and you
know what will happen?”

The woman was silent, even in glaring daggers at him.

“I will leave you to die. Because is it not rightful vengeance? You are the ones that took their
families, their packs, their very rights from them and you want me to protect you?” Harry drained the
rest of his hot chocolate, looking out at the crowd that was watching him in either morbid fascination
or thinly veiled horror. “Right, well not that it hasn’t been lovely, being ignored and then
subsequently accosted because of a heirship I inherited from my murdered mother– but I think I will
retire for the night.”

Susanna and Annie both softly wished him a good night, Cassiopeia giving him a hug, and when he
looked over, Zacarias just grinned cheekily. “Sleep well little bat. Watch out for-”

“If you tell me to watch out for hawks again I will curse you in your sleep.” He narrowed his eyes on
the vampire.

Laughing, Zacarias patted his head. “You know I’ll never stop teasing you about that, little itsy bitsy
baby bat.”
Sending a stinging hex at the man, he looked once more at the rest of the ballroom who had decided to instead stare and him and criticize his every move in whispers. Shaking his head, he just turned on his heel, and made for the quiet solitude of the gardens.

Stalking down the hallway, Harry fisted his free hand in his robes, not stopping until he got to the upstairs balcony overlooking the gardens and he was breathing fresh-sweet-cold-air.

“Fucking idiots.” Taking a long drink of his hot chocolate he allowed himself to slowly relax, back untensing until he was calm enough to confront the elephant following him from the room. “I know you’re there.”

Tom-Thomas-the mini Dark Lord-stepped from the shadows. “That was a remarkable exit.”

Harry snorted slightly. “And here I thought it tame. I really was about to send Violetta to her knees with a curse, had she pushed me any further.”

Thomas made a low sound of contemplation and joined Harry in looking out at the grounds, breath fogging in the air. He pulled out his wand and cast a warming charm over the two of them. “Next time, perhaps.”

“You sound suspiciously like the voice in my head.” It was a snarky comment, but yet at the same time he was so very tired and it was strange to see the Dark Lord stooping so low to talk to him, the one who had killed him and-

No. No, he wasn’t getting down that rabbit hole.

“Great minds think alike.”

We are literally the same person. Of course we think alike.

He covered a snicker with his mug of hot chocolate at that, wincing when a pin in his hair stabbed the back on his head. “Would you mind doing me a favor?”

“Depends on the favor.”

Rolling his eyes, he turned slightly, waving a hand at his hair. “Cordelia put my hair up in some complicated...thing and I’m too afraid to try to take it out less I accidentally rip my hair out-Can you help me? These pins are uncomfortable...and I would give you a book of your choosing from my own personal library?”

Harry waited in awkward, agonizing silence for a moment, before Thomas replied, “Of course.”

“Thank you,” Harry sighed.

Thomas didn’t respond, his hands instead moving to Harry’s hair and working through it in an attempt to understand the bizarre updo Cordelia had woven. “Just hold still.”

He took a sip of where his mug had refilled with hot chocolate to hide his small smile. “Yes sir.”

Merlin, his hair was so soft, there had to be some kind of magic to it that he couldn’t sense.

Tom worked through Hadrian’s-Harry’s updo diligently. He had been right- it truly was a
monstrosity. Tom had stopped keeping track of the sheer number of hairpins he had pulled out. He watched Harry’s breath puff out into the cold air- the warming charm hadn’t extended that far, as he wanted Harry to have the chance to still watch his breath in the cold night air.

(He wasn’t sure why, and he wasn’t about to examine his reasons.)

Tom curled his fingers in Harry’s hair as he worked towards getting another pin. His hair was like silk. What hair products did he use?

“Tea tree and mint shampoo.” Harry muttered quietly. “Though I should definitely rip off Lockheart for his idea of Occamy egg yolk shampoo.”

Tom… really didn’t think he had asked that out loud, but maybe he had. He would have to watch himself- he was better than this- it was just Harry’s hair that had divested attention usually routed to his composure, was all.

Merlin.

Pulling himself together at the same time he pulled the last hairpin from Harry’s hair, Tom used his fingers to work through the smaller braids and knots. Mind wandering, he wondered what book he could ask for- the boy probably had many fascinating tomes stashed away, if the other text was any type of indication to what the boy had hidden away. It would be impossible to choose just one.

But. He smoothed Harry’s hair out, now-unsnarled locks falling neatly across the petit boy’s shoulders, and let his eyes slide half-closed as he stared at the child. He knew just how to get the best book from Harry’s collection.

Emeraldine eyes turned on him, mirth hidden in their depths. “You could always just come to my rooms whenever you know what new book you need?”

“I want whatever book you think I need the most.”

The eyes widened, something dark and almost afraid crossing them before it was snuffed out, but still the boy looked off balance. “I- I will have to think on that…” Seeming to look into the middle distance as if seeing something that wasn’t there, Harry hummed something under his breath for a second before blinking, the effect fading. “And if I pick something you don’t like? I do have a collection of Spanish dramas...”

“I’ll read it anyways, and then ask you why you thought I needed to read that particular book the most out of any in your collection.”

A chuckle, coming out in a puff of warm air. “Very well. I’ll have to dig through my tomes upon tomes of hidden secrets, see what mysteries I have forgotten they hold.”

They descended into silence, the child’s smaller hands coming up to play with the ends of his silky ink black hair. “I’m glad Dalton convinced me to keep my hair long. It’s much easier to manage this way...”

Damn, Tom actually had something he had to be grateful to Dalton for? He wasn’t sure how to feel about that. “If you don’t count the instances when Lady Malfoy decides to put it up with an army of hairpins and enough hairspray to petrify a horse, that is.”

Hadrian’s- Harry’s laugh echoed across the grounds.
Okay so maybe Thomas did have a fairly great sense of humor - but damn if he’d ever seen it before.

The day caught up to him and he reached up to rub at his temples, sighing. “I overdid it, didn’t I? Bloody hell I haven’t had such an outburst like that in forever…” Groaning and lowering his head to where his arms were resting on the balcony’s guardrail. “At this rate, I’d rather face Dumbledore naked than admit I was wrong, because I’m not, but still… I really made a scene and now the papers will be more on my case.” He huffed a sarcastic laugh. “Maybe I should try out for Quidditch.”

Thomas leaned on the guardrail beside Harry. “How on earth will Quidditch solve anything?”

“Maybe you haven’t seen someone out-fly a dragon, but I’m pretty bloody brilliant on a broom.” He shot the boy a half-grin. “And do you fly, Thomas?”

“As if I would trust my life to some piece of wood with smaller pieces of wood strapped to one end, held together by some unknown person’s shoddy magic work.” Thomas sneered. “No, I do not fly.”

Snorting, he grabbed the metal and leaned back, tilting his head to look at the sky. “Shame. It’s one of my favorite things to do- night flying… All those stars watching over you, the moon lighting the way… Stunning.” He thought longingly of the custom Nimbus 3000 in his trunk.

“It sounds beautiful, when you describe it that way,” Thomas allowed. He, too, tilted his head back to look up at the sky. “…if I were to fly, I would learn how to do it with my own magic, not anyone else’s.”

Glancing over, his lips curled into a grin. “Ohhhh just wait- one of these days I’m going to custom make a broom for you- so fast and sturdy and filled with raw magic you’ll have to try it out.”

Thomas snorted. “You’re welcome to try.”

“Okay. What wood is your wand made from, if you don’t mind my asking?”

Thomas turned to look at Harry. The Slytherin gave him a long, considering look, before finally answering, “Yew.”

Harry beamed. “Brilliant. Yew’s a good wood to work with, so making a broom from it shouldn’t be too hard- plus I tend to work better with yew and elder than most woods… other than holly of course.” He sent the boy a conspiratorial smile. “That’s my wand’s wood.” Some wizards would find it strange, telling someone about this, but he guessed that if anyone had a right to know it would be his so-fated ‘equal’.

Tom inclined his head slightly, in acknowledgement, then turned once more to look out over the gardens. Harry, knowing that the conversation was over- for now, at least- joined him, and the two let their breaths mingle like dragon’s smoke in the chilly air as the night passed them by in their quiet companionship.

“Harry?”

Turning, he instinctively sought out the arms of the girl. “Cassie!” Basking in the smell of sage, he grinned up at the girl. “You have fun talking with Annie?”

Giving him a glare that held no heat, the girl rolled her eyes. “Should’ve known you’d try to set us up… and yet I let it happen anyway. Little fiend.”

“Well, we all need some good love and anyways, I can’t have my favorite girl being lonely!” He turned to the side, about to ask Tom if any proper gentleman would let their favorite girl go lonely- or
something stupid like that if only to see his smile again- but the boy was gone, almost as if he had never been there at all. “Where…”

Cassiopeia smiled softly. “Give him time… he’ll need it.”

Something twisted uncomfortably, wanting to go seek the boy out, to go see what had made him leave without even saying goodnight, but finally he nodded and relaxed into the hug. “At least it’s progress.”

The girl’s voice was soft but resolute in the cold night air. “It is.”

Chapter End Notes

okay okay- so this chap was a bit more fluffy and sweet, but they're still trash humans so don't expect them to just get together now ^-^ they're both horrible and I love them
BUT CASSIE/ANNIE? CATCH ME OUT HERE SUPPORTING MY TWO LESBIAN ICONS!!!!!
@bellachrome deserves the world for her amazing writing so please give her your love if you like the Tom scenes!
See you in... three(ish)!
In Which Harry Unwinds With His Friends (Because Frankly, Spending So Much Time With Tom Is Exhausting)

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry loses his cool at the inanity and imbecility of pureblood society and gives the entire gathering a lashing lecture. Tom meets Harry outside and is coerced into undoing Harry's atrocious hairdo, to the mini Dark Lord's simultaneous dismay and satisfaction. Tom makes a very intelligent request regarding the book he wants from Harry. The two have a good conversation, but Tom vanishes as soon as Cassie shows up, leaving Harry to console himself solely with the thought that: at least it's progress.

Chapter Notes

I, bellachrome, am posting this because @PurpleMango has been absent. @PurpleMango, if you see this - I love you.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Is it progress?” The redhead whispered, sounding oh so broken. Blue eyes caught him in their glassy haze. “Progress that so many people died, that my siblings- my very blood- took away your freedoms, that you're living such a lie…”

“Not a lie.” Harry smiled gently. “I might not love Ginny, but that doesn’t mean all of my life is a lie.”

George Weasley, looking tired and more like Arthur Weasley every day, sighed. “Harry, kiddo… You’re not really living, are you? All this running around fighting the bad guys, letting the media paint you as the hero one second and then slander you the next- where did the kid go that just loved to fly?”

He took off his glasses, rubbing at his eyes. “I could ask the same for you… but we both know exactly where you went.”

The man chuckled. “And you keep all of us runaways in line, don’t you warden?”

It was barbed, but true all the same.

He was the only one that the misfits- the wizards that had left their family and hidden away- let try to talk to them, knowing perhaps that he wouldn’t push too far. He’d only push a bit, respectful of the grief and pain. Merlin knows there was a lot of that to go around.

Smiling, he nodded. “Yup. That’s my job as general, didn’t you know? I keep the troops in line.”

“You shouldn’t have had to take on that role.” The sad look was back. “None of us should have had to do what we did. Kids shouldn’t have been fighting in a war- much less one asked to end it.”
The smile slipped from his lips. “Yeah- yeah sorry… I-” He fiddled with a gear on the table of clock parts. “I forget sometimes. Slip into that mask of ‘Harry Potter the Killer of the Dark Lord’… It’s like I don’t know who I am anymore.”

George snorted. “You’re Harry.” The man took the gear from his fingers, setting it down and instead grasping his hand in a larger, warmer one. “Harry that loves to fly. Harry who can’t go a year without getting into trouble. Harry, the boy that won’t ever say no to Treacle Tart. Harry, who is brave and good and a huge pain in my arse.”

He laughed. “Right back at you, old man.”

“Harry!”

He blinked, looking to the door of the compartment where Lucy bounded in. “Hey Lulu. Have fun over Yule?”

The girl beamed, Cameron and Dominic coming in as she sat down next to him on the bench of the Hogwarts Express’ compartment. “I loved that scarf you sent me for Yule! It’s so soft!”

Cam smiled. “Yeah, thanks for the cool pranks you sent!”

Harry relaxed into his seat as his little group of friends came together, all talking about their different breaks.

“Have any room?” Cassiopeia opened the door, a familiar boy in Slytherin robes at her side.

Nodding, he waved his hand, expanding the compartment. “Hey Cassie, Theo, come on in.”

Domonic muttered something about ‘collecting snakes’, but the two were accepted into the compartment, taking the space on Harry’s other side. “I didn’t see you at the Malfoy’s gala Theo- did you get the pleasure of missing it?”

The boy smirked. “And miss your fantastic telling off of all the adults in the ballroom? Unfortunately I was sick, though my mother had quite the rant about it… is it true? About the lordship?”

“Depends. Do you think that this makes me look evil?” He held out his hand, studying the golden ring in the light, ignoring the gaping of his friends. “Maybe I can channel the evil…. He scrunched up his face as if concentrating on channeling all his inner ‘evil’, before shrugging. “Nope. Nothing.”

Cassiopeia chuckled. “I am sure that Dumbledore will disagree vehemently… I also hear that he’s trying to get the Headmaster to accept him as the Defense teacher in the next few years.” Her silvery eyes caught his. “Maybe you should find someone that could rival his skills to teach… perhaps a boy that once used your wand?”

He looked at the girl, startled. “Him?”

“Him.”

Making a mental note to go to Germany sometime in the future, he smiled back at the group. “Where were we?”

Lucy grabbed his hand, holding it up. “You’re the Heir of Slytherin!”
“Oh, right. That.”

It took a while—talking out the smaller more stereotypical reaction his friends had and making them see that, no, not all Slytherins were pureblood supremacists, that is. Nott and Dominic had gotten a bit defensive over Stephan and Grace’s questions, but it seemed that the cool indifference that Cassiopeia exuded, combined with Harry’s factual knowledge of Salazar Slytherin worked wonders to convince the group that: No, not all Slytherins were happy go lucky but not all of them were evil and conniving.

Lucy cut over Pomona’s curious questions to Theoden about the Slytherin common room, eyes cautious. “So how are you heir?”

“Well like the parsel-speech, which is talking to snakes—” He clarified for Grace, who smiled appreciatively, “The Heirship was passed though my mother’s bloodline because she was a descendant of Isolt Sayre… Officially.”

Grace snorted. “And unofficially?”

He grinned. “Unofficially? I fought a basilisk.”

Nott snorted, rolling his eyes. “I think you’d be better at making friends with the basilisk than fighting it.”

Harry tilted his head slightly. “You’re right… Next time I’ll try that instead.”

“Are you planning on finding a basilisk just so you can do that?” The boy sounded incredulous.

Dominic looked at him with a deadpan look. “Welcome to the Harry Protection Squad. New members have two days to resign their membership or you’ll be forever stuck with this brat.”

“Hey!” He mocked offence, but his smile gave away just how he felt about that. “It’s three days!”

And with the soft chuckling laugh the Slytherin boy gave, Theoden Nott was fully accepted into his group of friends.

They all made their way to the carriages, a familiar boy with inky hair and silver-blue eyes standing in their path with his arms crossed. His eyes narrowed on Harry. “Malfoy. You look less… pitiful now that you’re not drunk.”

His friends looked at him and he grinned sheepishly. “Sorry about that Black. I- uh- my Aunt tried to marry me off and so I decided to get a bit drunk… I didn’t mean to run you over...”

With slitted eyes, the boy hissed, as if trying to speak parseltongue (which didn’t work... unless he was trying to say ‘pig meat’). “Come on Nott- the King requests your presence.”

“Oh, say hello to Thomas for me!” He crowed, grinning impishly at the stunned look on both boy’s faces. “And tell him it might take a bit to rifle through all my secrets, but I’ll get that book to him as soon as I can!”
Lies.

Sliding into the carriage, he rolled his eyes where no one could see him. The boy didn’t need to know that he was putting off giving him the book he’d come to the conclusion of being the ‘most needed’—the very book that he’d put together himself when he had done in depth research of the boons and pitfalls of Dark Magic.

(Unsurprisingly there were more pitfalls than boons).

And yet… there were a few rituals in the book that were less harmful to the caster but even more dangerous—and he wasn’t completely ready to hand it over to the boy yet—not with what was at stake.

Pomona was the first into the carriage, sitting down next to him, the others following. Cassiopeia smiled at him from outside and when he tilted his head she just shook her head. “I’m going to go see how Nott fares with the King.”

Humming, he nodded. “Give him my regards.”

The girl strolled away, Domonic speaking up with a scowl. “What’s Black’s problem? He seems to have it out for you.”

“Orion Black is…” There were many things he could say—A horrible father, a bit too far up his own ass, a pureblood supremacist even—but he settled on muttering, “He’s not fond of me, but that’s okay.”

And it was. Okay—that is. Even though Sirius’ father might not like him, who’s to say about the boy himself?

*If Sirius Black is even born.*

Sending a mental image of a frowny face at the horcrux—likely blocking out the mindscape’s sky with a yellow emoji-like thing—he shrugged. “I can’t expect everyone to like me.”

Grace groaned. “And that’s wonderful, but Tom Riddle? Really Harry? Couldn’t you have made friends with less venomous snake? He’s more likely to sneer at me for being a ‘muggleblood’.”

“Muggleborn.” He wrinkled his nose, hands tightening in instinctual defense.

The girl just rolled her eyes dramatically. “Yes, right, whatever—What I mean is you’re asking us to be friends with that—... He’s not even friendly!” By the end of this the girl was red, looking between flustered and frustrated.

*Merlin you are dense*—She finds him attractive.

Oh.

He remembered the one candid conversation with Ginny he’d had in their whole two years of arguing, was about how attractive Tom Riddle had been. And that red-faced, furiously flustered look wasn’t unusual when Hermione had been first courted by Draco.

“Well… I’m 99% sure he’s single. Maybe if I happen to convince him away from his prejudice you two can arrange a marriage? It’ll probably go better than whoever Orion Black gets married to.” Merlin smite him down—he had promised to himself that he’d never have to talk about young Tom Riddle’s stupidly handsome charms with a female ever again…and yet here he was.
I will take that as a compliment.

The girl turned even redder in mortification and embarrassment, hitting his shoulder. “Not funny, jerk!”

Chuckling along with a few others in the carriage, he smiled at the girl. “It’ll be okay Gracie. He’s not that bad- even being King of the Snakes.” Tilting his head, he let his smile grow a little more mischievous. “Plus… if anyone can warm the iced over hearts of those snakes- it would be us badgers.”

Harry had seen the Slytherin-Hufflepuff effect many times before in person. Ted and Andromeda, Teddy and David, Marian and Gwendolyn, Erik and Silas…. There was something about the open inviting loyalty of badgers that seemed to tame even the worst snakes. Merlin knows Marian was a conniving little shit before Gwen had started to make gooey eyes at her.

Stephan raised an eyebrow. “What’re you planning out in that pretty little head of yours?”

“Nothing much, just a cross-house alliance…” He grinned. “I wonder if Hufflepuff would be up for study buddies and maybe a democratic system of leadership outside the normal prefects…?”

I agree. They need some rigidity and structure to their weak house.

He mentally flicked Riddle v.2’s shoulder, ignoring the hiss he got in return.

The group was silent for a second before Cameron broke out into a wide grin. “ALL HAIL KING HARRY!”

And then, the group snickering together, the conversation turned to lighter and less potentially dangerous subjects.

Chapter End Notes

it's 2am. i've staved off 3 anxiety attacks today already. i have to be up in 5 hours for a job interview. and the project i'm trying to get under control has way more paperwork required than i thought was necessary.

we know that y'all want fic. heck, i, as a reader, want fic. but both @PurpleMango and i are stressed and depressed college students who can barely take care of ourselves like functioning humans should, let alone be productive writers.

thanks, everyone, for being patient. and we ask you to please, continue to be patient with us, and have grace.

we appreciate y'all- all our readers. seriously, we do! y'all have been so amazing and supportive... it's really helped me with my insecurity about posting any writing related to me. and i know @PurpleMango loves all the comments and feedback we get. so thank you, all of you.

i'll post another chapter after i've gotten some sleep. tune in next time for some outsider-POV Tom, Professor Dalton, and Harry being a little showoff with his magical abilities.
In Which Harry Decides That The Snakes Need Some Company

Chapter Summary

Previously:
With a carriage ride to Hogwarts full of friendship, Theoden Nott makes a tentative friendship with Harry and his friends, before being called to see Riddle. Lucy has a crush on Riddle, the Horcrux decides to take Harry's thoughts of Riddle being 'good-looking' as a compliment, and the Hufflepuffs decide that maybe Harry should be the king of the 'Puffs.

Chapter Notes

Hey y'all!
I'm alive, look at that! (okay maybe 'alive' is debatable- but I'm moving? :))
Thank you thankyouthankyouthankyou to @bellachrome... because honestly she's my favorite and do I need a reason to thank her? Okay but, really, thanks Bells for keeping this afloat while I was MIA <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Theoden Nott could feel his hands shaking and tucked them into his robes so he could keep up the normal composure that was expected of him- But in a way this was no ordinary circumstances.

Riddle- King of the Slytherins and the most terrifying person in the whole school - wanted to see him in his carriage.

The boy king had claimed the last carriage as his own to share with his exclusive inner circle, and yet even as he marched to what could very well be his own demise, his eyes drifted to the spaces in front of the carriages.

He had noticed the small 'Prince’ (as Cassiopeia had called him) always stopped to coo softly at the empty space, petting something the others obviously couldn’t see.

Wondering, brain sidetracked from his fate, he stopped a few carriages from the King’s own and held his hand out. There was a pause- maybe the boy was just crazy?- before something leathery and strangely soft brushed against his hand and he barely held in a surprised shriek. Pulling his hand back, he quickly caught up with where Orion was looking back at him with steely eyes.

But his mind was elsewhere.

With the things the younger Malfoy knew, the things he could see in people, it was no surprise that Riddle was keeping a close watch on him.

The door was swung open menacingly- but it was as if the fear had left him at the warm brush of that strange invisible creature- so he just nodded to Orion Black and stepped up into the carriage.
Surprisingly, the only two people in the carriage were Abraxas Malfoy and Riddle- who was the
picture of bored grace, draped across the bench like he was the King of the world and not just one house.

He bowed lowly. “My Lord.” And yet something was poking at his brain, bothering him, so he glanced to Abraxas. “Malfoy- Has Harry ever mentioned the creatures he sees?”

The boy to the king’s side looked thrown off by this, but as he opened his mouth to sate Theoden’s curiosity-

“You call him by his given name.” Riddle’s voice was as emotionless as always, as if stating a fact out of a long-forgotten text, but his eyes glinted darkly, their deep brown seeming nearly crimson in the sunlight from the window, a stark comparison to his parchment-pale skin.

Another thing of difference between the two- Harry liked wide open spaces and seemed to bask in the light of the sun whenever possible, hence his sun kissed honey colored skin.

Swallowing all the strange confidence the small boy gave him (because Slytherins were not supposed to be so bold and brash ), he dipped his head. “Apologies, my Lord. I meant to explain myself. Cassiopeia Black approached me earlier at Kings Cross with the intention of inviting me to travel with Malfoy’s… friends. It seems the boy considers me one of these friends and yet- he has not asked anything of betraying you to follow him, as I believe Cassiopeia did that on her own whim.”

Riddle watched him with unreadable eyes, as if a deadly snake, and he so wished Harry was here to do his proclaimed ‘snake charming’ just so the boy would stop looking at him like so.

“Also- he… Hadrian bid me send along a message?”

That strange gleam was back, the boy raising himself slightly in interest but Riddle’s voice stayed cool. “Out with it then.”

“He said to say hello to ‘Thomas’ for him- and to tell you that it might take him a while to rifle through all his- um- secrets... but that he’ll get ‘that book’ to you as soon as he can?”

Abraxas looked surprised by this, and Theoden hazarded a guess that Riddle and the small mystery of a boy had been in some sort of contact without the boy’s elder cousin knowing. “You said something about Harry seeing creatures?” Abraxas almost looked worried- Malfoys were known for their care for their family after all.

He paused. “Well not mention to me, per say… But he does go to pet the creatures that draw the carriages every time he gets off the train. And Cassiopeia did mention not to talk about King’s Cross- in fear that the- uh- ‘nargles’ would come to haunt him so… Whatever you can make of that.”

He had half a mind just to label both Harry and Cassiopeia crazy. Delusional. And yet... with minds holding such secrets and the way they both moved through life with such grace- maybe it was possible they both just saw things a little differently? It was already a well known fact that Harry was a genius, could perhaps Cassiopeia be holding more than a few of the boy’s secrets?

Riddle seemed to be just as disinterested as ever. “Cassiopeia holds no interest to me,” he said, completely dismissing the girl. “Hadrian however… will inevitably be either a formidable enemy or a useful ally.” The Slytherin King’s intense eyes fixed on him. “And with you having been so... close to the boy...” He gave Nott an open-toothed grin. Nott hysterically thought he looked like a large cat, ready to eat his prey. “What are your thoughts on the side he takes?”

Not wanting the smaller boy to suffer, even without knowing him for more than a few hours- he was already cursing the fate of being in the boy’s corner - Theoden steeled himself and thought of the
way he’d hated how melancholy the boy had looked when he’d glimpsed him walking through Kings Cross. “My Lord, Hadrian is a wild card. Personally I do not think that he is going to choose a side, but make a side of his own- however if you wish to know more I would have to spend more time with him…”

It was a stretch, but hope dared to curl in his traitorous throat.

Perhaps he could be free of these masks, of the tiring games the snakes played- if even for a moment? Could he laugh so easily as he did before, the smiling faces of Harry’s friends surrounding him? Become a friend with someone not because of his ranking or his skills but because someone actually liked him? He was already willing to spend time with people his parents would sneer at- if only to be accepted so easily and perhaps cared for as the group seemed to do with each other.

Riddle stared at him, as if he was broadcasting each one of these terrible feelings. He focused on the melancholy of Harry’s face earlier to distract from where his heart was beating out of his chest. Time stretched in tense silence as Riddle watched him. No one in the carriage dared speak until the King answered.

Finally, Riddle spoke. “As you have… volunteered yourself for this position… so be it.” Riddle sat up, his entire attention focused on Nott, who felt as small as a mouse beneath the predator king’s gaze. “You will… spend time with Hadrian. You will protect him from those who wish him harm, at your own risk if need be. He is your mission; he is more important than you. You are to watch, to listen, to observe, and to learn. Anything you determine to be of a sensitive nature will come to me directly. Other than that, reports will be every Saturday, in writing, delivered to my rooms.”

Abraxas seemed to dislike the idea, but didn’t say a word.

Nodding, Nott stood and bowed deeply. “As you command, my King.”

He turned to leave, but Riddle’s call stopped him. “Nott.”

Nott paused, about to respond, but Riddle didn’t give him that chance.

“Do not forget that if you displease me, I can easily arrange an… accident.”

Nott turned to look at Riddle once more. “I will not forget, my lord.” And with another low bow, he left.

And if he gave a small smile to the space where the invisible creatures were, for helping him out, that was between him and the strange beings- but he would forever deny any and all claims that he giggled breathlessly and went to hug the soft and strangely horse-like creatures.

A Nott would never break composure like that so foolishly.

Harry would have traded the stares and whispers of the Malfoy’s Yuletime Gala for the piercing stare that was fixed on him like one of the energy-blaster-things that had been in that one muggle movie Teddy loved.

Dumbledore even had the gall to try to probe at his mind shields when he looked up towards the head table, so he made his barriers look thin and shadowy, the horcrux behind them growing more and more upset as he did.
What are you doing? He's going to see me!

But as soon as the garish vomit yellow magic tried to test the shadowy barrier, it reacted like that of quicksand, latching on with spiny barbs and slowly pulling the magic in. The man’s eyes widened in alarm even as he tilted his head with an innocent look on his face and with a jolt, the ugly colored magic severed itself off from the part of the magic that had gotten stuck, Dumbledore looking pale when he slumped back in his seat.

Harry only turned back to look at the empty plate before him, hiding a grin.

The inky death magic would keep the remaining yellow magic in it’s slimy cold grip until he could be alone to deal with it.

Grace leaned into his side with a slight frown on her face. “You okay Harry? That was a really long staring match with Dumbledore.”

“Yeah what’s his problem with you?” Lucy leaned in from where she was sitting in between Stephan and Cameron. “He seems to hate you. Like really hate you.”

His snort was soft as he shrugged. He wasn’t about to admit that was exactly what he wanted. “Dunno. Maybe he has a thing for green eyes.”

The group all gave noises of discontent at that idea, some short laughs, while Pomona made the most disgusted face he’d ever seen her wear. Her eyes darted up to somewhere behind him. “Professor Dalton?”

Glancing around he saw the man who was surely on his way to the head table pause, moving their way with a smile. “Yes Miss Morrison? What can I do for my favorite group of second year hufflepuffs?”

Raising an eyebrow, he snickered just slightly. “Does that mean that you have a favorite group of fifth year Slytherins too?”

Dalton met his teasing head on with only a slight wince. “Does Miss Black count?”

“Of course I do.” Cassiopeia smiled thinly when the man startled and she took a seat next to Harry. “But I think that was not the point of the question.”

Grace took the chance. “Do you think Dumbledore has some weird obsession with Harry?”

The professor blinked, before his normal smile was replaced with something thin and more frustrated. “Definitely.” Then before Grace or the others could get over their shock, the man looked at him. “After our first class I would like to talk to you about your free period.” When he nodded slightly, the man smiled, but it was tired and didn’t reach his eyes. “Excuse me.”

Watching the man walk up to the head table, he hummed. “Miss Moon? Are there any nargles circling the professor? Maybe ugly yellow ones?”

“A very ugly yellow indeed.” The girl to his side hummed. “Though it seems you caught the one circling you. May I as what you intend to do with it?”

Harry’s voice was a mutter, still watching Dalton to try to spot just what was ailing him. “Grill it.” Catching the furrowed look the Professor gave Dumbledore, he turned back to the girl with a smile. “Maybe even eat it... I bet it’ll taste okay with enough steak sauce.”
Domonic sent them a curious look, but before he could open his mouth, a (horrendously) familiar voice was speaking up across the hall. “Cassiopeia Black, if you could please sit with your house during formal meals…”

The girl moved to stand but he stood as well, voice carrying over the hall. “Professor Dumbledore, I assume you mean the rule in the Hogwarts code of conduct that mentions all students must sit with their houses during all but informal meals? Because if I recall correctly…” He frowned, as he dug through his bag, and with a rush of warm Hogwarts magic he found a worn book in his hand, pulling it out and humming as he flipped the pages. “Ah, here it is! Rowena Ravenclaw made the rule to keep the houses from trying to do such things as ‘get into childish quarrels during formal dining’… So if Cassie is just wanting to spend a meal peacefully with her friends than it would not apply to the rule, would it?”

Dumbledore pursed his lips and stood as well, eyes light with a righteous fire. “Rules are not supposed to be bent, Mr. Malfoy. All students are to eat with their houses during formal meals.”

He hummed, tilting his head. “Shame.” Turning to Cassiopeia he gave her a small smile. “I guess that studying during Breakfast and Dinner will have to be postponed for a while.”

A Ravenclaw made a noise, standing to look at him. “What do you mean?”

Harry gave the boy a look of confused innocence. “Oh, don’t you know? Formal meals include all breakfasts and dinners, by accordance with the Hogwarts rule book. So to say that no one can sit with other houses during any formal meals means that no one can sit with other houses during all of the formal meals.”

The Great Hall broke into outrage- most all the tables except for Slytherin- standing and arguing the rule. In this time and era, the houses were not as divided as they were in Harry’s time at Hogwarts, and many students had friends and family in other houses that they wanted to sit with.

Headmaster Dippet stood, raising his arms and the hall quieted. “Students, it seems that once again we will have to ich forward towards change- and by tomorrow the rule will be re-written out of the Hogwarts rule book, but for tonight let us all sit as we please. Hogwarts is a school of learning, but that does not mean we cannot make friends while we do.” The headmaster clapped, the head table disappearing before them and the house tables lengthening to fill the space. “And to encourage this co-mingling, the staff will be dining at the tables.”

Some of the staff (Dalton, Moorvitch, Marigold) instantly started to move forward, where others seemed unsure, Dumbledore outright looking displeased as he moved to the Gryffindor table. Though the students seemed to love it, more than half the students moving to mix in with other tables, sometimes even following a certain teacher they liked so they could ask them questions.

With a glance to the table of the snakes that were watching all this happening but not moving an inch, no one even looking their way, he clasped arms with Cassiopeia and smirked back at his friends. “Dare to venture into the pit of snakes?”

Surprisingly it was Cameron who stood and moved to take Cassie’s other arm, meeting his gaze head on. “Let’s melt some snake’s hearts, pretty boy.”

They started over, most of the hall quieting to watch them.

The house tables had expanded from the end of the table as not to disturb the sitting students, so the spaces were right next to where Tom Riddle was watching them with a blank mask.
Stepping into the bench gracefully, he sat directly across from the boy, Abraxas on his right and Cassiopeia to his left with Cameron sitting down next to her. “Seems like my reign of mischief continues unobstructed.”

“Who would obstruct you?” Lucy chirped cheerfully, plopping down next to Cameron with Grace at her side. “I’m pretty sure you could out-stubborn a stone statue.”

With a soft snort, Stephan took a seat across from Grace with Dominic and Pomona at his side, though he left a few seats in between him and Riddle. “Harry could out-stubborn a nesting dragon if he wanted to.”

Cassiopeia laughed brightly, turning to nudge at him. “It’s too true- you did piss off that one Hungarian Horntail into chasing you on broom- though I’m not sure what it was thinking. No one can match you when you’re flying.”

He could feel his face heat up, the whole mass of his friends turning on him like he was a child to scold him and then try to subsequently trying to pry the details of the encounter out of him.

“ I bet you made that whole story up!” Orion Black was eyeing him poisonously from down the table.

Harry hummed. “Yes, it was very much made up-” He sent a look to Cassie, trying to convey his irritation. “I would very much like to think of that year of my life as a dream .” Pushing at his steak with his fork, he felt his heart clench painfully. “...A nightmare, on the best of days.”

“Harry, you know that re-experiencing memories though nightmares is-... Well it’s not a good thing, darling Prince.” Cassiopeia’s voice was soft. “Not to mention avoidance of talking about-”

The fork in his hands snapped- metal burning in his hands, and he quickly let it clatter to the table, folding shaking hands in his lap. “I think this hypothetical subject of which you speak is much rather discussed outside of a large, inter-house dinner... please ?”

There was still silence for a second, silver eyes pinning him down. “We will talk about it.”

He only hummed, reaching forward to pick up the two pieces of his fork, conjuring a flame from his finger so he could weld the fork together as best he could-

“Little Master needn't worry.” An elf appeared with a soft pop, placing another fork down and holding a hand out.

Grimacing, he blew on the fork to cool it, a thin layer of frost covering the metal that hissed slightly and cooled rapidly. Gently placing it in the elf’s hands he worried at his lip, feeling bad for ruining the silver fork. “Sorry Pammy.”

The elf smiled brightly at her name. “Little Master is not a problem. Cannot be blamed for his wild magic.” Then she popped away, a cup of coffee appearing next to his plate.

“That was elemental magic, right? Like the ice you make?” Abraxas leaned forward to look at him. “Can you teach me that? I think I finally got the hang of the ice trick.” Abraxas had found Harry in the kitchens after one of his nightmares and they had spent a few hours trying to teach Abraxas to do the basics of elemental magic.

He curled his fingers around the mug, moving to set it in front of the boy. “Hmmm… if you can make an ice cube from this, then maybe.”
Sending him a look- they both knew that hot drinks were much harder to create ice from, given the fact it had to cool down first- Abraxas took the mug, and furrowed his brows in concentration. Slowly a thin layer of frost crept out from his fingers and he could feel the eyes watching them as the mug slowly stopped steaming.

“Take a breath- you’re doing better than I expected.” When the boy relaxed just slightly, he smiled gently. “Ready?”

Nodding, Abraxas watched as Harry flicked one of his fingers, a ball of coffee rising in the air. Slowly, as if it was a rare treasure and not a globe of liquid most purebloods hated the idea of, Abraxas reached out, and when his fingers touched the liquid it froze into a misty brown circle of ice.

With a proud smirk, he held it out proudly. “See? I’m more than ready.”

Nimbly taking the ball of ice from the boy, he plopped it into his mouth, grinning cheekily. “What? I don’t see any proof of that claim.” He took back the coffee mug, dipping a finger in it and stirring it until it was soon steaming again, licking the bitter liquid off his finger before taking a long drag of the hot liquid with a raised eyebrow. “This coffee’s perfectly warm.”

The boy sent him a look bordering that of betrayal. “Aren’t Hufflepuffs supposed to be nice?”

He laughed brightly. “Fine, fine you win. I’ll teach you my fancy tricks, but in turn you have to sneak me coffee this summer. The house elves at the manor must have gotten lessons from Moody in their constant vigilance.”

“Coffee and chocolate in trade for lessons in elemental magic and you have to try out for Quidditch next year.” His Slytherin cousin grinned. “I find myself wondering just how good on a broom you are.”

Sighing, he rolled his eyes. “I despise the fact you are playing off my weakness for chocolate…. But whatever- just don’t hate me when Hufflepuff wins the cup.”

Wishing his dorm-mates goodnight, Harry closed his curtains, sitting back against the headboard to delve into his mindscape.

~

Riddle v.2 greeted him at the castle’s gates, looking him over and then scowling. “He’s driving me crazy. Get rid of him.”

Snorting softly, he walked past the horcrux to the main courtyard, seeing a shade of Albus Dumbledore standing in a cylindrical container of thick black magic. The man’s eyes widened when he saw him.

Harry tilted his head. “Albus... I would say it’s nice to see you, but it’s really not.”

“You’re not Harry. Not the Harry I know.” The man narrowed his eyes. “Or is it that this is really you and that everyone else doesn’t see it?”

With a sigh, he made a simple stool for him and a more lavish throne chair for the horcrux, who
looked pleased. “Why don’t you tell me? Maybe with all the passive aggressive clues I’ve given you for the sake of driving you crazy, you can put it together on your own. Riddle and I will wait.”

This prompted the man to really look - at the other boy draped across the lavish chair. “Tom? How...” A light came to the man’s eyes, the same light he got when he thought he was right. “The gaunt ring. He made a horcrux and then for some reason you got... put in Hadrian’s mind-corrupting him.”

“Interesting.” Harry hummed. “You must only see me as a misguided shield then... Not the answer I was hoping for- I really was hoping you’d go off on how evil I was I think- but still very interesting nonetheless. You’re wrong though.” He smiled simply. “Riddle is a guest. He might have taken hold of my magic, but we have a... symbiotic relationship. He says comedic and snarky things and I ignore him.”

The boy next to him snorted softly. “How very ‘symbiotic’. No, Harry here just has no need to get rid of me, because I’m not annoying.” This cruel poke was at the man in the shadowy cage, Riddle v.2 sneering softly.

“You kind of are though.”

The boy scowled at him.

Raising his hands slightly- not that the boy could do anything to him- he looked back to where the man was watching them with furrowed brows. “I’m the Master of Death. Can’t die, have the hallows, have the support of all the non-human races- check, check, and... check.”

“You can’t be. I- Someone else has the wand, and the other two-”

With a roll of his eyes, he was holding the three hallows, all of them vibrating with power. “Please stop being annoying. It won’t help your case.”

Dumbledore narrowed his eyes. “What... what will you do with me?”

Riddle looked to him, seemingly interested as well.

Summoning a book from his mind’s library- the same one he was thinking of giving Tom- he flipped to a page in the back on absorbing another’s magic. It was an incantation entirely in latin, but he’d long since surpassed having any trouble learning languages and filing them away in his meticulous mindscape.

The incantation would ask for both parties- even if one was unwilling- to give up a certain amount of magic and the two equal parts would fight, until one absorbed the other and the person who won gained both parts. It was usually used ceremonially to see who was the stronger wizard, but since it could be non-consensual, it had been buried in history when powerful wizards had started to bleed less powerful wizards of all their magic.

Harry grinned at the shade of ugly yellow magic. “I’m going to eat you.”

The man’s eyebrows furrowed, even as he started reading.


With a sucking feeling a cloud of black inky magic flowed from his body to combine with the bars of
the cage, forming a pulsing blob of ink even as Dumbledore seemed to melt into his own ugly yellow orb of magic.

Riddle looked over as he sat down. “What is happening?”

“That’s pure magic, both in their natural states… and now they fight.” As if waiting for his word, the cage constricted around the yellow magic, which had to separate into little bits to get out of the smooth rolling black magic’s destructive path.

But the small separate pieces scattered and the solid mass of magic grew out tentacles, spearing the smaller pieces of magic and absorbing them as if an octopus grabbing fish out of the water.

The yellow magic roiled at losing some of it’s size, trying to run but with a stab of the black tentacle, a chunk was taken from it’s side and it seemed to realize it would have to stand its ground.

Riddle v.2 snorted lightly. “Coward. Always hiding behind others.”

Harry nodded in agreement, even as he could feel his magic growing with every stab of the ugly yellow magic he absorbed- and oh he didn’t think this though did he? What was he going to do with more magic in this weak body?

The boy to his side looked over, both ignoring the way Dumbledore's shade was getting slaughtered. “Are you alright? You look a bit… sick.”

"I'm not sure… I can hold all this magic."

Riddle frowned, standing from his chair (it really was a throne) and walking off into the castle. Wondering idly at what the boy was thinking, he went back to watching the black death magic slowly piece holes in the yellow magic, absorbing more and more as it did. Finally the black inklike magic was almost three times the size of the small yellow blob and with a smooth move it encased the lesser blob, rippling and expanding.

There was a humm and he looked up as Riddle walked back over, book in hand. "I cannot summon things in this mindscape as you can, but I think this would be helpful to use up some of that roiling magic."

Taking the book, he looked at the title, and then smiled up at the boy. "Thank you. I would not have thought of that."

The horcrux seemed proud. "Go make sure you do not kill us both from something stupid like exhaustion. And leave the chair."

He shook his head at the horcrux's need for some type of power object, leaning over and pressing a soft kiss to the boy's forehead. "Will do. Goodnight."

There was no witty retort this time, even as he walked down to the gates of his mind.

~

Changing into his worn sleep-clothes, he idly wondered if anyone had ever wished the boy goodnight that way.

Maybe you should try it on the other version of me- see what happens.

Smiling at the familiar prickly voice, he only turned over and closed his eyes, sinking into his dreams.
Bells went and actually spoke up about the kind of unspoken things in the background that I had been avoiding, but there was more than a lot of love in return (thank you all for that, it really helped), so here it is:

Yes, we post more than most.
Yes, we try to respond to comments as much as possible and I know I'm always writing, but that doesn't meant that it's easy all the time. I write because I love it, but I also write as a way to cope and it kind of sucks the life out of me to have to do that coping on someone else's schedule. So I stopped posting for a while, even though I felt as if I was going to get about a million messages only pleading for me to 'post more'.
However what I came back to was Bella's chapter explaining some of the stuff I should have (smh next time, I swear) and the reaction? Was honestly so uplifting and positive to read, so many people saying that our writing was important to them, but not as much as our mental health.
Which...
Means a ton. Like. A. TON.
So thank you all for being the light that drew me back from that dark place, I love you all so much <3
(you especially Bells- you'll always be my favorite bumblebee <3)
In Which Harry Gets a Pen Pal

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Nott has an enlightening (read: terrifying) meeting with Tom, getting recruited to spy on Harry for the Slytherin King. Harry make a fool of the rule book, sits with the Slytherins, defeats mental-Dumbledore in a blob fight, and forehead-kisses horcrux Riddle goodnight.

Chapter Notes

I am alive.
Sorry for the late update :}
Big Kudos to @bellachrome for... everything? Like honestly, my favorite person 10/10

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It seemed that Dippet had no intention of backing down from his decision and though the Head table was back in place the next morning, Harry saw a few teachers sitting at the house tables even though not many of the students were up. Taking a seat next to Cassiopeia, near the head of the still-empty Slytherin table, he sighed. “I don’t—... I can’t have PTSD.”

The girl looked at him incredulously, before quietly replying. “Harry, you saw more people die than anyone else in that war. Not to mention the abuse you faced and the years of brainwashing— It’s almost inevitable.”

“So what do I do?” His voice bordered on pleading. “I have nothing to do but keep going as I am. Maybe— maybe when all this is done I can finally sleep...”

Cassiopeia sighed. “Just don’t push yourself too hard.” A soft hand took his hand, a thumb dipping past the sleeve to brush against scars on his wrist. “Slipping back into bad habits won’t help you in your mission.”

“And what is this ‘mission’ of yours?” The voice of Tom Riddle cut in, as the boy sat down across from him.

Apparently, to annoy me to death.

Breaking his wrist free from the girl, he tugged up the sleeve even more and smiled thinly at where Tom sat down across from him. “Driving Dumbledore to the brink of insanity- Think I can do it?”

Tom watched.
He watched Hadrian—Harry, *Harry*, the name tasted sweet on his tongue—intently, intensely, noting how the boy acted, who he talked to, what he ate, the way he smiled—*like the sun showing through clouds*—how he felt.

He didn’t know what the fascinating child had been talking with Cassiopeia about before he arrived, having been brushed off too quickly and completely to gather information about it, but whatever it was… Harry looked visibly distressed when he had arrived, and even now melancholy lingered in his air.

He didn’t like that.

And he couldn’t stand Cassiopeia for making Harry feel that way.

Even as the Great Hall cleared and students began leaving for classes, Harry’s melancholy stuck with him like a splinter in his mind, driving him to distraction and frustration.

Tom couldn’t *kill* the girl, sadly—he would if he could, at this point, to be completely frank—so was there even anything he could do to drive the melancholy away from the child?

*The boy should never be sad.*

He was halfway through History class when inspiration struck. Hiding a smile with the dip of his head, he took a spare piece of parchment and scratched a quick note on it, before surreptitiously using a spell to send it to Hadrian.

There.

Harry was in the middle of tea (read: detention for trying to feed a blast-ended skrewt chocolate) with Dalton, when a small paper appeared before him and floated down onto his lap. The Professor smiled slightly. “Important message?”

Frowning, he shrugged as he moved his tea aside. “Don’t think so…” He opened it up to the same long looping writing that he knew so well.

*Harry,*

*Do not let anyone make you think that you are anything less than capable of doing whatever it is you have before you to accomplish.*

The note was unsigned, but he recognized the handwriting.

It was from Tom.

Smiling softly, he tucked it in the breast pocket of his old faded jacket, looking up at Dalton. “Know any spells for sending a message to someone that didn’t leave their name?”

The man tilted his head. “Secret admirer?”

“No, more of a… stalker.” He grinned at the man’s alarmed look. “Don’t worry though. I think I can handle their kind of crazy. Or at least I think so.”

Shaking his head, Dalton waved his hand. “Go on then. Write your response and I’ll demonstrate
how to do the spell.”

Wiggling his eyebrows to make the man laugh, he scrawled out a quick message and folded the paper over, pushing it across the table. The professor did a complicated spell (that Harry already knew) and the paper floated out of the room.

Tom, sitting at the library surrounded by homework and books, blinked as a note came floating in. It landed in front of him. He touched it tentatively, with his magic and his fingers, and recoiled immediately as he came in contact with Dalton’s magic.

He gagged, fingers twitching as he forced his hands to stay in place, he couldn’t-

**THAT DISGUSTING**-

**BURN IT**-

But, well, he couldn’t burn it, he had to see what the… teacher wanted. Tentatively, grimacing the whole way, he unfolded it.

And immediately his disgust turned to rage.

*Thank you, anonymous person.*

*I greatly appreciate the sentiment, but sometimes it’s not the fault of another person. Like this case- I fear my bad mood (thank you for noticing) is entirely my own fault, as I’m having trouble sleeping. It seems I’m haunted by the ghost of an old goat.*

:)* Harry*

He didn’t believe one word of that explanation for Harry’s melancholy. He’d seen Harry on low sleep. The boy was even sillier and more infuriating than normal.

But Harry attempting to explain things away was alright; he hadn’t signed the note he sent, after all.

What really mattered was the note was dripping with DALTON’S magic. That incompetent, ignorant, teacher - if he could even be called such considering how bad he was at his trade- who took up too much of Harry’s time already, all coercive smiles and honeyed words, had sent the note that Harry wrote-

Tom loathed him.

In that moment, he wished nothing more than to gut the man, and string his entrails out from one end of the Great Hall to the other, a stunning display of what would happen to anyone who would dare get in the way of his plans, dare make a mockery of Tom Riddle.

But- well.

Harry hadn’t included Dalton on his list of people to protect.

A slow, cruel smile spread across Tom’s face.

So what was stopping him?
"Little Prince."

Harry didn't look up from his book, engrossed in reading as he drank down his second cup of coffee for the morning- only muttering out, "Miss Moon."

A newspaper was set down over his book, Cassiopeia leaning over his shoulder. "You have another article calling you out. Read it."

He hummed, pushing the offending paper to the side. "Rather not, thanks though."

His coffee was snatched out of his hands.

"Hey! That's cheating!"

The girl’s face was serious. "Read it or I tell the elves that caffeine makes your nightmares worse."

"You wouldn't. I would suffer withdrawals." But there was no leniency in the silver eyes. He pouted. "Merlin you remind me of a mix between Luna and Bella- that psycho..."

Cassiopeia pressed a kiss to his temple as he turned back to pick up the paper. "You still love me."

Grumbling, he pouted. "Don't push your luck darling. You already committed a punishable offense by touching my coffee." His lips quirked up though when he heard her chuckle, focusing on the paper in front of him.

**Hadrian Malfy and the Slytherin Heirship**

*By Penelope Salarina*

Out of all the influential and personality-changing things the new generations of wizards do, is go to Hogwarts- our lovely British School for Witchcraft and Wizardry.

As we all know, the four houses of the school are from the founders themselves and all four remain to this day respected bloodlines that if not fading into obscurity, have died out.

So imagine my surprise when I heard that the boy genius, the most eligible bachelor under the age of seventeen, and the same person Which Weekly is dying to get a picture of- is the heir of Slytherin.

Yes my loyal avid readers, the 'Pretty Boy' of Hufflepuff himself is the heir to the most feared founder of Hogwarts.

According to multiple sources inside Hogwarts itself, this magical prodigy breaks all type of decorum for a 'Slytherin Heir' from associating with muggle-related wizards to denouncing a place in the court of his own blood's house.

With such news, I wonder, will Hadrian Malfy be able to stay Hogwarts' most loved genius for long?

*Cordelia Malfoy talks to Hadrian's potential marriages pg.3*

"Um… Cassie?"
The girl set his coffee down. "Yes Harry?"

Glancing back at her, he folded the paper and pursed his lips. "Did she really not..." Drifting off as he suddenly felt the eyes of the Great Hall fixed on him like he hadn't felt since fourth year, he tried to silently ask about the way the paper had casually mentioned his status as an available dating partner, waving his hand at the paper.

Luckily, Cassiopeia was one of the angels and already knew what he was thinking. "Ironic isn't it? Asking you to possibly choose a suitor at your age... old man."

He scowled deeply at her. "Now you really sound like Luna. Just- Please don't start cackling like Bella or I might have to not sleep for a week to avoid that dream."

The girl only smiled softly. "Do we die just a bit when we refuse to dream?"

He grimaced. "Not if the dream is of death, then we die no matter what we do."

"And won't we all eventually?"

With a sarcastic smile, he leaned in. "As I always say: Why not sooner rather than later?"

"And this is when your common sense cuts in to tell you to finish your coffee before you two end up confusing more people in your strange codes and serial killer vibes." Lucy did not look amused. "It's not even lunch, save your creepy flirting for later."

Cassiopeia and him looked at each other before both bursting into startled laughter. He blinked. "So does this mean she didn't tell anyone?"

The girl to his side smirked. "And ruin the satisfaction of seeing everything go to flames when it comes out? No, Cordelia wouldn't miss watching the world burn for a thousand designer dresses."

Stephen, the gossip of the group leaned in. "Oh? And what's this?"

Harry debated the merits of coming out, but then decided to do it at a time beneficial to pushing everything really off the edge. He smiled at the boy. "Nothing anyone needs to know just quite yet... though you all will be forewarned before the general public."

"As well as your snake friends?" Grace challenged, still the mix of flustered-upset that Riddle was part of the 'group' even if he wasn't really a part of their group.

Worrying his lip as he glanced to where Cassiopeia gave him a gentle nod, he sighed. "Guess I should start with 'Braxas anyways. He's family after all. And I wonder if Nott would tell Thomas for me- I'd rather not do that face to face."

Cassie nodded. "When the time comes, yes, your message will be delivered."

He hummed softly, putting thoughts of his eventually being shunned by a majority of his friends aside for lighter topics. It was mere fantasy to think everyone in this time period (that was not his own) would be so open to his sexuality.

Tom gripped the edges of the newspaper so tightly that the paper crumpled beneath his grip.

What rot.
How could that imbecile writing the paper think it was appropriate to splash across the front page of the paper the secrets that Harry had worked so hard to keep quiet? Harry didn’t want fame or power beyond what he already had- an idea that baffled Tom, to be sure, but that was just another facet of the mystery that was Hadrian Malfoy- and though Tom didn’t understand that specific desire of Harry’s… he wanted to see it respected.

And worse … the fact that that vulture proclaimed to the world that Harry was an “eligible bachelor”? Harry was a second year!

Disgusting.

But hm. Tom worried the inside of his bottom lip, brow furrowed in concentration.

He wasn’t sure if getting that reporter, terrible though she may be, fired immediately was the smartest way to do things. At best, it would be a stretch of his present resources; at worse, it would besmirch his reputation, if word got out that he was involved. The masses would see the article as necessary, eventually, or something that was bound to happen anyway, idiots that they were.

He would bide his time. He had learned patience. Like a snake in the grass, he would wait for his prey to stumble before attacking.

Tom continued on with the newspaper, for all outward appearances perfectly alright, the world unchanged. But unbeknownst to anyone else, the name Penelope Salarina was added to the list of people who, one day, he would wreak his vengeance upon.

One day.

He paused, then, with an air of nonchalance, turned to page three.

Cordelia Malfoy sits here with me, stunning in a designer robe, as a small secretive smile graces her lips. The Malfoy Matriarch is currently here to have words with me, Penelope Salarina, about her nephew.

Penelope Salarina: So, how did you take the news of Hadrian’s Lordship?

Cordelia Malfoy: Well, to be completely honest, it was just a shock to me as anyone, Penelope. Hadrian has always been a shy and somewhat reserved boy, so I found out just as anyone else did- at the Malfoy’s Winter Gala.

PS: Oh, that must have been horrid!

CS: Well, it sure was a surprise.

PS: Are there any potential… marriage contracts being set up for the youngest Malfoy?

CS: Hadrian certainly needs someone to bring him out of his shell, and I had talked with him about a contract with Miss Cassiopeia Black-

The newspaper burst into flame.

The day after the newspaper disaster found Harry sitting on the edge of Dalton’s desk, the large tome composed of the ancient greek wizarding philosopher’s ramblings about time and fate balanced
carefully on his lap. He tapped the page of the book, teeth worrying his lips as he read the increasingly morbid predictions about what would happen if one meddled with the future, brows furrowed as he concentrated on the wordy descriptions.

“And due to my complete inability to organize, Hadrian Malfoy will be helping out around class as my assistant.”

Harry glanced up, at the voice, feeling like a deer in headlights when he saw it was a somewhat familiar Slytherin-Hufflepuff class of fourth years. Blinking slowly, he smiled and moved his one hand to stabilize the heavy tome carefully as he waved with his other hand. “Good afternoon!” He smiled sheepishly at Dalton, who just looked amused, shrinking the book with a tap and tucking it away into his jacket’s pocket before fiddling with the sleeves of the familiar brick-red Auror’s jacket. “And what is it you need me to do Professor Dalton?”

They had decided Harry was to be Dalton’s aid for the semester during his off-period as not to let Dumbledore try to use his free time to bother him.

A grin was sent his way and he knew that his tenseness had not gone unnoticed. “Anything but demonstrate. I do find myself liking the number of chairs I have at the moment.”

Chuckling and relaxing a bit, he slid off the desk. “I have no idea what you’re on about.” Moving to sit behind the desk the professor never used, he tried to keep the sarcasm out of his voice, but ultimately failed. “I am a pinnacle of society as far as chairs are concerned.”

The man snorted.

“But as you wish, I will organize this mess you call a desk.”

Rolling his eyes, the professor turned to the class. “Today we will cover the theory behind the silencing charm!”

Smiling slightly to himself because he knew most of the Slytherins knew how to do the charm already, he transfigured three different colored boxes and started sorting through the papers in the order of: grading, paperwork, and personal. Then with that aside, he hefted the grading box up onto the desk with a scowl, flicking his hand so the top ten papers levitated in front of him. Scanning names and topics, he sorted them into floating piles of grade and topic, flicking the papers to their associated place.

It almost reminded him of the muggle game of solitaire and he briefly wondered if he could enchant a deck of cards almost like wizarding chess.

Hogwarts brushed against him like a chiding mother and within an instant of the door starting to be opened and Dumbledore looking into the classroom, the papers were all lying flat on the desk. He looked up with a slightly curious yet thin smile. “Professor Dumbledore, how nice to see you… don’t you have a class?”

His comment made Dalton look over, brows furrowing slightly. “Albus. Do you need something?”

The man smiled, blue eyes twinkling and Harry really wanted to just sock him with a solid right hook. “No no, I was just checking up to see how young Mr. Malfoy is faring…” The blue eyes caught him, turning to ice and he clenched his hands into fists at his sides. “My dear boy, if you ever need to tell me anything, my office is open.”

It was oddly reminiscent of the memory of Tom Riddle when the Chamber of Secrets had been open and he gave the same polite yet slightly disdainful smile he’d seen on the mini Dark Lord’s face so
many times before. “Do not worry about me being in your office, sir. I have other teachers I much prefer to confide in.”

There was no secret here- they did not like each other one bit.

With a narrow of cold blue eyes the man nodded sharply and left, the shutting of the door leaving Harry to breath out a deep sigh, rubbing at the bridge of his nose slightly. “Sorry about the disruption, please, continue in your lecture.” He sank into the chair, taking off his glasses so he could clean them on his old auror’s jacket.

Instead of getting back to his sorting, he shifted to stare out the window, wondering if putting himself in a grudge match against a delusional wizard professor was going to lead to his demise before befriending a mini Dark Lord could.

Chapter End Notes

Tom: *reading about Harry's eligibility*
Tom: This is ridiculous! No one should put him under that pressure at this age!
Tom: *turns the page sneakily to read about Harry's potential suitors because why not, that doesn't mean anything*
Tom: *sets newspaper on fire because Cassiopeia is mentioned*
Tom: This is fine.

~

One of my favorite scenes, by far.
Love you Bells!
In Which Tom Steps Back And Harry Falls Forward

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Tom and Harry send each other notes (Tom not knowing Harry can tell it's from him), Cordelia Malfoy seems to have let everyone think what they wish about Harry's status as a bachelor which upsets Tom, and Dalton gains a new assistant with emerald eyes while Dumbledore is being increasingly annoying.

Chapter Notes

Extra long chapter because I love all of you and you deserve it! <3
Also the weather's miserable here and I hate snow so much that I need something good right now- hence the angst! MWAHAHAHAHA
Yes, feel free to throw fruit at me. I will eat them :) (just not tomatoes. blegh. nasty.)
@bellachrome is still my favorite human-shaped sentient being, apologies to everyone else, you're all lovely too though <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Potions was just as boring for him as usual, so like he normally did, Harry turned to helping the students around him. He spotted a boy down the isle- isolated from the rest of the Slytherins and yet looking like a seventh year in his awkwardly large body.

Harry’s brain practically melted.

Hagrid was a Slytherin?

It seemed to fit though… how else did Riddle have access to his rooms so easily or know so much about the half giant? And Hagrid’s later dislike of the snakes- that was born from being betrayed by his own house- oh Merlin, he felt a headache coming on just thinking about this…

That oaf is notoriously bad at potions.

His eyes followed the boy’s movements, knowing that the ingredient he was holding wasn’t measured correctly and with a sigh, slid past Pomona to catch the larger boy’s arm. “That isn’t the correct amount- you’ll ruin the potion.” Gently pushing the boy’s hand to the side, he leaned over to show Hagrid how to measure the bone dust, sprinkling it lightly over the top of the potion. “Now stir three times- slow and smooth as if you were petting a sleeping animal.”

The boy nodded, his stirring coming out almost smooth.

Harry smiled. “See? You’re pretty good at this!”

That got a few looks from the other Slytherins, but before anyone could say anything, he was being pulled into large arms- small frame being crushed. “Thank yah! Say, ya’re tha’ boy who everyon’
talks about in hush hush-er Hay-dian som’thin?”

“Call me Harry.” He chuckled as he was set on his feet once more, smoothing out his robes. “And what do I call you, my friend?”

The large boy’s eyes widened. “Harry… ya’re my friend?”

Oh. He felt that right in the stab of his heart.

Weak Hufflepuff.

Mentally kicking Riddle v.2’s shin, he nodded. Hagrid had been his first friend and who was he but a sucker for a misunderstood Slytherin? “Yeah. I’m your friend.”

“Ya’re the best!” He was pulled into another hug, a flick of his hand barely able to save the potion before Hagrid knocked it over, and he patted the boy’s back with his small hands smiling at the picture they probably made. “Ya’re my second friend other than-...” The boy drifted off, looking a bit guilty.

Harry smiled softly. He’d let Hagrid understand in his own time that giant spiders weren’t meant to be in the castle. ‘They sound lovely and I’d be happy to meet them… but we might want to finish your potion first.”

Both his feet on the ground once more, he started into the task of teaching Hargid to appreciate potions just as much as any dangerous creature- because by the fates he was not about to let the larger boy fall to Dumbledore’s clutches again.

Slughorn stopped him on the way out. “Mr. Malfoy- Hadrian, my boy- I’m hosting a small get together of like-minded individuals and I was debating inviting you, but seeing how well you interact with the other houses I think it would be a wonderful fit!”

He smiled uncertainty, sure he looked like a shy little boy even as he was digging his nails into his hand at being called the same nickname that Dumbledore threw around so often. “Oh? I mean I mostly get along with Hufflepuff, maybe Ravenclaw, and Slytherin… I- uh- sometimes Gryffindors get a little loud sometimes though…”

The man scrambled to reassure the students that he’d been trying so hard to ensnare in his web of rich and famous people he was friends with. “Oh no no no-” The man leaned in conspiratorially with a small smile. “Gryffindors usually have less talent in potions than I would like, so there aren’t many attending. And Ravenclaws… well, usually they aren’t the most social of students.”

So it was going to be most all snakes and him then. Lovely.

Nodding slowly, he smiled a bit wider in something so fake it made his cheeks hurt as if they were protesting being used like this. “Okay. Yeah- I’d be happy to come to your get-together.”

A small slip of gold parchment was handed over, the man smiling widely in what he thought was victory. “Wonderful then! This little pass will not only tell you the meeting times and dates but if you bring it, it’ll let you into the rooms!”

So like the DA coins but more obvious and gaudy.

It is a club for showing off the most ‘accomplished’ of the school.

He dipped his head, tucking the gold slip away and turning for the door. “I’ll see you then
“Professor.” And without any further will to let himself be talked around in circles, he slipped out of the potions lab.

“Tom, my boy!” Slughorn waved him up after class, fat little fingers crossing in front of him as he smiled down at Tom like a stupid clown. “Earlier today I invited Hadrian Malfoy to the Slug Club!” He beamed like a lapdog stuffed full on food scraps. “Could you, as a prefect, make sure he knows how to get to the meeting room? He will be the first Hufflepuff to join and I don’t want him to get lost!” The man chuckled as if he was nervous. “I have a feeling that boy will do great things- you should see his potions! They’re all perfect! And I’ve even seen him altering the recipes and writing them in one of his journals!”

“Astounding,” Tom breathed, effortlessly pulling on his flattering smile. “To think that we have such talent here at Hogwarts- and in Hufflepuff, no less! I’m flattered that you would entrust me with the duty of seeing him to the Slug Club safely.”

Slughorn seemed to glow like a particularly chubby caterpillar. “Yes, well your talent in potions is a close second to the boy- Don’t think I haven’t noticed you doing some of your own experiments!” Giving Tom a hearty slap on the shoulder, the man smiled even wider. “Yes, well, I’ll see you at the meeting!”

“Of course, Professor, see you then.”

Tom waited until Slughorn was out of sight to let his smile slip from his face. Blundering idiot. The only reason he tolerated the fool was that Slughorn had connections. He was smart, in that he surrounded himself with his betters, being useful in that he connected great minds.

Tom was one of those minds, and he was planning to use Slughorn to make the connections he needed.

It was interesting that Slughorn would invite Harry, however. His little club consisted mostly of Slytherins- with the occasional more social Ravenclaw or the rare composed Gryffindor- the Hufflepuffs, by and large, had no talent at potions that Tom had yet seen.

But, well. Harry was the exception to every rule, it seemed.

As it should be.

A small smile ghosted across Tom’s lips as he made his way to his next class. This would be interesting.

Tom walked into Charms class- and stopped.

His good mood evaporated instantly.

This is not what he attended Hogwarts for. Not. One. Bit.
Sitting on the dark wood of *Dalton’s desk*, a familiar petite figure sat cross-legged with a book in hand, long silken hair in the professor’s hands. The infuriating boy laughed, clear and vibrant. “I am not a menace! That’s inaccurate and slander!”

“Really? I think the amount of books of mine you’ve set on fire would say differently.” The professor, *loathsome cad*, smiled. “And that drawing you put on my chalkboard during yesterday’s class! I wasn’t able to calm them down for a good twenty minutes!”

Tom felt his insides twist around each other in a very unpleasant manner as Harry- Hadrian, that is- giggled and moved to cover his mouth as if trying to stifle his amusement.

That was how it would be? Then fine.

Orion touched Tom’s arm lightly, and Tom pulled himself together from his moment of expressionless disturbance. Glancing at the Black heir in acknowledgement, Tom set his face to a pleasant mask and took the seat next to Abraxas, Orion sitting on his other side.

“Good morning class! As you can probably tell, Hadrian Malfoy has taken over as my student aid during this time period and will be assisting me in answering any questions- just don’t ask him to demonstrate- I don’t want to repair any more tables.”

At this Hadrian snickered harder, cheeks flushing just slightly as he did. Closing his thick book and setting it to the side, the boy looked up, eyes immediately finding Tom’s. Blinking as if surprised, the smile wavered for just a second and then returned full force. “Right. No wand waving around the students. Copy that, loud and clear.” Then the boy tilted his head back, exposing the golden skin of his neck. Tom swallowed at the sight, but his facial expression didn’t change in the slightest. “Can I do it wandless?” Hadrian asked.

Dalton rolled his eyes. “Fine. But the second you break anything-...”

With a grin, the infuriating boy held his hands up defensively.

After Dalton had let the class loose to practicing and sat down at his desk, Hadrian jumped down from his perch and bounced over to sit backwards in the empty seat in front of Tom. “Thomas. ‘Braxas. How are you doing this fine morning?” The green eyes darted to Orion, something dark flashing over them for a quick second. “Oh. Hey there you rusty spork. Good to see you too I guess.”

Tom hummed noncommittally and gave a quick flick of his wand, in accordance with the directions the professor had written out on the board. The secondhand quill he had pulled out precisely for this class flew across the room, thwacking against the board splendidly and smudging part of the instructions. “Ah, I need to work on my direction,” Tom said, giving an easy grimace.

That was a lie. He didn’t need to work on his direction.

But, as he effortlessly summoned his quill back and watched the professor huff and get up to redo the instructions, the tight knot his insides had tangled themselves into eased a bit.

“Mhmm- and I’ve never seen a dragon .” Harry’s voice was sarcastic.

“I don’t see why that’s relevant, Malfoy, but as you like.” Tom faked complete ignorance of Hadrian’s sarcasm- *impertinent brat*- and watched Orion glare at Harry. Orion then tried to do the assigned wand movements, but failed the spell and made a face. “Black, try giving the last movement a bit more flick at the end,” Tom suggested.
Orion did it- the banished quill hitting Hadrian in the face.

Tom grimaced again. “It appears I’m not the only one who needs to work on my direction.”

The boy snorted, seeming to find it mildly amusing, sending the quill back to Orion with a flick of his finger. “Damn, I know the Black madness is strong, but the Gaunt stubbornness must be legendary.” Standing, piercing green eyes fixed on him, but there was no smile in them like before.

Tom merely tilted his head at Hadrian, his face questioning innocence, and his eyes as blank and empty as the sockets of a skull.

The infuriating siren of a boy sighed, as if somehow Tom had sorely disappointed him, as if this was Tom’s fault. “I really should know how to take a hint and stop trying to be your friend, you walking scarecrow.” Something so very remorseful passed over the insolent child’s face before he nodded. “Let’s hope in the future you’ll see that I’m not an enemy to make, Riddle. I would rather not duel you again- but should you keep acting like an idiot I will, if only to knock some sense into you.”

Hadrian turned on his heel and stalked off like a frustrated feline, saying something to Dalton before grabbing his book and leaving the classroom.

Tom clenched his wand just a touch more tightly than before. That was how it would be? Then fine.

He was above things as base as human contact, kindness, affection, love. He didn’t need any of that. He had spent his life trying to remove such human weaknesses from himself. He was better than that.

He didn’t need Hadrian anyway.

“I don’t know where your cousin gets his ideas, Abraxas,” Tom said mournfully. “I mean, really. What on earth did I do to provoke that reaction?”

Abraxas gave him a long, silent stare. “No idea…”

Tom nodded and sighed in a put-upon fashion, then attempted another banishment. Yet again, a perfect execution.

He wished he could banish this nasty twisted human feeling as easily as he could banish the quill.

It was only a few days later- Friday, the last class before the weekend that he was helping Dalton- that the old goat decided to move past checking Harry was with Dalton during his free period and instead trying to take action.

Playing with a snitch that Zac had sent him along with a box of raspberry jam-filled chocolates shaped like little hawk heads and a crossword puzzle, he studied the parchment in front of him lazily. The whole scene reminded him of his time during long breaks as an Auror and the comfortable energy made him sink into the chair, magic humming contently as he would let the snitch go only to use the wind of the wings to find and grab it a few seconds later.

The door creaked open and he forgot the snitch he’d let go, wondering why Hogwarts didn’t alert him to the man standing in the doorway. “Malfoy. As I see you’re not busy, please come with me.”
Dalton turned to meet his eyes, but Hadrian broke the man’s gaze to stand up lazily, stretching with a sarcastic smile. “Of course sir, just let me catch the snitch that seems to be- Oh there it is!” Hadrian’s holly wand instantly jumped to his hand, and Dalton instinctively pressed himself to the wall.

There was chaos as instead of the snitch being caught, the back of the room’s neatly filed papers exploded into the air, being thrown every which way. Cursing, he reached up to grab the golden flying ball out of the air, shoving it in his pocket as he shook his head. “Darn. That was entirely unexpected...”

Dalton picked up the slack of his tired, monotone acting. “Malfoy! Clean this up! You know better than to use your wand anywhere near my rooms when other students are around!” As Harry made a cartoonish ‘wah wah wahhhh’ sound, Dalton turned to Dumbledore. “Albus- excuse my aid, but please find a time to corner him outside of my classes.”

The old goat seemed on the verge of hexing them both, but instead only nodded stiffly. “Very well.” Then the door slammed shut.

He groaned, waving his hand to reverse the spell he’d cast, the papers settling back in order. “What a pain. The word to complete this bloody crossword was on the tip of my tongue too!” He scowled darkly, moving back to slump in the chair. “Now I’ll never get it back.”

“What’s the hint?”

Looking up at where Dalton was leaning against the wall, he wrinkled his nose. “General or widespread. It’s ten letters and has a ‘b’ and a ‘q’.” Smile breaking out on his face, he moved to the board, drawing ten spaces and a little hangman’s platform. Writing in the ‘b’ and ‘q’ in the second and fourth spaces respectively, he grinned at the class. “Anyone up for hangman?”

Dalton chuckled, but fixed him with a playfully reprimanding look. “Mr. Malfoy this is not the time, and as much as I am all for keeping your from both Dumbledore’s clutches and your own idiocy, any playing games will be outside of my class.”

Humming slightly, he nodded. “Wouldn’t want to blow up books or cause a student to grow out their hair suddenly, would we sir?”

With a grin, the man waved his wand, the chalk moving to fill in the gaps. “Only on Mondays and Wednesdays after class Harry.”

Sticking his tongue out at the man’s back because-of course it was that word how stupid was he-he crossed his legs in the big chair and wrote out the word, grinning when the crossword was completed and it rearranged itself to form a note.

_Little Bat,_

_I hope you enjoyed the chocolates- they are an early gift for valentines- as you will most likely be overrun with suitors clamoring for those titles of yours. Know that any letters addressed to me as your guardian will be burned on sight, though I might send you a few to read over if I find them amusing._

_The snitch is from Annabell, who I just barely convinced to send it instead of homosexual erotica- as I think that would be highly disapproved by the staff at the school._
Harry snickered, imagining the faces of the school if he was to be seen carrying a book like that around, having half a mind to ask for it just for the shock value and entertainment it would bring.

No, I will not be sending anything of the sort- I can hear you thinking as I write this- and no I do not want to know anything about your hormones as you grow into the lovely young man I know you will be.

As for the crossword, I thought you needed a challenge as you are more than able to teach half those pitiful classes and I will send you any book you request from my own library if just to not have to show up at that school again because you decided to do something stupid.

Which reminded him- he had a basilisk to befriend.

Try to be an ordinary child for a few months more. You will find I have made up quite the schedule for your month here over the summer- so enjoy not having to do paperwork or be a negotiator as long as you can.

Yours in everlasting amusement,

Zacarias

Shaking his head at the man’s teasing nature, he pulled out a spiral notebook and ripped out a page, twirling a muggle pen in his hand as he thought out his letter.

Loopyly writing out a sarcastic letter about him really really wanting to read the books Annabel was suggesting, his plans to befriend a basilisk, and that he would very much like to see who was trying to arrange a marriage behind his back- he folded it smoothly into the shape of a crane.

“Benedica con un viaggio sicuro. Assicurati che nessun altro veda i tuoi segreti. Viaggia verso la casa del signore dei vampiri.” The crane moved slowly, tilting its head in a question and he smiled. “Se vieni scoperto, copia e continua a viaggiare. L’altro esploderà.”

Picking it up gently he moved to the window, casting a weatherproof charm and an anti-tracking charm on it, watching it shake out it’s wings.

“Ora vola, bellezza.”

The crane flew off and he shut the window softly, turning to find Dalton looking at him in exasperation. “Do I want to know?”

He raised his hands, sitting in the chair again and turning the pages of his book to where he’d left off. “I will sit here, making no noise and trying not to be a bother. Please feel free to ignore me.” Then with a saucy grin, he winked at the man. “Non ho mai detto che sarei stato calmo e obbediente, bello.” A girl in the back of the class giggled into her hands while also turning slightly red, and he smirked conspiratorial when she shook her head in response to the other ravenclaw girls turning to look at her in curiosity.
No doubt his words would make the rumor mill one way or another, but the attempt to keep his secrets was nice.

Plus, he never would have guessed that Myrtle Warren was multilingual.

It was late. Far later than most of the castle was awake. Tom, holed up in his room—thank Merlin that prefects got their own—wrote the last sentence for his essay and smiled. Now… to test his latest concoction.

He reached over and uncorked the potion sitting there, waiting for him. Then, pulling on his dragonhide gloves—a gift from Abraxas—he lightly coated the parchment in the potion, then sat back and smiled.

That imbecile teacher would only have to touch the parchment to experience all the symptoms of the flu, including violent vomiting and passing out. One embarrassing fainting spell in the middle of the great hall— or perhaps emptying his stomach in front of a classroom of students— and he would be out of commission, and away from Harry, for several days.

Humming a dirge to himself, he set aside the essay and sat back with a smile.

He couldn’t wait.

With a grin, Dalton dropped a stack of papers in front of where Harry was re-reading a worn copy of ‘The Lord of the Rings’. “Looks like you need something to do.”

He didn’t look up, invested in his mental image of Aragorn— damn that man was fine—fighting alongside Legolas.

Get your mind out of the gutter. You have a teacher asking on you for Merlin’s sake.

Snickering slightly and sending the horcrux back a quip about how he wouldn’t mind the King of Gondor ‘asking on him’, he reluctantly put the book in his bag and sat up. Looking from the pile of papers to the smirking professor, he made a soft clicking sound with his tongue in irritation. “When in Rome… slave labor? Is that what this is?”

Chuckling, Dalton ruffled his hair. “Good luck. Some of those Slytherins use words bigger than even I understand sometimes.”

That is, most likely, on purpose.

Rolling his eyes, even if he was silently agreeing with Riddle v.2, he pulled out a red pen from his bag that usually used to edit the manuscripts he was in the tedious process of writing, twirling it in his fingers as he pulled the first essay off the top.
The uses of simple household charms outside of the house? This was child's play.

Setting to marking clear spelling errors, grammar errors, then adding comments on the creative uses the students had come up with, Harry noticed his throat was starting to ache about halfway through.

Frowning, but continuing to read the essays- that in his opinion seemed rather rudimentary after Tom’s in depth essay on how many of the cleaning charms could also be lethal (because of course he did-) he ducked his head into his elbow when he shuddered through a wet cough that shook his entire frame. Taking a few deep breaths and staying with his head ducked for a few seconds longer, he pulled away, only to blink at where a few spots of blood were dotting his jacket.

*That’s not a good sign. You need to get to the infirmary!*

Just as he moved to stand, feeling as if he’d lost all his body heat, the door was thrown open, Cassiopeia running in. Her silver-grey eyes were wide and worried as she ran to steady him. “Harry!”

“Harry?” Dalton sounded worried, turning from his class of seventh-years. “What happened?”

His eyelids felt as if they were weighed with lead, and his hand tightened on Cassiopeia. “The- the papers.” Stupid of him- he should have noticed the effects sooner- had he not been poisoned many times before? The girl nodded, his hand tightening once more. “Can- Not now.”

They both knew that even the mildest of poisons could be potentially fatal with the way his core wasn’t completely in sync with this body. And where he would usually give up and just let the poison take over, then sigh a lot when he was stuck back in his seventeen-year-old body, this time it was different. He had no idea what he would come back looking like and everything would be ruined if he were to magically age- not to mention how he’d explain dying in the first place.

No- he couldn’t let this poison kill him.

Cassiopeia looked distraught. “I didn’t see this!” Her voice was a hoarse whisper, looking as if she was going to cry. “It was supposed to be Dalton!”

Oh.

‘Oh’ indeed.

Brian whirling, from both the migraine that was pounding at his head and the situation, he looked up at Cassiopeia. “Go- go tell Braxas.”

“But-”

“Now!” He pulled from the girl’s support, legs collapsing from under him. By now Dalton was by his side, helping him up, and he squeezed his eyes shut as he proceeded to throw up both his breakfast and a good amount of blood.

*So what do we do?!

Mentally praying Dalton would forgive him, he let himself go limp as he retreated to his mindscape.

~

*The borders of his mind was tinged with gray, creeping inwards as it killed the grass it touched, and he ran past Riddle v.2 into the castle of his mind.*
“Where are you going?!” The boy followed him.

Twisting through the familiar corridors, he reached the headmaster’s office, running up into what he’d made his most personal library of memories. “I’m saving you!” Taking a glance around, he grabbed a glass orb off the shelf, ignoring the voice of Trelawny as he reached over to cut his finger on a sharp corner of a familiar empty owl cage before smearing the blood on the orb in the shape of a sigil. Muttering a spell, he smashed the glass on the floor.

The castle shook, as if from an earthquake, both Harry and the horcrux gripping onto the walls to keep themselves upright- before everything stopped.

“What was that!”

Slumping to the floor, he looked at the boy. “A particularly dark spell that stops the mind from from dying with the body. This mindscape won’t be affected until my heart beats for the very last time. If Cassiopeia can get an antidote, it will save you from being destroyed.”

The boy shifted, looking at him in something he recognized as fear. “And if she cannot?”

Harry knew that Tom Riddle would only ever be afraid of Death, and here he was, only hours (or less) from greeting it. Picking himself off the floor and sinking into a comfy armchair instead, he grimaced. “We will both die. I will come back… somehow… and you will most likely not.”

There was a pause as the boy turned and his voice was small when he spoke up again. “I’ve never been in here… What is this room?”

It was a horrendous transition, but with the fear and stress of the situation, Harry couldn’t blame the boy. So he hummed, looking around at the room he hated most. “These are my- ah- less pleasant memories. All the deaths, bad endings, and nightmares, are in this room.” He stood, waving at the boy. “Maybe another day we can come back to this room. I think now would be better spent doing something less- well- sad .”

“And what do you have in mind?” The horcrux’s voice was biting, snappy, but he ignored it.

“I’m going to teach you to roller-skate.”

~

How could she fail like this?

Cassiopeia had seen the potion- like a bad dream about Riddle and then flashes of Dalton being sick in the Great Hall- but like a bolt of lightning out of the blue, she’d been hit with a vision of her young lord pale and unmoving, shooting out of her seat before it could even finish.

And now she was running, weaving through younger years, bumping into multiple Gryffindors that she just ignored, and sliding into the Slytherin Common room.

The snakes on their off period- Abraxas Malfoy and Theodore Nott included- looked up at her ruffled demeanor, surely someone about to curse her while her guard was down, but she didn’t let them get the chance. Locking eyes with Abraxas, she felt he throat closing up with unshed tears.
“Harry- he’s- he’s dying!”

The whole room froze.

Abraxas stood, books on his lap falling to the floor, his eyes wide. “Say that again?” His voice was deadly, Malfoys were more dangerous than even Tom Riddle could be when family was involved.

“He was poisoned- he was coughing up blood!”

Abraxas looked sharply to Theodore. “Nott! With me!” Sharp eyes turned on her. “Go tell Riddle. Even if he is not your king.”

The boy wasn’t finished, but she was already nodding and running out. She didn’t have to ask about his classes, she knew he would be in Astronomy with Moorvitch.

At least Lady Fate had good timing for bad events.

As soon as she was in the class, Moorvitch stood. “K’ssiopeia?”

“I need Riddle.”

Moorvitch’s eyes widened, before her face became a stone mask, the ‘mean old hag’ persona coming out to play. “Riddle! Get out before I dock ‘ou points for destracting ze class!

Dipping his head like the perfect prefect he was, the boy followed her out, but as soon as they were in the hall she found two murderous eyes fixed on her. “What do you want Black.”

Ignoring the jealousy and irrational hate she could practically taste wafting off the boy, Cassiopeia felt her chest constricting and she knew that this next few minutes would shape fate. “Harry- he’s dying.”

The slight widening of the boy’s eyes confirmed what she already knew- the cold-hearted bastard cared, even if he would rather cut out his own tongue than admit it.

She pressed on. “He was poisoned during Dalton’s class, and was coughing up blood last time I saw-”

“What was he doing?”

It wasn’t a rhetorical question in the way some would express frustrations about how stupid their loved ones where, no, this was a meticulous pry for knowledge, to assess if this was his fault. She locked eyes with him and kept her voice as bewildered as it could be. “Grading papers, why?”

The subtle clench of the boy’s jaw told her just how those few words had thrown the boy, despite his stoic composure.

Good. He deserves it for hurting Harry.

Never let it be said that she was any less vindictive than the rest of her family when it came to the things- or in her case, people- she cared about.

Chapter End Notes
Hey! :) Anyone wanna take a crack at the crossword word I had Harry trying to figure out?
If so, here's the hint- 'General or widespread. It’s ten letters and has a ‘b’ and a ‘q’.'
Good luck!

Translations:
Benedica con un viaggio sicuro. Assicurati che nessun altro veda i tuoi segreti. Viaggia verso la casa del signore dei vampiri. (Bless with a safe journey. Make sure no one else sees your secrets. Travel to the house of the vampire lord.)
Se vieni scoperto, copia e continua a viaggiare. L'altro esploderà. (If you are discovered, copy and continue traveling. The other will explode.)
Ora vola, bellezza. (Now fly, beauty.)
Non ho mai detto che sarei stato calmo e obbediente, bello. (I never said I would be calm and obedient, handsome.)

Okay. So... I would say I'm sorry, but I try not to lie ^-^ I've been waiting to post this part for a while and now it's finally up! *dances in a circle waving arms*
It just gets better from here! *evil grin*
Kisses!
-Mango
Harry and Riddle v.2 were sitting on the floor of the Great Hall, having gotten tired of roller skating, even if it warmed his dying heart to see the boy so uncomposed.

He was even sitting on the floor - who would have guessed?

“You call him Thomas.” Looking up, he saw the boy’s face was thoughtful. “Yet you call me ‘Riddle version two’.”

Blinking, he tilted his head and sat up off where he was leaning on his hands. “I don’t have the best-uh-track record with horcruxes... so I guess it wasn’t as much a personal slight as it was my mind trying to compartmentalize the fact that you aren’t me - that you’re literally part of another person’s soul stuck in my brain.”

Nodding slowly, the boy kept his face unreadable. “I see.”

“Would you rather me call you by your middle name?”

Eyes snapping to him, the boy narrowed his eyes for a long second, before relaxing just slightly. “My family...” With a soft huff, the boy looked away. “They were pathetic.” The boy clenched his jaw, looking upset. “My mother had magic and yet she was too weak to even have a single child without dying.”

Looking away, Harry shrugged slightly. The whole situation with the Gaunts and Riddles was... complicated. “The Gaunts were all quite-er-inbred, so with your new blood and stronger magic, she couldn’t survive your birth as well as being abandoned by your father. Though I’m not placing the blame on him either, as he was only trying to get away from the woman who basically drugged and-...” Glancing over, he cut himself off at the anger in the boy’s eyes. With a long sigh, he shook
his head. “It's not important.”

Maroon eyes narrowed on him. “Not important? How is it not important? Those are the people that left me! They-”

“They’re dead. It’s done and you’re proof that.” He didn’t look up from where his fingers were pulling at fraying stitching of his coat. “It’s not about the fact they left you anymore, is it? It’s about the fact that even after you killed them, that you still felt alone… It’s okay, y’know? We all feel alone sometimes.”

The horcrux was silent.

He tilted his head back, leaning back on his hands so he could watch the stars on the ceiling of the Great Hall shine.

“What will dying feel like?”

Looking at the boy out of the corner of his eye, he smiled bitterly. “Someone once told me that it would feel like falling asleep… but as it seems to be one of the things I am best at, I can tell you that there are many different ways and levels of pain to dying.”

The boy’s eyebrows furrowed.

Harry smiled reassuringly. "Between one second and the next, you will simply… cease to exist. It will not hurt."

The great hall around them was silent and this time it was more oppressive in its weight.

"You can call me Marvolo."

He felt the corner of his lips tug up, moving to get to his feet, steadying himself as the roller skates wanted to roll him away. He held out a hand. "Well then, Marvolo, will you join me for one last metaphorical dance?"

The fragment of Tom Riddle's soul that would never grow to see the age of sixteen smiled softly, looking in the moment like a completely different boy as he took Harry's hand. "I would be delighted, Mr. Potter."

His startled laugh rang out around them in the quiet of the mindscape.

~

Pale and so very still, Abraxas’ cousin laid in the hospital bed that dwarfed his tiny frame, making him look all that much more fragile.

The hospital wing was silent, still in its weighted anticipation. Cassiopeia and Nott had both joined him, his cousin’s dark haired hufflepuff friend standing like a statue on the other side of the bed—probably the one to be chosen for the rest of the group to face the nurse’s frowns at their lingering.

When the woman in question straightened with a frown on her lips, Professor Dalton cut in before even he could say something. "What happened?"

"A potion, one that seems to give the victim flu-like symptoms, seems to have gotten into his system. I've never seen anything like the potion before though, and as for Mr. Malfoy… he seems to have
gone into a healing coma- except for the fact he's not healing. The coma instead seems to be self-inflicted and it is only slowing the rate at which the boy's body is dying."

The doors were thrown open, the Vampire Lord and his red-haired companion stalking into the room. "Anything of use, repeat it- Annie, you're in charge of making sure that no one tries anything funny to our little lord while he's out."

As the nurse hurriedly repeated what she had said, the redhead pulled out a wickedly curved dagger, perching herself on the edge of Hadrian's bed and scanning the room.

Lord Zacarias huffed when the woman was done, a deep frown on his lips. "He used the sealing spell- what was he thinking?!"

"You and I both know exactly what he was thinking," the redheaded vampire’s eyes were cold, “but that's neither here nor there- a better question is how Healer Habora is going to kill him herself when she finds out."

That actually had the man looking pitying for the boy. "I wish him luck then… goblin healers are the worst."

"What's a sealing spell?" Abraxas spoke up before he thought better of it, both vampires looking his way.

The man- the Lord- didn't seem phased by the question though. "As long as I have known Hadrian, he has had an overabundance of magical power. I… was not the one to raise him as a young child, but the people who did… they held no love of magic and whenever possible tried to beat it out of him, so you can imagine his magic isn't on great terms with him sometimes. When I found him, half alive in the snow near my castle's borders, his magic was killing him. Over time I think training and studying magic has helped Hadrian accept his magic, but it is still a force that is somewhat foreign to him." The two vampires shared a long look of hidden meaning, before the man continued. "The sealing spell is one of the ancient magics- essentially locking away one's magic and mind, separate from the body until it is released. Normally it was used to control or punish, but I believe in this case, Hadrian knew that his magic would only make the situation worse and used a very powerful act of occlumency to use the sealing spell on himself. Not to mention should he somehow survive this, his mind will not have deteriorated or sustained any damage that it would have coming so close to the brink of death."

While the room took a moment to absorb that, the redheaded woman took the boy's finger and nicked it with her knife, inhaling deeply before anyone could do anything about it. "He's deteriorating. I give it two hours, three at maximum."

"Miss please let go of-"

The vampire hissed at the nurse, baring her fangs. "I will do nothing of the sort! I am a far better healer than you will ever be, so you can shove that clipboard up your-"

"Annabell!"

The two vampires once again shared looks that seemed to communicate whole sentences.

"He will be alright." Cassiopeia's soft voice came from his side, drawing the attention of the room. "One way or another, he will be at peace, as he is at home in his mind."

This seemed to placate the vampires more than it should, and they shared one last look before the Vampire Lord straightened. "I will have to call the Ambassadors, let them know that Hadrian is sick
and he will not be in contact for a little while, get them ready for any unexpected outcome. Annie, keep an eye on him. I have many people to contact." The man strode away, heading out of the room, voice was soft but deadly as he moved to pull open the door. "I hope for the sake of whoever did this, that Hadrian recovers, or many important people will not be happy."

The door slammed shut behind the man.

Stowing away her knife, the redhead moved to sit at the head of the bed, moving Hadrain's head to rest in her lap. "He's just worried. It's not everyday our little bat tries to die on us… though I think you'd find it amusing how much he still cannot stand the sight of hawks."

Cassiopeia moved to sit in a chair by the bed. "Well it's better than if Harry was out there breaking tables and batting those ridiculously long eyelashes of his- I rue the day he takes you up on those books you offered to send him."

Both of them smiled knowingly and Abraxas wondered what it was that made Hadrian Malfoy attract such powerful and yet strange people.

“Miss Black.”

Cassiopeia looked up from where she sat by Harry. Tom Riddle hovered at the doorway, not entering the room. “Yes, Slytherin’s King?”

Tom hesitated, gaze flickering over the other inhabitants of the room. He did not look at Harry. “If you would step outside, I have a message for you…?”

Glancing down to the boy at her side even as her mind relayed scenes- possibilities of things to come- she nodded slowly and reluctantly left her Prince’s side. As she joined the boy in the hallway outside the infirmary doors, she had a difficult time keeping her composed mask- just because she could see him helping did not mean this wasn’t his fault to begin with- but somehow, she managed. “The message?” It was short and slightly snappy, but her best friend was dying.

Tom held out his hand, revealing a potion vial that sat in his gloved palm. “Per your request.”

There was a pause in which she was sure her mask had cracked, glaring in spite for the boy in front of her.

It would forever be a mystery to her why this sadistic fool was Harry’s equal and why the sweet boy thought he had to save him- Cassiopeia would have made sure her best dagger had sunk into his throat the second she met him- and after this? She was not on Riddle’s side.

“Ah… I see.” Her voice was glacial as she took the vial from him. Then her eyes narrowed poisonsly, mask slipping on purpose. “I am sure that because of this setback in health, my darling Harry will not be able to receive visitors outside his… immediate friends. I’m sure you understand.”

“Of course,” Tom replied smoothly. “And of course, you, being his fiancee, fall into that category. Which is why I am fulfilling your request.” He inclined his head slightly towards the vial that Cassie now held. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I must be going. I have… other matters to attend to.”

With that, Tom bowed to her, turned on his heel, and left.

It was too unexpected- even as it shouldn’t have been- and a slight laugh escaped her. Cassiopeia looked from the vial to the space where the horribly misinformed boy had stood, before moving back
to her Prince’s side. When Dominic and Cameron and all the rest of Harry’s little friends left for their
next class, leaving her and Annie alone, she pulled out the vial.

Annabell looked at her, not stopping her, but still wary. “Are you sure?”

“I am.” There were few things the future was certain, but the fact that Harry could not ever fully die
was one of them. She was just delaying the reincarnation that would surely cause him trouble.

And she would do anything for her Prince.

That, in itself, was another basic fact of the universe.

~

Harry noticed the change.

It was impossible not to.

Body, connected to soul, connected to magic- it was like a spiderweb, and someone had just tugged
one one of the strings. The connection vibrated and he paused in his reading. Putting the book to the
side as he’d obviously read it before, he looked at the Horcrux. “I think that… the antidote was
administered.”

Marvolo looked up from the book he was avidly absorbing. “Does that mean you will leave?”

He thought about it. He could stay here, reading with company, or he could go deal with a small
sickly half-dead body and worried friends.

Harry picked his book back up.

“They can wait for a few more hours.”

~

Chandler Dalton was not worried- certainly, he was a teacher and teachers didn’t have favorites-
no… But he still paced, because what if Hadrian died? What would happen then?

It was as if his heart was breaking, something so dire like that- well it was impossible.

Cassiopeia had told him the boy would be fine, and as strange as the girl was, she had never told him
a lie so… Now it was just waiting.

Merlin he hated waiting.

A knock at his door.

Startling, Chandler turned on his heel and moved for the door quickly, throwing it open. Instead of
anyone he was hoping to see, the Slytherin prefect stood, almost like a shadow in the dim light of the
hallway. “Riddle?”

The boy hesitated, his hands worrying at each other. “…may I come in?”
Blinking, because this was new, he held the door open. Maybe it was about Hadrian? The two did seem to have a strange friendship of tentative manner… He nodded and waved the boy in with a thin smile. “Of course, come on in.” Letting the door swing shut behind him as Tom stepped inside, Dalton moved to lean against his desk, giving the boy some room. “What can I do for you this eve, Mr. Riddle?”

“I have something I need to talk to you about,” Riddle said quietly. “But, um…” he bit his lip worriedly. “It’s of a rather private nature.”

Nodding, Dalton cast a silencing spell with a flick of his wand. “Of course. I, as one of the faculty members, can help you talk things out if needed?”

“Thank you, Professor,” Riddle said, his voice warmer now, almost relieved.

He smiled. Maybe this boy wasn’t as bad as Dumbledore often whispered- gods know Hadrian was better than the slander Dumbledore often spouted.

“I just…” Riddle looked down at where his hands grasped each other tightly, before shoving them into his pockets instead. He took a deep breath, then looked back up to look at Dalton again. The boy’s eyes were hard. “I’m really sorry to have to do this.”

“What are you talking about?”

“This.” Tom raised his wand. “Lycacomia.”

Horrible ripping tearing pain- racing through his veins his bones mangling his insides- sounds like flesh tearing and bones cracking- he couldn’t breathe he couldn’t-

Someone was screaming screaming screaming and it took Dalton an eternity to realize it was him.

Finally, finally, it was over, and he lay panting on the floor, too exhausted to even begin to question, to ask, why -

Tom’s lips curled in a malicious grin.

“Obliviate.”

Harry ached.

That was what happened when he died, but still- it was like 300x worse since he was still in the body that had been pulled back from the brink of death.

He moaned pitifully.

“Harry!” That was Lucy, fretting over him.

“He’s awake? Zacarias get your ass in here, Harry’s awake!” Annie’s voice shouted across the infirmary wing, leading to the nurse scowling at her.

Harry tried to laugh, but the pain was way too much- almost bringing him to tears.

Cool hands tilted his head up slightly. “Here. Drink.” Cassiopeia looked so very tired, hair limp and clothes wrinkled and he wondered how long she’d been up and at his side. Her hand shook has it brushed through his hair. “You scared me… you scared us all.”
He leaned into her touch and closed his eyes softly, voice broken. “Sorry…”

Almost all of Hufflepuff had visited Harry, along with Theo and Abraxas- his close friends staying as much as they could, the two Vampires and Cassiopeia basically never leaving his side.

But a week into his recovery, he frowned at the cards in his hands and looked to Cassiopeia- poker with Annie momentarily forgotten. “Hey Cassie? Why hasn’t Thomas visited?” He’d expected that even as cold-hearted as they boy was, he would come to visit the person he’d practically killed, if only to see how long it would take before his next murder attempt.

Annie and Cassie shared a look. Cassie worried at her lip. “I thought you wouldn’t want to see him after- after what he did.”

Zacarias snorted. “Harry’s a big fan of flirting with death, isn’t that right kiddo?”

“Sure old man.” Rolling his eyes, he looked back to Cassiopeia. “Wait- so you stopped him from seeing me?”

The girl wouldn’t look at him, but her face got a pinched look. “He’s a bastard! Why would you want to see him! He poisoned you Harry! Equal or not- he’s unsavable! Why are you so determined to put your life on the line for such a-”

“Stop.” His voice was hand, hand bending the cards as he clenched his fist. “He’s not ‘unsavable’. No one is unsavable- I’m sort of disgusted you can say that honestly.” Harry swallowed thickly, knowing what he had to do, but hating it. “Leave. And don’t come back until you have him with you.”

The girl stood, chair clattering as she stormed out.

Annabell covered his hand in hers. “It’s hard, but you’re doing the right thing.”

“Is it-... is it bad that I myself think that it might be impossible to get through his thick head- I just-... hearing her say it out loud…” He sighed and rubbed at his face. “I think I need some more sleep.”

Zac nodded, standing, but Annie stayed a second longer before standing as well. “Sleep well Hadrian.”

He wouldn’t, but it was a nice thought.

Cassiopeia’s fists slowly unclenched the further she got from the infirmary. She knew that Harry was right, that she was being unnecessarily mean to the Slytherin King, but something red hot burned at the thought of the boy hurting her little Prince.

Striding into the common room, she knew she was sure that most all the eyes were on her- robes creased, hair messy- she must have looked like fresh meat to the Slytherin wolves, but she gripped her wand tighter and made for the stairs.

“Hey, look at that! The traitor’s back!” A boy the year under her taunted, sneering.

She clenched her jaw and continued to the stairs, ignoring the jeering words of the house that was supposed to be ‘united’- so much being part of that.
When she was showered and felt refreshed, like she had enough patience to not curse Tom Riddle to not have a nose, she moved to stand in front of the pompous asshole who was doing his homework while stretched out across his throne. “Slytherin King.”

Tom glanced leisurely up from his homework, not even deigning to give her more than a slice of his attention. “Black.”

She took a deep breath, counting to ten in her head and trying not to go for her wand. “My Prince has expressed his... express displeasure that you are his only friend he had not seen. I recommend you fix what you messed up.”

Tom put down his homework and stared at her, bearing down on her with the full weight of his gaze. “I was under the impression that... how did you put it... your ‘darling Harry’ would not be able to receive any visitors outside of his ‘immediate friends’, of which you certainly did not count me one.”

“Yes. I did say that.” She wished it was true- just so she could curse this damned- Clenching her fist, she gave a bitter smile. “And yet it seems I have once again underestimated the lengths my Prince will go to forgive people who should be unforgivable-”

“Watch your tongue, Black.”

“-though maybe his... obliviousness is part of his boundless generosity.” She grinned, showing all her teeth. “You’re welcome, King Riddle.”

Tom raised an eyebrow. “Welcome? For what? From what I understand, it was the younger Malfoy who decided he wanted to send for me, and you who were chosen to be the unfortunate messenger.” He tilted his head at her. “Possibly with some consequences if you did not deliver the message, given that you do not seem to hold me in the best of regards.”

Oh Merlin she wanted to curse him so bad. “Maybe... But either way, the boy is hurt and would like to see you- for what reason I will never understand. If I may be so kind- go by yourself. I have other things to deal with at the moment.” Turning on her heel, she stalked towards the kitchen.

She needed some damn chocolate cake after that whole mess.

Harry was just on the edge of sleep when a hand touched his shoulder lightly. Jolting slightly, he blinked up at Abraxas. “Oh- hey cousin. What are you-” In the middle of painfully sitting up, he froze.

Tom Riddle was standing there at the edge of his hospital bed, face the impassive mask it had been since that terrible day in Dalton’s class.

Blinking, he finished sitting up. “...so she actually went and got you...” He fought off the conflicting feelings of happiness to see the boy and the hurt that had been lodged in his chest since the boy’s cold words that day almost two weeks back.

“That’s not putting enough emphasis on her complete reluctance in the task.” Tom gingerly took the seat by Abraxas, sitting as though he needed to be ready to spring up and leave at any moment. “I’m rather surprised she didn’t get cursed by anyone in the common area.”

“I’m sorry. For her behavior. I’m sure that she went through hell at seeing me like this, but... well, it doesn’t excuse anything she said to you.” Offering up a tentative smile, he looked at the boy, his sharply trained Auror’s eyes noticing the faint shimmer of a glamour. “She’s bound to be back to her
calm and impassive self soon- Annie says that I’m due for a full recovery within the next week.”

“That long?” Tom questioned softly. “You’d think that they would have speedier processes of magical healing, considering how much of the semester three weeks is.”

He laughed softly, ignoring the pain in his chest as he ended up coughing slightly. “It’s always something interesting, isn’t it? It seems that my magic is so wild that the possibility of using magic to heal me would only end up hurting me more.” Shrugging, he reached out to squeeze Abraxas’ hand when the boy looked more than upset at that thought. “It’s troublesome but nothing too detrimental. Plus, I could take the OWLs tomorrow and pass, so I’m not too worried about classes.”

Tom inclined his head in acknowledgement.

Harry yawned, tipping his head to hide his tiredness from the two but knowing they saw it anyways.

Abraxas stood, and Tom stood with him. “We should let you get some sleep,” Abraxas said. “I’m sure Tom knows that he can come visit you whenever.”

Tom nodded once, then turned to Harry. “Rest well.”

“Thank you. And ‘Braxas is correct in his words.” He sought to meet Tom’s maroon-flecked eyes, but the boy didn’t meet his gaze. “I do wish to be your friend, and no matter your and Cassiopeia’s spat, you are welcome to visit me. It’s not like she holds any say over my life more than maybe an overprotective sister- not after that long talk I gave Cordelia for trying to marry us off.”

Tom blinked, his impassive mask seeming… blanker than before, somehow. “Of course,” he said smoothly.

Abraxas snorted. “Mother was really upset- she wanted to see you two married off, but I guess after your loud argument she got the hint that you had no interest in choosing a spouse at the ripe age of thirteen.” The boy rolled his eyes, earning a soft snort from Harry. Tom covered his mouth with his hand, attempting to hide his smile, but his eyes still crinkled at the edges.

Good.

Progress.

Harry gently shooed at at his cousin. “Okay you buffoon. Take the King and go- I’m about to pass out and I’d rather not two Slytherins be here to use it as blackmail over my head.”

Laughing, Abraxas led the far less expressive Tom from the infirmary, and the door swung shut behind them, leaving Harry alone to rest.

Smiling, he coughed and laid down, closing his eyes. His voice was barely a murmur. “You’re suspiciously quiet.”

You’ve said enough for the both of us.

“Do you really think he’s upset with me?...”

There was no response from Marvolo, only a vague sense of both discomfort and amusement. Huffing in mild annoyance, Harry took a deep breath and let himself fall asleep.

Tom slipped noiselessly into the infirmary, wrapped in layers of cloaking and deflection spells, and
silently closed the door behind him. Moonlight streamed from the huge windows lining the walls, illuminating the otherwise dark room. By pure luck, or by fate’s meddling, all the beds were empty… save one.

Tom stopped by Harry’s bed, stilling as he watched the sleeping boy’s unmoving form. He relaxed slightly, letting most of the spells he cloaked himself with drop from him like water. After all, he was as sure as he could be that no one would disturb those in the infirmary- not this late at night, at least.

"What am I going to do about you," Tom murmured quietly, his inordinate fondness for this stubborn, insufferable boy leaking out into his unanswered question. "You're just determined to thwart me at every turn, aren't you, Harry?"

He settled into the chair by the edge of the bed, huffing a laugh. "Stubborn child." But there was no recompense in his voice. Not this late at night, not with the modified silencing spell he had woven around himself in a small radius, keeping those more than five feet away from hearing his thoughts, and not with his exhaustion chipping at his usually composed mask. “What on earth am I to do with you?”

He stared, watching Harry sleep, the rise and fall of his chest, the moonlight cast upon his skin painting him as a glass-spun work of art, a faerie from the folklore of old, something beautiful and foreign and all too delicate. And he did not know how to handle that in his brilliant plan, sure in his superiority and careless in his sureness… he had hurt Harry.

He could not bear that knowledge and he did not know what to do.

“Stubborn, stupid child-”’ his voice broke- “not you, never you -” he pressed his lips together and covered his mouth with one hand, blocking the pained sounds that threatened to escape him.

Tom pulled himself together, enough to escape a breakdown in a public space. And, deciding that the area was secure enough (not safe never safe, but… enough) in the solitude of the infirmary and Harry’s sleeping presence to lower one of his many guards, Tom pulled his knees to his chest, curling up in the chair by the hospital bed, and watched Harry sleep.

“May I fix my methods and work always to keep you safe,” he whispered quietly.

He’d be gone before the sun rose and before anyone knew he was here.

There was the sound of bells- church bells- ringing in his ears as he gasped awake, trying so very hard to remind himself that, no they weren’t dead. He didn’t have to hold Teddy as his parents were lowered into the ground, Hermione’s pained sobs echoing next to him.

“Breathe, Harry.” The edge of the bed dipped as someone sat on it. “Breathe.”

His wide and frightened eyes fixed on the figure before him and he reached out to grab the boy’s arm. “I- You’re real? I’m not there… no one’s dead yet?” He forced himself to breathe, loosening his grip and swallowing thickly.

Tom’s free hand carded through Harry’s hair, pushing the loose strands away from his face. “You’re at Hogwarts, in the infirmary. You’re safe.”

His laugh was small, coughing slightly, and he turned on his side so he could curl up around the boy’s sitting figure. “Funny… I think you’re the first person to get me out of a nightmare that fast.” His eyes were heavy, hard to keep open.
“Well, I’ve had plenty of experience.”

Blinking slowly, he gave a sad smile to the boy. “Thank you, either way…”

“Of course.” Tom settled more securely onto the side of the bed, brushing some more hair out of Harry’s face. “Go back to sleep, Harry. You’re safe. They can’t hurt you here.”

A fond smile, and his voice was soft, eyes slipping closed. “No- they wouldn’t dare with you here…”

“I’ll stay, then, and keep you safe.”

Just on the edge of sleep, Harry murmured, “I knew… you cared…”

“About you? Always.”

The feeling of Tom’s hand in his hair guided Harry into his dreams.

Yet when he awoke the next morning, the other boy was gone.

Chapter End Notes

@bellachrome- I'm still not over Dalton ;v;
(can we get an F in chat?)
Marvolo’s much too tired of these two idiots (^-^) and I love him
Also just the petty hate between Cassie and Tom right now is... dramatic, to say the least -u-
Hoped you liked it! Love you all! -Mango
In Which Harry Is Upsetti Spaghetti

Chapter Summary

Previously:
The Horcrux is now named Marvolo! The vampires take over the medical wing and we find out Harry used a spell that would seal away his mind so that even if the body degraded, the mind would not take damage. Tom hands over the antidote, Cassie bans him, Harry gets mad about the ban and lifts it- leading to Tom visiting during the night and incidentally helping Harry through a nightmare. Oh, and did I mention that Tom cursed Dalton to be a werewolf? (it must've slipped my mind ;))

Chapter Notes

Okay, get ready to cry over this magnetic speech @bellachrome wrote for Tom- like honestly, I tear up a bit every time I read it- it's just that amazing Also, I'm thinking of starting a petition to let Tom feel his emotions because it's killing me to watch this ;u;

Morning came, light and soft though the large windows of the infirmary- Harry already awake, watching the shadows of night slowly get pushed to the side by the rising sun.

Had it been a dream?

There had been dreams before of his old life and new life, of memories even he'd forgotten he had... but this?

This was... new.

And odd.

How was he supposed to react to dreaming of Tom Riddle helping him through a nightmare?

So he just stared at the orange-tinted wall and puzzled over the strange dream. Maybe- maybe his brain had suffered some damage after all? He was having some sort of delusion because of the past few days?

It wouldn’t be unlike him. With a small sarcastic smile, he closed his eyes. “I’m crazy.”

That you are.

“Absurd.”

Indeed.
“Fantastical.”

*Perhaps.*

There was a soft laugh. “Having a debate on the merits of your sanity with yourself? Because I can tell you now- it’s not one you’re going to win.” His eyes opened to see Annie holding something in her hands. The cover of the hardback book was a painting of a half-dressed man in a suggestive pose and it made him raise an eyebrow. The countess smirked. “Thought you’d want something to entertain yourself with. I snuck it past Zac so… maybe glamour the cover?”

He took the book, opening to a random page and released a soft snort at the frankly horrible (but moderately entertaining) word choice that was staring up at him. Looking up at the redhead, he cast the strongest glamour he knew on the book’s cover and set it to the side. “Why do I feel like this is more for your own amusement than mine?”

She shrugged and ruffled his hair. “Get better soon, little bat.”

Watching her go, he decided something. It didn’t matter if it had been a dream or not. If anything, it solidified the fact that he already knew.

He *would* save Tom Riddle.

Tom lasted two nights before the urge to visit Harry again became too much to bear.

Maybe it was the guilt driving him to check up on the troublesome child. Maybe it was the fascination he had with the boy’s power and personality. Maybe it was… well. He was hardly in the habit of doing introspection on the reasons for his desires. Far easier to simply fulfill them.

Wrapping himself in concealment and attention-deflecting spells, he slipped out of the Slytherin dorm and made his way silently through the empty Hogwarts halls to the infirmary. He stopped outside the door, but paused.

He… knew Harry had trouble sleeping… and he didn’t want his nightly, ah, *excursions* to be discovered.

Was seeing the boy really worth the risk of getting caught?

Tom let his hand slip from the handle. No. It wasn’t worth the risk. He couldn’t get caught visiting a Hufflepuff younger year, in the middle of the night no less.

With a last, lingering glance at the infirmary door, he turned and set back off to the Slytherin common room.

He was back the next night.

Turns out, seeing Harry *was* worth the risk of getting caught… he had just needed another night’s worth of guilt and desperation.

He checked his spells, making sure they were all still in place, and cast a silencing spell around him.
Then, testing the infirmary door handle, he easily dismantled the alarm spell, and silently pushed the door open.

The moonlight lit the room eerily, casting shapes into the shadows that would surely be benign in the daylight. Tom held his breath as he stepped in, feeling as though he had ascended to a higher plane. The pervasive sense of strangeness persisted, given that the infirmary was empty, save for one bed.

Tom retraced his steps to Harry’s resting place, and stopped, about three feet from the bed. Truly, he looked like a member of royalty from a fairytale underneath the moonlight, surrounded by soft white linens and long raven-dark hair haloed around his head.

Harry was…

Tom didn’t let himself finish that thought.

He settled into the chair he had claimed during his previous visit, wrapping his silencing spell more tightly around himself, tasting of cinnamon and cranberries. Truly, he mused, one of the strangest experiences of his entering the world of magic was how full of it all the magical places were.

(He often wondered how none of the dumb children surrounding him were driven insane by overstimulation.)

Tom huffed a silent sigh, deciding not to muse on the astounding tenacity of the insects he had found himself surrounded by, and instead settled in to keep silent watch over Harry, to monitor his condition and be there if the fascinating, infuriating, sunlight bright boy needed him.

Harry was, on the best days, a light sleeper. On the worst days, it was like pulling teeth to actually fall asleep, and he usually retreated to his mindscape to give his body at least a little bit of rest.

~

Sitting in his favorite chair, throwing a tennis ball against the wall so it would bounce back to him, he sighed deeply. His mind was too occupied and even as he knew his body wasn’t up for it, he wanted to do something. Anything.

Sitting this still drove him crazy and he’d been in the damned hospital wing longer than ever! Even longer than when he’d been the Golden Boy and Pomfrey had practically tied him to the bed to make him sit still!

A huff of irritation. “If you are going to be annoying- do so elsewhere.” Marvolo looked as if he wanted to stab him, fingers tight around his book.

“I’m bored.” Harry threw the tennis ball again.

“I don’t care.” Marvolo’s voice was edged dangerously, eyes narrowed. “Get out of here or I swear that-”

Harry stood, raising his hands. “Fine. Fine, I’m going.”

~
Blinking out of his mindscape, he slowly sat up with a wince. And froze.

Something was here.

He could feel it. Not physically and there was no one in sight… but that sense that he got before a raid went bad was tingling and his whole body was filled with ice. Wand in his hand in a second, he let his eyes fall half-lidded, focusing on the feeling that all his senses were screaming about. “Who’s there.” There was no warmth in his voice, steel lining it as he clenched his teeth. “Show yourself now and I might not curse you.”

“So inhospitable, Harry.”

Eyes widening as a wave of magic was released, he took in the form of Tom Riddle, grinning slyly and curled up in the chair that he’d taken when he had been with Abraxas.

Merlin, spare me.

Peering at the boy, he let his wand arm drop to his side. “Thomas… Have you been sleeping?” There were dark half-moon circles standing out starkly from under the other boy’s eyes, adding to the atmosphere of being ‘caught red-handed’. It was… refreshing to see on the normally impassive boy.

Tom blinked at him in confusion. “Of course I’ve been sleeping. Why wouldn’t I have been sleeping? I- ah.” Tom reached up, feeling at his face, then grimaced and swiftly jerked his wand in an approximation of a cosmetic charm.

Harry leaned back against the cold wall of the infirmary, breathing through the electric feeling that had come over him. He reached up to run a hand through his loose messy hair. “Glad I didn’t curse you... Can’t sleep?” He looked up at the vaulted ceiling. “I’m not used to being this- well- stationary.”

Tom let out a quiet chuckle. “I should think not. You’re a whirlwind on a good day.”

“Yeah.” He glanced over, before averting his eyes once more, as if it would make the moment break by acknowledging the boy was there and he’d wake up. “I think maybe Braxas was right. Maybe I should try out for Quidditch next year. Merlin knows I sleep much better when I’m properly worn out.”

“I... have a difficult time picturing you on a piece of wood attempting to capture an unintelligent sphere.”

Snorting softly, because really- why had Voldemort not kept his sense of humor? Killing Dumbledore would have been easier and done with one well-placed line- he smiled. “Goes to show you don’t watch Quidditch much. Flying, when one really looks at it, can be quite beautiful.”

“I’m sure anything you do can be beautiful, as long as you’re the one doing it.”

At this he forgot his plans to not look at the boy, blinking as he eyed the boy who was curled up in his seat, looking out the window at the moonlit courtyard. Sleep deprivation. That was all… The boy was just spouting randomness.

I thought I could not feel that I am surrounded by idiots any more than I did while whole. I was wrong. Now I count even myself among them.

Snickering at the Horcrux’s brutal insult, he ducked his head and covered his mouth.
Tom turned to look at him and raised an eyebrow. “I was not aware you found me so... amusing.”

“No- no- sorry, just... I- uh- I can’t imagine anything I do is beautiful.” Is was a rush, and before he could think the plain truth was slipping from his lips, insecurities standing stark.

Tom stared at him for too long, until Harry was nearly fidgeting under his stare. “Harry...” he asked, “have you seen yourself?”

The dark and almost dangerous tone of the mini Dark Lord was not something he wanted to touch with the end of a Cleansweep Four and he pursed his lips and looked away. “Most of what everyone sees is not actually me. I employ an extensive glamour to cover all the scars- as you well know- and to think that someone could look at me and actually understand...” His eyes slipped closed. “I only know a handful of people that could do that... and they’re gone.”

“I’m not talking about appearances, Harry.” The purely exhausted tone of Tom’s voice spoke more for how much sleep he was getting than did his earlier lapse in his cosmetic spell. “Surely you know me better than to think me so shallow.”

Harry blinked. “Then... what? I’m by no means graceful, nor all that good with words and fancy mind tricks like you Slytherins. Though I do happen to have a friend who always told me that ‘brainy is the new sexy.’” He snickered at the thought of George’s horrible joking flirtation attempts.

“What have I done to deserve this purgatory.

Casting only half a thought to Marvolo, who sounded as if he was suffering, he tilted his head. “Usually it’s not in a good light though. I mean with being the bastard Malfoy who is now trying to ‘sully the name of Slytherin’-” His lips quirked at that thought, as every wizard with any worth would fall over themselves should they know his titles. “-And my trying to ‘upstage the school with my genius’... I’d think it’s a miracle that I haven’t had fend off another attack like the beginning of the year. Merlin, the Gryffindors must hate that I’m Heir Slytherin and yet in Hufflepuff.”

“Then perhaps it is only when you are not looking that what I see occurs.” Tom unfolded himself and stood up- somehow looking graceful even despite how late (early?) it was- moving over to where Harry sat and settling himself nearby. Tom met Harry’s gaze with his own, steady and strangely bright in the moonlight.

“Harry... your smile alone is enough to chase away storm clouds on a rainy day, to lift the mood of everyone who comes into the remotest contact with you. Your magical aptitude, instead of being depressing in its superiority, is inspiring- because of you, other students strive to do better in their own studies. And your pain would bring armies to your cause, to fight on your behalf, if you would so let them.

“You possess the kind of magnetic attraction that many- Slytherins included- can only dream of cultivating. And for the longest time, I couldn't grasp why . Even with your magic being what it is, even as I too became subject to your all-encompassing pull, I could not figure out what it was about you that drew people to you. And I have finally decided that, in the light of all I have learned and all the hypotheses that have failed, that you are simply good . And it is your goodness that attracts people to you, to help you and fight for you, to care for you and compete for your attention.

“That is what I mean when I ask, have you seen yourself?”

Harry was at a loss for words. As if someone had just kind of casually come in and stole his lungs.
Tom’s gaze slid to the side. “But I should leave you to rest,” he said quietly. “I’m sure you do not want your sleep disturbed any further than it has been, and I’d rather not have any of your champions give me an earful in the morning.” He rose, and then, hesitating, gave Harry a quick bow, a smirk playing along his lips. “Thank you for not cursing me.”

With that, he wrapped himself in spells as quickly as Harry could wrap himself in his invisibility cloak, and vanished.

“Hey! Thomas!” His voice was loud in the silent infirmary, but he could feel that sense again, somehow knowing the boy hadn’t left the room just yet. “If you can’t sleep… I’ll be here for a while and- well- I wouldn’t mind the company?”

A pregnant pause. The feeling of Tom’s spells crawled up and down Harry’s skin, a sixth sense he couldn’t focus. He waited, hoping for but not expecting a response.

“…some other time, perhaps.”

The infirmary door swung shut, and Tom was gone.

It wasn’t as if he was waiting.

No, that would be ridiculous.

No, Harry just… couldn’t sleep. Brain whirling, eyes staring at the chair that he’d come to hope he’d see occupied when he opened his eyes- something curled in his chest painfully at the thought of his invitation being rejected, of his plea for company from the curious and fascinating boy gone dismissed.

The first couple days, he’d marked it down to the boy being embarrassed about being caught- Merlin knows that no one else would have noticed him curled in the hospital chair- but the longer it went, the more he started to doubt that.

The more his brain rejected the possibility of Tom coming back at all-

After all, the visit had probably just been out of the guilt manifested from accidentally almost killing him.

It wasn’t unusual for people to leave Harry.

The war had taken almost all of the adult family he’d had, the hardships of living with him had driven Ginny away, and the Potter and Black Lordships had driven that final wedge between him and Ron…

So he supposed it wasn’t anything new.

But still.

Wasn’t this new life he’d made supposed to be about him not having to be left behind? Wasn’t it to help him fix things, giving everyone a new life- including him?
Zacarias and Annabell had returned to their castle already, Cassiopeia only showing up in brief intervals as if she was afraid of him being mad at her, and as much as the other Hufflepuffs said they wanted to visit, he got the impression that none of them wanted to miss class when he was clearly almost healed... that or the strict nurse had glared them out too many times.

So he spent time annoying Marvolo. Dragging the boy into roller skating with him, playing tennis, or even sliding down the stairs of the mindscape on a mattress.

His salvation came in two sentences practically spit at him by the nurse who’s life he’d apparently made miserable by humming ‘The Gummy Bear Song’ on repeat for two weeks. “Mr. Malfoy, you are free to go to class again. I don’t want to see you again anytime soon.”

So he might be partially to blame for his early release.

Sue him. He had to get out.

And get out he did.

Whooping, he ran down the halls, sliding down the banister and flopping face first in the fresh-smelling grass outside the castle. Hogwarts gave him an amused nudge when he just laid there for a long moment and with a grin, he pulled himself up, not even a bit embarrassed at the students staring at him.

Having taken a long and wondrous soak in the Prefect’s bathroom, Harry got to work.

A month of homework? Done in a solid three days of not sleeping.

He was being productive and it felt wonderful.

(And in the jumble of things to do to get back in rhythm, it didn’t hurt that Tom hadn’t spoken to him even once.)

The first warning sign was the dietary changes. Less processed foods, rarer meats, more vegetables. Not unusual, just… strange and unfamiliar. The second sign was the loss of weight. The third the odd yellow tint to normally light brown eyes. Fourth the stopping their lessons and then the disappearance on the full moon.

Harry’s breath came out strangled when it hit him- fully.

Somehow, someway, Professor Dalton had been turned into a werewolf.

His first stop was the potions lab to kiss Slughorn’s metaphorical ass so he could brew an ‘experiment’, the second his dorm to write a letter and send both a letter and one of the vials to the goblins, third was the Charms classroom.

Knocking on the door softly, he gave a soft smile to the haggard-looking professor. “Hey… can I come in?”

“Oh, um, of course.” The professor waved him in but left the door open- seemingly a new tick, but Harry brushed it off- choosing instead to watch the man standing next to his desk stiffly. “Something you need Hadrian?”

Looking around the room, he wrinkled his nose at the dark and slightly musty space, moving to open
one of the curtains. “I had a friend. A mentor really. He was one of my favorite people in the world-his son was even named as my godson- but he was cursed. With lycanthropy.” He didn’t turn from his mission to let some light into this room, but he could hear the intake of breath. “He hated himself for it, right until the moment he died, but his son? Well by the time his son could cast the Patronus, it was that of a werewolf- because he would love himself, no matter the curse. Because it was all of his father he had.”

“Hadrian-”

“Please.” He turned, stopping the man mid-sentence as he raised his hand. “Many people have called me a genius. Or a prodigy. That’s not- well okay, it’s partially true- but it’s also because I have an advantage. I literally cannot forget anything I’ve ever read of seen. My brain is a walking textbook on… everything.”

Dalton blinked, face morphing into awe even if the situation was horrible, showing just how much he was led by his love of knowledge. “Really? Like never forget?”

He huffed. “Ravenclaws… Yes, I cannot forget anything. It’s basically impossible.” Waving his hand to cast a privacy charm around the room, he reached into his robes and pulled out a vial. “This is the first product of that memory. I call it… Lupina. It’s an advanced compound potion that will make it easier to transition to your werewolf form while also putting some heavy sedatives into your bloodstream- you take it, go to the woods for a single night, and get a night of running around- It’s also 100% bloodlust free, but works better when one has a friend who is an animagus.”

“And are you saying-”

“I’m an animagus.” Harry crossed his arms. “Look... I’m telling you this because I really like you, I do, but the patent for the potion is going through the goblins as we speak and so if you don’t swear to never tell another about this interaction without my permission… I’m going to obliviate you and come back without telling you I made the potion or that I’m an animagus.”

The man’s shoulder twitched a bit at the word ‘obliviate’ and he narrowed his eyes just a bit, before letting it go.

There was a long pause, before the man nodded, gripping the potion as if it was his lifeline. “I, Chandler Dalton, swear never to reveal any of Hadrian Malfoy’s secrets without his explicit permission.”

He grinned. “Lovely. You can then be one of the anonymous ‘test subjects’ that the goblins need to prove the potion works.”

Dalton laughed, relieved and bright. “You’re such a Slytherin… What’s your animagus?” The man snorted. “Mine-… mine was a wolf.”

“A bat.” He pursed his lips for a second before they both burst into laughter, the room’s tension easing. Harry smiled, shaking his head. “Take a shower, old man. You kinda look like shit. And get some sleep. Coming down from full moons are hard enough without you worrying over everything and not sleeping.”

Harry was halfway to the door when-

“He would be proud.” Dalton’s smile was understanding when Harry looked back. “That mentor of yours. He would be proud of you... In case you needed a reminder.”

Swallowing around the thick feeling of his grief choking him, he nodded. “Thanks.” Then he got as
far away from the classroom as he could before he broke into soft sobs.

“And you say you are here for... what reason, sir?” The tall man loomed over him, even as he held his ground.

Muggles. They always were overly suspicious about everything.

Before he could even get out the reason for his visit to the large building so far away from Britain, the clicking of heels stopped his words short even before a voice rose to greet him over the soft talking of the people that actually did have proper clearance.

“Harry. I haven’t seen you in a while.” A sharply-dressed woman with short hair that only barely brushed her shoulders walked towards where he was standing awkwardly in the middle of the white lobby. “Come to make sure I’m not getting into trouble?”

He smiled at the woman, no glamour in sight, as America wasn’t very familiar with his face, especially not in the middle of the muggle inhabited Washington D.C. “Pansy you attract trouble more than I do- No, I just stopped by to take you out for a coffee. Can I not do that now?”

Looking at the security, her dark eyes grew glacial. “Haynes, please give my colleague some space. He has the clearance and training to put you on your ass before you could blink, he’s just too polite to do it.”

Licking his lips and shifting uncomfortably as this brought on more eyes, Harry drew out the worn badge he kept close whenever around muggles. “Harry Potter, Commander of the Auror Branch of the British Secret Services.”

The man looked at him strangely. “I’ve never heard of any ‘Ah-rar’ branch...”

“They must be bloody good at keeping secrets.” He turned to Pansy, holding out his hand. “May I?”

Rolling up her sleeve with nothing but a light sigh, she rolled her eyes when he made sure to put his hand directly over her Dark Mark while they did the customary DA greeting. “So cheesy. Do you do that to Draco every time you cross him in the halls of the Manor?”

Harry only smiled, noticing with pride that instead of covering the mark, the woman rolled up her other sleeve. “Not to him, no. Only to those under my watch that need the reaffirmation that it isn’t their fault.”

Looking away in a tell-tale sign that he was right in showing up to remind her she was very much loved by all the family that had seen her off to where she was now, Pansy scoffed slightly. “I bet Daphne doesn’t let you pull this sentimental bullshit.”

“She’s too busy crying- and I don’t blame her for that.” His voice was soft, caring. “Shall we go for coffee or would you rather have me shadow you for a bit like an overprotective brother?”

The woman snorted. “I have work to do, but you can get some coffee while you shadow my boring routine schedule. I’m sure that the office needs some new gossip anyways.” That being said the woman turned on her heels, heels clicking against the tile as she stalked further into the depths of the American’s Federal Bureau of Investigation.
Following the woman into the main area of the top floor where she worked, he whistled lowly. “I see that you’re runner up for best set up… Zabini has something shady going on within the purebloods that I don’t ask about, but this- this is nice!”

Pansy chuckled. “Zabini’s whole family is one big grey area. I had to move out of all of Europe just to get away from possibly investigating him.”

Grinning, he opened his satchel, digging around and finally pulling out a box. “Narcissa insisted I bring you something pretty and protective to wear so…”

The girl opened the box, eyes going wide when she saw what was inside. “This is…” She pulled out a deep emerald coat with gold stitching- the same design of the coat that Harry always wore. “This-

“Your own Auror’s robes. Only better and more snakey. Draco has one in white that makes him look like a mad scientist, Zabini insisted on black, Luna has a lovely periwinkle, Neville has a wonderful tan, Teddy has one that never seems to stay one color, and ’Mione has sky blue… so I thought since you were the only of the family that was in danger that needed one.” He was pulled into a hug, rubbing her back softly when the woman grabbed at his shorted frame like she was afraid of letting go.

“Thank you.”

He hummed as he was released again. “Of course.”

The woman looked him over. “And this faded red color? Does the Minister have a minor stroke every time you refuse to get a new coat?”

“’Mione doesn’t even try, but Kings used to get on my case about it nearly every week.”

Pansy Parkinson, America’s feared but respected no-nonsense FBI Director smiled softly down at the wiry man with the messy hair, more fond than anyone had seen her look at another human being before. “Come on then, Boy Wonder. You deserve a coffee for coming all this way just to talk to an ex-Death Eater.”

She started to walk away, and he grabbed her wrist gently, stopping her. “I’m not. Talking to a ex-anything, that is.” He reached out to brush a thumb over where the faint lines of what looked like an old tattoo were slowly going away with time. “Blood does not make you who you are, your actions do. You took that oath out of fear, and to survive, not because it is by any means reflective of your character.”

Then, before the office of her most trusted, the cold-hearted woman that ran the most efficient FBI in American history let a tear slide down her cheek, a wobbly smile on her lips. “If I ever forget why you come here, why I let you in my office each and every time you randomly show up, you just keep saying that and I’ll remember. Because before all family and friends, you are the boy who lost everything and still forgave.”

His smile was just as fond. “Come now, ice queen, don’t we have a date in you teaching me how Americans do things? I almost got run over sixteen times on my short walk here.”

Both chuckling, the two made their way over to the shoddy coffee maker that only worked two out of the seven days of the week.
Waking up from that dream, in particular, left his throat feeling scratchy with wet sadness- eyes stinging with unshed tears- and he curled tighter under the heavy weight of his blanket he wondered why-

Why did he always have to lose people?

Why did everyone he care about hurt him so badly?

Tom’s hand paused over the pumpkin juice as Harry entered the hall.

The boy was wearing a glamour. A cosmetic charm, much like his own.

“Merlin knows I sleep much better when I’m properly worn out.”

That was unacceptable. His Harry, struggling to sleep so greatly that he had to resort to charms to conceal the ill effects of his insomnia. He wanted to solve it. He wanted to give the boy sleeping draughts or talk with him until he felt safe enough to sleep or hold-

Tom grabbed the pumpkin juice and wrenched his mind away from that train of thought.

He couldn’t.

No matter how much he wanted to.

He couldn’t.

But Tom glanced up again at Harry, and found the boy looking back at him, and-

fear-molten-bright being-cornered-with-no-escape falling-from-a-great-height terror-with-human-eyes baring-your-neck-to-the-predator undefended-and-unprepared-

Harry’s green, green eyes, luminous and alluring, looking at him like that, and Tom knew he would tell this boy everything if he asked-

Tom glanced away, quickly, too quickly.

He couldn’t.

Tom wrapped his hands tightly around the pumpkin juice to hide the fact that they were trembling.

“My King?” Abraxas’ voice wasn’t soft, never soft, but it had an undertone of caution. “It’s almost time for Charms.”

Tom pulled himself together. He had to. He had to. He turned to Abraxas and smiled, a perfectly pleasant smile, like there was nothing wrong in the world. “Thank you for the reminder, Abraxas.” He took a quick drink of his pumpkin juice, before setting the cup down and standing to grab his bag. “Let’s walk there together, shall we?”

As he left, he didn’t glance at Harry again.
He couldn’t.

Chapter End Notes

Tom already has his mastery in Denial, smh
Thanks Bells, your characterization is amazing (and it slays me every time I read it)
Cool! Might die soon because of the coming end of the semester, but yeah, I'll try to
post semi-regularly when I have the time!
Dalton’s curse and his friends had only distracted him so long from what he’d been trying to ignore—
that tightly-wound hurt feeling resting under the right side of his ribs like a tumor.

Tom hadn’t talked to him since that night in the hospital wing.

It didn’t matter.

Not really (he was lying and he knew it), it was more just the fact that... The boy had gone on this
whole long monologue about Harry’s ‘magnetic pull’ and had generally just made him feel so special
and warm... and then what?

Just leave?

Not say a single word to him since?

He’d seen the boy. It was kind of impossible not to as he was Dalton’s aid for a class where he saw
Tom two times a week, but even then. Even then he’d been the mask of the stone-cold mini Dark
Lord that Harry was starting to grow to hate.

It was an interesting phenomenon.

The more upset he was, the closer he found himself to the third-floor girls' bathroom.

This time, however, instead of turning around immediately as he usually did, Harry pulled out the
Marauder’s Map. At finding no one in the bathroom or in the hall directly around it, he strolled up to
the sink. "Open."
With the groaning of stone dragging on stone, the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets was revealed. Looking at the dusty, grimy tube and wondering if Riddle had slid down it as well the first time- he scrunched up his nose.

Hogwarts' magic seemed to quiver with laughter, and a second later there were stairs appearing to meet him.

He grinned in exasperation at his stupidity. "Smart Harry. Real smart." Taking the stairs down into the Chamber, he hissed a command for the entranceway to close behind him and lit his wand.

Humming songs that he knew hadn't been even thought up yet, he vanished bones and cleaned up as he went. It was nice to flex his magic- sealing cracks in the walls, getting rid of the brackish water and the growing mold on the stones. By the time he actually turned to the statue of Salazar Slytherin, the Chamber seemed to sparkle in its cleanliness.

*I never took you for a neat freak.*

Harry scowled at nothing, mentally sending storm clouds Marvolo's way. "I like to stay in spaces that aren't filthy, so I assumed that the basilisk might feel the same way. Plus, this is one place I can hide from Dumbledore or pretty much anyone else in this school."

The soul piece just hummed.

Rolling his eyes, he then closed them- not about to go through all that drama with getting poisoned just to die via oversized snake. "*Speak to me, Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts Four.*"

The grinding of stone, the soft sliding sound of scales and the gentle splash of the (newly-cleaned) pool of water. "*So... A speaker comes to visit me...*" A soft hiss and then something was darting out to touch his cheek, but he held still, knowing it was just scenting him. "*You smell like Death... Tell me, little Death Lord, why do you close your eyes if you cannot die?*"

"*Because should I open them, I might not die, but many of my plans would have to be changed.*"

There was a pause. "*Open your eyes, Son of Death. I have lowered the film over my eyes so you will not be killed should you look upon me.*"

Trusting the snake- this was a bad idea- he slowly looked up, gaping at the magnificent green eyes of the basilisk much like the color of his own eyes. "*Oh- I didn’t know you could do that...*"

"*Not many do.*" The basilisk moved to curl her long body around him gently. "*I thank you for cleaning out the Chamber- though I imagine since you wear my master’s ring, you would not treat me fearfully as most all other wizards do. Now... Tell me of this time speaker and how long I have slept. Tell me what has changed since my Master died.*"

Harry obliged and they traded stories- him telling her of the future and the past and what could be, her telling him of what had been and how wrong the stories of Salazar Slytherin were.

"*And how are you feeling today, Tom?*" the divination professor asked him.
Tom smiled— a perfect, practiced smile. He personally thought all professional practitioners of divination were at least slightly touched in the head. “I’m well, thank you.”

The professor smiled back at him, vacantly, and moved on. Tom kept smiling.

In full disclosure, which Tom would give to no one else, and occasionally not even to himself… Tom didn’t actually know if he was well or not. He supposed he was well- he wasn’t starving, he wasn’t at the orphanage— *don’t think about that place*—, he was succeeding in all of his classes… all the external signs of him doing well were there.

But Tom wasn’t sure how he was *feeling*. He hadn’t taken the time to examine his *feelings*. They were such a weak, human thing, after all. And Tom was trying to *transcend* that.

That’s what he told himself when he rose in the morning after dreaming of long black hair and golden skin and felt as though he couldn’t breathe. That’s what he told himself when he determinedly did not stare at Harry from across the Great Hall. That’s what he told himself when he wrapped his mask around himself like a cage every time he sat in Dalton’s class— with Harry, right there, green eyes and luminescence— and acted, acted, acted.

Tom was a very good actor. So good that he fooled *everyone else*. And sometimes he was so good that he even fooled himself.

Which… well. He wanted to do well in his classes, didn’t he? And he didn’t have time to examine his… ugh… *feelings*. So perhaps… that’s what he needed right now.

So Tom kept smiling.

He was doing well, after all.

Eventually, over the span of three days he and the newly named ‘Morticia’ (after Morticia Addams because it was too good to pass up) cleaned up every room and hidden room that made up the Chamber of Secrets— her whining eventually leading to him researching a parslemagic shrinking spell so she could be in the library and parlor without knocking things over.

Currently, she was wrapped around his shoulders, watching lazily as he drew out a rune circle and put two objects inside. A set of jeweled hair sticks that could turn into daggers on command and a familiar locket with an ‘S’ inlaid with emeralds that he’d had the goblins hunt down and buy.

“You are going to do a ritual on Master’s locket?” The basilisk sounded faintly offended.

He reached up to smooth a hand over her scales. “*I will not harm it- I am merely putting a reserve of my own magic into it for safekeeping. It will protect the one who wears it, and in turn no one but I will be able to destroy the locket or take my magic out of it.*”

Slowly, the snake dipped her head, seeming to approve.

Standing at attention, he lit the candles around the field of containment. “*I, Master of Death, imbue these items with my own magic, for a time until I will need it again. I offer up a sixth of my magic to these two items, and in turn, let these items always protect those that I have chosen to gift them to.*”
The room built with magic, a light golden light wrapping like a whirlwind around him before two tendrils reached out and touched the items. Slowly, as if unspooling from his very core, the magic slowly sunk into the items, before severing itself—his magic snapping back into him and the loose magic was then constrained by the rune wards.

He stumbled back.

The golden magic was attached to the items, but whirling around in the area of containment as if it was searching for him.

Harry looked to Morticia with a small smile. “It will take a few hours for the magic to settle in the items, so I need you to promise not to go inside the circle, alright?”

“I am not stupid, Son of Death.”

He snorted softly, flopping down on the comfiest of the couches in the parlor and closing his eyes. “Right, well if you would wake me in time for dinner… I’m beat…”

Harry wasn’t sure he’d ever get the locket to Tom.

Even as he thought over just mailing it to the boy, he eventually just put it so the side in his mind and instead focused on something else. Namely, the hair sticks.

Picking them up and smiling at the warm and comfortable feeling they had in his hands, he transfigured a hairband from a quill like Hermione always did when in a rush, and tied his long hair up into a high ponytail. Then he slid the hair sticks into it like an ‘X’ and quickly made his way to dinner.

Searching the hall, he spotted Cassiopeia by two girls at the Slytherin table and started their way. Before he was anywhere close to them, the girl looked up in surprise and he knew she’d seen him coming. He smiled softly and finally moved to stop by her. “Hey.”

“Harry.” There was only a brief pause, before, “Let me introduce you. This is my sister, Dorea Black, and her best friend, Violet Selwyn.”

He looked at the girl who was his grandmother and shifted his weight slightly, not knowing what to say. Then with an unsure smile, he held out his hand, resorting to his Malfoy-approved manners. “Hadrian Malfoy. It’s a pleasure to meet the sister of my dear friend.” When the girl took his hand, he brushed his lips to the back of her hand and then released it when she blushed a faint pink color, turning to the other girl who he had no history with. “And you as well, Miss Selwyn.”

The blonde girl—Violet—who was less blushy about the kiss to her hand, smiled at him in a way that had his spine crawling. “Mr. Malfoy… And what brings you over here to the snake pit?”

“Making amends.” He reached up and pulled the hair sticks from his hair, holding them out to Cassiopeia. “I hope that these will help soothe any hurt my words caused.”

A slender hand moved to pick up a single hair stick, silver-grey eyes widening. “These—Harry— I’m the one who needs to apologize, not you! And these— I can’t accept them!”

Flipping the other one, he grinned as it turned into a dagger mid-air, catching it smoothly and tossing it up again so fast that when he caught it— it was as if it had never turned into a dagger at all. “Obsidian steel, so they’ll never break, with a few extra… tricks. Are you sure you won’t take them?
I’d keep them, but well, I’m more of a sword kind of guy, and I already have that covered.” He tilted his head. “Should you not accept them- I’d be happy to have the goblins melt them into-“

The hair sticks were snatched from his hands, the girl’s face offended as she held them to her chest as if they were her children. “You wouldn’t! That would- that would take away their value!”

“I know.” They both knew the real ‘value’ was the magic they were imbued with. He tilted his head with a slight smile. “So? You going to accept them?”

Silver eyes narrowed. “Fine. But you get to put them in.”

Taking the sticks from the girl, he laughed under his breath as he unwove the black hair (that had slight highlights of blonde in it) from its braid and nimbly (he had a lot of practice now) pulled the hair into an elegant updo, finishing it with the sticks. “Wonderful. Now you can just stab whoever dares call you such vulgar names I’ve heard.” He could tell his eyes flashed with his buried anger—*he had heard a few… rumors from Nott*—but before anyone could say anything, he was leaning down, voice a whisper in her ear as his cheek brushed against hers. “But know that even should Riddle hold my still-beating heart in his hands, I will never forgive you if you hurt him… I cannot die, little Moon. Never forget that.”

When he straightened, her eyes studied him for a long moment before she smiled, showing all her teeth in a slightly wicked grin. “It is a fact of the universe that’s been written in stone since you stepped foot in that forest, my Prince… I would never forget it.”

“Good.” He put his hands in the pockets of his robes lazily. “Because it seems to be the one thing that I’ll never fully remember.”

Silver eyes were understanding. “If you did… I would think you would set yourself on fire if just to forget.”

His chuckle was mirthful and he just smiled, even as he could feel the eyes of a few surrounding Slytherins on him. “Alas, I was explicitly forbidden from setting myself on fire by Nev.” He winked. “He said it too messy to clean up, y’know? Told me to stick to poison, as it was much more effective in getting the job done. I admit I was almost disappointed, as I had always wondered what burning alive had felt like.”

Dorea Black looked at her sister in shock when Cassiopeia just smiled, unfazed. “Maybe Annie will be more open to it. You never know- it would be interesting to see what the Witch Trials were all about.”

“Maybe I’ll write a book on it. Call it ‘A Very Harry Fire’ or something equally ridiculous.” Sensing the burning glare of Dumbledore on him, he wrinkled his nose. “Well, I better go- Saruman’s gaze will try to curse me lest I don’t sit down soon.”

The girl just chuckled. “Thank you, little Lord. Unfortunately, the Kili to your Bilbo is unable to ward of Saruman’s gaze, as he is…” Her eyes darted to where Nott was watching them curiously from next to Orion Black’s hateful glare. “-With a spiteful orc.”

“What does that make you, I wonder?”

“I’m Gandalf. The last person anyone takes seriously and yet the first person people *should* listen to… Now go sit down with your other hobbits and pretend you’re not a merchant of death and blood.”

Harry flashed her one last grin and—wondering when the girl had gotten around to read *The Hobbit*-
he ambled back to the Hufflepuff table.

Tom lay awake.

Harry had apologized to Black.

Harry had not yet sought him out or attempted to talk to him again.

He supposed that made sense. Which would be more important to the boy, anyway- the girl he had asked for protection for, or the boy he was forced to ask protection from?

If only he could get his traitorous, seething feelings to see the logic of the situation.

It turned out that he was not doing as well as he pretended to be.

The other boys in the dormitory lay sleeping, breathing deep and regular, the room eerily quiet. But Tom lay awake.

Tom sat up quietly, then cast a wandless silencing charm around himself to ensure he didn’t wake his roommates. He slipped from bed, and went to his trunk. Opening it by pressing his hand on top-truly, he was ever grateful to Abraxas for providing him with a charmed trunk- he reached into the secret compartment in the lid and withdrew a small black book.

Tom Marvolo Riddle, the cover read.

Tom grabbed one of his auto-inking quills- courtesy of one of the lower Slytherin years, he couldn’t quite remember the name, an attempt to buy his favor back after a particularly spectacular blunder-closed his trunk, and slipped back into his bed. Casting a wandless lumos for light and thanking Merlin that the beds’ curtains were charmed, he opened his diary to the first blank page.

Beginning was the worst part.

I hate

Inkblots formed on the page as he hesitated.

He doesn’t

No. He crossed that out too, quickly crafting a twisting snake from his mistakes, parseltongue reforming into a pattern across its back.

He’d start again.

His eyes glitter more brightly than the finest emeralds. As I looked at him, meeting his gaze, looking at those gentle green eyes, regarding me with such warmth and kindness, I knew that if he asked, I would tell him everything.

I would bare my soul to him, ugly as it is, twisted as I have become, freakish as I know I am at the deepest levels of my being. Things I can barely admit to myself, I would admit to him, in full. If he asked, anything, everything. I would answer.
And, the instant after I knew this, I knew that if I told him everything, he would never look at me that way again.

He would never again look at me with kindness, with warmth. He would never regard me with gentleness. He would never greet me with the quiet softness I have come to so desperately crave.

I could not bear the thought.

So I left. I left, and every day I must keep myself from watching him from across the Great Hall. I left, but I cannot keep him from my thoughts where he walks like a green-eyed ghost. I left, and he must hate me for it.

I left, and I hate myself for it.

He paused.

But all of this is nothing new, really, is it?

Tom snarled, ink splattering across the page as he broke his quill on the paper. He vanished the broken quill, then tore the diary page from the book, relishing in the tearing sound the paper made.

“Incendio.”

The incriminating page burst into flames in his hand, and Tom watched as it burned, burned lower, burned his fingers as it turned to ash, burned into nothingness and left him with only pain.

But the pain in his fingers from holding the paper as it burned to pieces was nothing compared to the pain in his chest, pain he would never admit not even to himself he felt no pain he was above pain he was above humanity he was above all of it-

Harry had made up with Black.

Harry had not even acknowledged him.

So be it.

Tom looked at his fingers. He would keep the burn marks. Let them be a reminder to him when someone attempted to make him soft again.

He lay back down, closing his eyes, and slept soundly for the rest of the night.

Chapter End Notes

One step forward, three steps back- isn't that the saying?
Ah, but that's just the way the world works without proper communication.
Goodnight my loves, I hope you liked it <3 and lets all cry over how well @bellachrome writes Tom ;v;
In Which The Freak Lives Though Dreams Of Magic

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry tries to distract himself from Tom by befriending a basilisk and making amends with Cassiopeia, while Tom decides that he’s better off as a stone statue.

Chapter Notes

Slight warning- heavy angst ahead!!
Please read at your own risk!
Mentions of child abuse, torture, and- uh- just Tom being a creep in general?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He opened his eyes to the underside of stairs.
Oh.
So it was a dream.

He’d had the dreams before, the ones of leaving, the ones of being free without a care in the world but none so… real? Exciting? Happy?
A spider crawled across the ceiling of the small room- If it could even be considered a room- and he closed his eyes again. His brain immediately pulled up an image of the large castle on the hill, windows lit up, and he felt something ache deep inside at remembering his dream.
Loved…
Could he be loved?

He could almost see small curious brown eyes looking up at him.

He’d never dreamed up a kid before- no matter it wasn’t his… he wasn’t sure if that made the dream worse or made the ache in his chest hurt more, but he still took a deep breath of stale air to try to breathe through the strangely numb pain.

Then his stomach grumbled. The feeling was painful like it was poking him with a sharp stick in protest of not eating, but he’d gotten used to ignoring it.
Breathe in the damp air and try to sit as still as he could.

He tried to enjoy the silence as long as it lasted and pretend like part of the reason he wanted to stay here in the dark was that he could still feel the warm arms of the girl that had called herself a name of the moon- because it almost felt like betrayal; having such a nice warm dream and having to wake up like this.
His body ached with the bruises as he turned onto his side, curled up.

It wouldn’t help, he knew that with painful accuracy, but he curled up into a small ball and tried not to cry as he hugged himself close.

Physically, he could ignore all the bruises and hunger pains, but somewhere deep in his chest… he hurt.

Lips trembling, tasting of salt, he mouthed a single word again and again.

‘Harry.’

What a nice name.

And wasn’t that what hurt more than anything? He wasn’t Harry. In his dreams he could be the hero, beloved by many, but here- here he had no name.

“Freak! Get up!” A hand pounded on the door of his cupboard and he flinched back at the loud noise.

Ah. Right.

Well, that could be his name then, couldn’t it?

‘Freak’?

Stiffly crawling out of the small doorway, he went to the kitchen automatically. Because that was what he was. Automatic.

He was told to get up? He got up and made breakfast.

It was Wednesday or Friday at noon? He went to go pick weeds.

Someone raised a hand? He flinched.

His life wasn’t really his, but then again, wasn’t that what dreaming was for? Being able to live away from all that he knew?

Stomach grumbling unhappily, he set down the plates at the table, not saying a word. He wouldn’t speak- couldn’t. His jaw felt as if it weighed a hundred pounds, teeth locked together and he couldn’t seem to even open his mouth, just relying on his silence.

Plus, was that not what he was good at? What he’d been taught since- well- ever?

The doorbell rang.

He was still lost in his thoughts, wondering what the food in the castle had tasted like, stomach protesting his imagination-

“What are you standing around for like a lump of bricks! We have a guest today so get back to your cupboard immediately!” Blinking at the large man turning a light red at him still being in sight, he ducked his head and scurried out.

Back to his cupboard.

Good news- guests meant less attention, which meant he was less likely to get hit.
Bad news- there was no hope that he was going to get any food today because if what he remembered from yesterday was true, he’d already cooked up a big feast and they wouldn’t be seeking him out anytime soon.

“Boy!”

The yell came as he was preparing to be shut away in his cupboard and he paused, eyebrows furrowing.

“Get in here!”

Slowly, as he knew the sorts of guests that the Dursleys were okay with him being around and he didn’t like them one bit, he padded softly into the room, before freezing.

No-

It couldn’t be-

Tom Riddle was seated on the nicer of the two ugly couches, the ones used for guests. The boy with the red-tinted eyes smiled cruelly. “Harry, Harry, Harry…” It felt as if he was being taunted, as if those long fingers twirling the yew wand were itching to strangle him and he watched with growing horror as those maroon eyes bled into vivid scarlet orbs. “Did you really think that you could run from me?”

Standing smoothly, the boy started forward with predatory grace.

“T- Thomas I-”

A stiff wand pressed to his throat cut off any of his hoarse begging. Malevolent red eyes seemed to gleam as the boy leaned over his small frame slightly. “Do not speak. You know your place… don’t you **freak**?”

It was as if he’d been stabbed and he stifled a sob.

The grin on the handsome face curled wider. “Ah… so you do know.” The wand pulled back, the boy circling him as if he was a predator, but Harry stayed oh so still, eyes slipping closed as he waited for the pain. “It seems you think I was your… ‘friend’? How quaint.”

His eyes squeezed tighter together to block the tears.

A thin finger brushed across his shoulders, nail scraping over his thin shirt and he hunched in on himself, skin burning where he’d been touched. A dark chuckle came from in front of him and he found long fingers with sharp nails grabbing his chin. “Look at me…”

He did as told, slowly peering up into gleaming red eyes in frightened anticipation.

“Oh, Harry… didn’t we all know it was meant to happen this way? Your little stint in the forest wasn’t supposed to end with you coming back and we both know it…” A sharp grin curled on the angelic face as Tom leaned forward, cruel words whispered just inches away from his own lips. “Don’t worry. I think I will keep your eyes when I am done with you. They are my favorite color.”

The hand pulled away and the next second he was on the floor, writhing in the pain the torture curse brought.
“Harry!”

Jolting, he looked around him frantically. The darkness couldn’t give him much, especially without his glasses, but he did see a familiar face. “D- Dominic?”

The larger boy furrowed his eyebrows. “You okay? You were thrashing and whimpering in your sleep.”

A very interesting dream, that one.

Taking a few deep breaths to steady his racing heart, ignoring the horcrux, he brought his knees up to his chest. “The- uh- torture curse.” Because it was true enough and wasn’t an unusual topic of nightmare for him.

Domonic’s eyes widened, even as he didn’t provide any other pieces of information, and the boy frowned deeper. “I- uh- I couldn’t sleep and was headed to the kitchens anyway for a cup of hot chocolate… want to join me?”

Looking up at the boy with eyes he knew were too wide, too afraid to even try to hide that he’d had a bad dream, Harry nodded slowly. “I… yeah.” Sliding out of the bed, he pulled the sweater he was swamped in tighter around himself, wearing only boxers under it but also knowing that it more than covered him. Not looking at the other boy, he only fiddled with the sleeves and followed the taller boy from the dorms.

“What does ‘F’ stand for?”

Startling slightly at the voice, as he’d been focused on his small feet and how the wood floor of the Common room was still slightly warm even in the dimmed light of the windows that during the day were always streaming with the sun. Glancing up, he worried at his lower lip. “Fred. He…” Swallowing thickly, he bit at his lips when he felt them wobble traitorously. “I was friends… with these two twins. And um when one died, the other- the other gave me one of his brother’s sweaters so I could remember him.”

He left out the part where he’d been given this in a way for George to make him promise he wouldn’t forget the lives in his hands- the people he could save by doing this.

A large hand reached out, softly prying his smaller shaking one open so the boy could hold it. Domonic didn’t look at him, as if he was observing the plants curling the walls. “I’m sure he would be proud. That they both would.”

It was all he could do to cling onto the warmer hand tightly and duck his head to hide the tears on his cheeks. His voice came out soft and strangled. “Thank you.”

And so, in the early hours of the morning, Harry found himself sitting on barstools with the one person in his dorm he hadn’t seen liking him more than a passable friendship. Their voices were soft, stools pushed as close as they could be, and when his eyes started to slip closed, warm hands carried him back to his bed.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so I actually forgot I wrote this and now I’m going to go cry because damn that
was a heavy chapter...

;v; poor baby, Harry's so scared of failing Tom...

@bellachrome- <3 <3 <3 <3 (why did we make this story so frigging angsty?)
In Which Harry Breaks

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry has a nightmare of the Dursleys and- surprise!- Tom's there too.

Chapter Notes

So.
You thought that we were going to be nice to Harry?
This is me, laughing :} because there's no rest for the cinnamon roll :}
Get ready to cry :}

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry felt jittery the next day, digging out his favorite red sweater with a big ‘H’ on it and throwing his hair up in a messy bun. Sitting down at the Hufflepuff table, he reached for his coffee and then paused.

Coffee was a big no-no when it came to these types of nightmares and he could hear Hermione’s voice scolding him for ‘making himself more jittery’.

Slowly, he retracted his hand.

“Having the mares of night? You seem on an edge ‘Adrian.” Moorvitch sat down next to him, nodding to his sweater. “Good protection, zis sweater. Soaked in many good memories.”

A smile curled his lips up just slightly, fingers curling around the extra fabric of the too-long sleeves. “I might have one with a big ‘M’ on it? I know Cassie would never accept the one Calla gave me of hers, even if her Slytherin pride would let her, but might I tempt you?”

The older woman laughed, patting his head as she put some food on her plate. “No no- I could not accept such a thing. It iz not my place to take zat memories from ‘ou.” Then her wizened hazel eyes fixed on him pointedly. “At-lass, I fear zat you are losing your distinction between zee nightmares and zee memories.”

“It’s not-...” He paused, swallowed down the small ball of guilt and fear the dream had brought up. “Do you think I will fail? In this mission, this goal of mine?”

“Fvinnaly. A good question.” With a small smile, the woman stood up with her plate, laying a warm hand on the shoulder that he could tell was shaking slightly. “‘Adrian… You vill only fail should you forget to do what you do best- fight.” Then with a wink, the strange old Russian woman walked off.

He reached for his coffee.
Fuck it. He needed caffeine is he was to deal with cryptic messages this friggin' early.

Harry eyed the rattling trunk with a cold type of dread, barely even giving a single thought to the Professor going on about boggarts and the spell to make them stop feeding off your fear.

What would his boggart even be?

The bodies of his friends? A funeral service? The cupboard? A dementor? There were so many things he could possibly fear but which one would it choose? What would he see here? Would it scare the kids around him? Or give him away?

Maybe this was a bad idea. Yeah, this was definitely-

"Malfoy!" He jolted in surprise, eyes wide as he looked at Professor Merrythought, who smiled and waved him up. "You're the best in class! This should be a breeze for you!"

He could feel his luck turning on him as he slowly trudged up to the front as if he was walking in front of a firing squad. "I- I really don't think-"

With a flick of her wand, the woman popped open the trunk. "Off you go then!"

Thick smoke, black and oppressive, hung in the air for a long second before-

It whirled, then condensed and settled on a familiar figure. Hermione, her long bushy hair braided back neatly, her favorite suit clean and pressed. Then her eyes fixed on Harry and a voice that was hers and yet not her own came out of her mouth, slightly disjointed and cold as if she was talking to a stranger. "Hello."

*How strong your fear must be to make it talk...*

"I- ‘Mione?” He didn't go for his wand, didn't want to lose sight of Hermione even if this wasn't really her, because something in him ached at seeing her.

The mockery of his best friend smiled in uncertainty. "Do I know you?"

Before he could answer, Hermione whirled- replaced by Neville except he was wearing expensive pureblood robes. And his voice was the same unfamiliar distanced tone that he usually took with press, the man looking at him with cold eyes that he hadn’t ever been on the other side of. "Do you need something? Damned mudbloods, always staring."

He choked slightly. “Nev?”

No. Neville wouldn’t say that-

His head was spinning and he felt as if he’d been punched.

Again it changed, Luna standing with a frown on her lips. "Harry?"

His heart stuttered.

Maybe-

*I don’t know anyone named Harry. You must have the wrong person, sorry.\"*
Harry couldn’t breathe, couldn’t raise his wand against the visage of his friend even as his heart broke.

Teddy was there then, hair bright pink, and the boy tilted his head at him. "You’re the legendary hero we were told about in class?" Then a sneer crossed the boy’s face. "You’re shorter than I thought."

“Teddy- Teddy please-” His voice was a soft cry of pain, as his chest felt as if it was crushing the air out of him. But still he moved slightly forward and looked at the boy with pleading eyes, heart pounding. “Please, look at me- Teddy- not you-”

“What was your name again?”

The pink-haired boy honestly didn’t know him.

Harry knew he was crying, tears hot and wet on his cheeks, but still he couldn’t raise his wand.

And finally, finally, the shape settled once more, except now it was of Draco. Hair a mess and bags under his eyes, there was a madness in the grey orbs that he’d only seen in seasoned criminals.

In Lucius, rattling the bars of his cell and eventually devolving to a screaming mess of a man that Draco couldn’t visit anymore and Narcissa liked to pretended was dead.

"Dray…” His voice was a whisper. The air was still around them, his eyes taking in every single feature of the man. He wiped his cheek of a single tear. "Tell me you didn’t- You couldn’t… You’d never do that to ‘Mione."

Pale hands pulled up the sleeve of his robe, a single mark thick and black on his arm. Insane grey eyes locked on him, lips curving into an entirely unfamiliar smile, one of bloodlust and greed. "You going to kill me, then?" Taking a step forward, the man he knew (and yet didn’t) licked his lips in a way reminiscent of Barty Crouch and he could feel himself flinch back. "You and I both know that if you do, My Lord will come for you, and one way or another you’ll end up in that forest again-facing down death like a coward because you couldn’t see another person be hurt. Your tainted blood is the earth’s favorite fertilizer after all…”

Snorting softly, Harry finally raised his hand, covering his grief and his shaking hands with a bravado that would put the best actors to shame. "Historically inaccurate. Dray had a Luna tattoo over that mark. And honestly? I would burn the fucking forest to the ground and dance in the ashes given the chance." Flicking his hand, the boggart was bound in thick silver bands- and even as the black smoke whirled, he just raised his wand.

“You wouldn’t!”

He clenched his jaw. “I would. Dray did ask me to kill him should he ever look like his father.” Then with a practiced flick of his trusty Holly wand, there was a loud unearthly shriek and the mass of shadows exploded into a million pieces of lightly smouldering cloth.

"Mr. Malfoy?"

He turned on his heel, looking at the teacher. "Oh. Right. Yes, well I fear I will have to leave now because that was terribly triggering and I can feel myself becoming horribly distraught-" he grabbed his bag and put a hand on his forehead dramatically while still keeping his voice deadpan,"-I must now go cry in the bathroom."

The teacher tried to say something, but he was already out of the classroom and into the hall.
It was during a free period, his gaze unfocused on the window outside, that someone actually brought it up.

Any of it.

“-drian.” A hand was on his shoulder.

His mind was replaying the pain of the torture curse—eyes still stuck on the window where it was raining. “Not now Moony. I’m contemplating how long a lecture I would get should I tell ’Mione I had a nightmare of-”

There was a pause.

And then he made a soft humming sound. “Oh. Right.” Standing with a smile that was trying so hard not to waver, he shook his head. “I keep slipping into my head, forgetting the dead—how rude of me. Dray would be… But he’s dead too… isn’t he?”

Dalton’s eyes were concerned. “Are you—are you alright?”

“Peachy. Just—” His voice broke, a tear on his cheek and he closed his eyes tight, lips pursed tight as if that could stop his overwhelming hurt. Like trying to put a tornado in a glass case, he was spiraling, slipping further and further into his grief. “I’m— I’m fine…” Another slow tear.

Wasn’t he the one to never lie?

Wasn’t he the boy who never cried?

Wasn’t he the strong one?

Dalton stepped forward. “Harry—”

“Why do the people I love die?” His voice was quiet, heartbroken, his hands shaking as he tried to regain his control.

“Because that is what was fated. They could not have asked to live, because that was not their place and they knew that.” A voice, familiar and stable, and Cassiopeia was standing in the door. “So when did you forget to hold the pain?” The girl walked across the room, hand moving to cup his cheek and he tried very hard not to cry.

He failed, the tears soft and warm on his cheeks.

“When did you forget to hold that pain and use it to fight? That when your loved ones were dying and the world was against you that the pain could be used as fuel to keep you moving, as fire to forge you stronger, to make you fight so no one else has to suffer the way that you had?” Her voice was so soft and so very sad. “Have you really forgotten who you are, just by being here?”

He could feel it, the hurt in every joint as if the torture curse had been pressed into his bones, the weakness in his limbs that made him feel so tired— all of it— he was so very tired of it. As if he had been reduced to the weak boy he’d been, hiding in that cupboard in the dark waiting for his relatives to sleep so he could stop feeling afraid they would come yell at him for something he’d forgotten he’d done.

“Maybe I have.” Magic spilling out, he sunk to the floor, back against the hard stone wall, and from
his mouth let go of a half-sob. “May-maybe… I should- shouldn’t be here.”

“Why?”

His laugh was soft and soaked in pain, a line from a show Calla had made him watch slipping from his lips. “Be-because they leave. And- and in- in the end… they break my heart.”

And didn’t it fit? An immortal time traveler having to leave everything behind?

Cassiopeia moved forward, sinking slowly to her knees. “Then do it. Let your heart break. Because before all family and friends, are you not you are the boy who lost everything and still forgave?” Pansy’s words made him cry harder, and the girl moved to his side with her arms around him. “Crying is good, just let it all out. Let it go.”

And with his magic curling around them, cutting them off from the outside world, Harry finally accepted how alone he was in this new world.

It was dinner by the time he was able to speak again, throat sore and chest hurting, even his head was aching slightly. “What-... what time…”

“It’s almost dinner.” Cassiopeia had been still though it all, letting him dig his fingers into her as he screamed all the unfairness of the universe, sobbed away all his pain and grief. And here she still was, hand running through his hair softly, voice gentle.

Now he just felt tired.

With a quiet nod, he slowly pulled himself away from her.

Her pristine white blouse was slightly damp with the salt of his tears, robes wrinkled in places he’d gripped at while trying not to lose himself, but she didn’t seem to mind. Instead, she only helped him up and hooked arms with him. “Come then. We must get some food into you before you collapse.”

“Do… do I have to?” He really didn’t want to face all of Hogwarts in his state, feeling as he’d been run over by the night bus about six times.

Cassie’s smile was soft, but layered with a steel that made her look so much like Luna that he felt tears on his cheeks again. But the girl only handed him a handkerchief and started walking slightly, as if to make him follow her. “Yes. You are never weak, and even in this state, you are more powerful than you think. Plus, should I bring you into the kitchens like this, there would be a revolution. Hogwarts would be rioted against should those elves ever see you cry.”

His laugh was wet, legs unsteady, and he was so very glad for the girl next to him.

With a brush of magic, the stairs changed for them, as it seemed even Hogwarts was concerned about him. He’d never made it to the Great Hall quicker.

They stood at the doors to the Hall, and he wiped his cheeks even as he knew they were already red from doing it so much, blowing his nose. “I would really hate to duel anyone today.” His voice was toneless, weighted with exhaustion. “I think I would much rather wallow in my sadness than dare let it turn to rage and accidentally hurt someone.”

“Just stay by my side, little Lord.” Her arm moved to settle around his shoulders. “You have me at your back.”
With a nod, Hogwarts pushed open the doors.

Slowly, unsteadily, they walked into the room-

But the first set of eyes he locked onto was Abraxas, who had his eyebrows furrowed in the same way Draco did when he would come home bleeding out, and a soft heartbroken sob tore itself from his throat.

He moved to pull away from Cassiopeia. “I can’t- please- please don’t make me do this Lun-”

Another soft sob, and he went limp, falling into her chest, voice a whisper. “Sorry. Sorry, I’m so sorry, I know- I know you aren’t her and yet- Oh gods, I’m just as bad as Sirius was…”

“I forgive you.” As always, the girl was steady and solid by his side. “Now let’s go get you something to eat… lay those ghosts of yours to rest for a bit in the distraction your friends will bring.”

One step at a time they moved towards the Hufflepuff table.

It was as Cassiopeia said, except she didn’t account the lengths Hufflepuffs would go for their friends. He had barely made it to the table when Grace and Lucy pounced on him, smothering him in hugs, while Cameron and Dominic started to threaten the lives of imaginary people that had hurt him. Stephen was busy draping him in multiple blankets— who knows where he got them—and on top of that, the rest of the house was offering comforting words or trying to pet his hair or other things along that line.

Then when that settled, the Hufflepuffs content with him not actively shaking from his sobs anymore, there were people leaning across tables and offering him things or trying to ask what was happening.

Harry just buried his face into Cassie’s shoulder, the smell of rosemary and sage hurting his heart and yet… this was all he was ever going to have of Luna. This girl next to him. So he held tight, and let her be the rock he clung to while the river tried to sweep him away.

Eventually, when it was realized he wasn’t talking to anyone, the Hall settled into an uneasy silence.

He felt Lucy scoot over, the bench dipping, and then larger warm hands rubbed at his back. “They would be proud of you. Your mentor, all your friends… And I know if I had a friend like you, I would never forget them.”

Hitting the nail on the head, Harry extracted himself from Cassiopeia and looked to the man, lips wobbling as he tried so very hard not to cry. “I guess… This makes you Moony now, doesn’t it? He covered his mouth as a sad-bitter-angry-self-loathing-pained noise escaped him. But with a wet inhale, he closed his eyes against the tears, voice small. “We’ll just- just start a graveyard… bury all the ghosts until they rise to haunt me again.”

Cassiopeia nodded, intertwining her hand with his. “And when they rise, you will not cry, because it will be for you that they fight.”

He nodded despondently, once again leaning into her and trying to do just that-

Let go of his past.
Tom strode back to the Slytherin wing, away from the scene at the Great Hall.

What a disaster. One boy comes in looking like the world’s ended, and the entire school descends into an uproar.

…he couldn’t even think that without hearing how hollow the sentence rang.

He had almost joined the rest of the school in their chaos. It was only how Harry had stood next to that Black girl- how much he had relied on her- how close they had been- to keep him from doing so. A cruel but effective reminder of Tom’s own place in things.

Harry didn’t care about Tom. Didn’t come to Tom when he needed someone, didn’t come to Tom when he wanted a friend, didn’t come to Tom… ever… not after that night where he had bared his soul to the fascinating, sunlight-bright boy.

But of course Harry was disgusted with him after that night. Who wouldn’t be? Tom was disgusted with himself for showing such vulnerability.

That was a mistake he would never repeat again.

Tom hissed the password to the Slytherin Common room, not even breaking stride as he stepped inside. His footsteps slowed as he neared his dormitory door, his hand pausing over the handle.

But… Harry…

His red-rimmed eyes glinting with tears, face streaked with them. The way his shoulders slumped and he seemed small, so small, in stark contrast to all the space he usually takes from any room he enters. And that look of utter misery on his face.

Tom held back a groan, and closed the door to his dorm room behind him. Opening his trunk, he rifled through his private potions stash. Stupid. He was so stupid. Ah, there it was. Tom pulled out the one he was looking for, holding it up to the light- yes, the best quality he had. Only the best for hi- the boy. For the infuriating child.

He placed the potion on his bedside table, then twisted his wand, in a variation of the spell he used a few months ago to send a note to the younger Malfoy. He allowed himself a moment of feeling smug for his foresight and research- ensuring he would never be cornered by curious Hufflepuffs again.

But, as he watched the potion vanish to its intended destination, his moment of smugness quickly dissipated, overwhelmed by an all-encompassing sense of disgust.

He was so weak.

So weak that at the first sign of the boy being not okay, of needing something, anything, he went right back to his old ways. So weak that he couldn’t not help him, couldn’t not bend over backwards and send the stubborn, infuriating child potions from his own stores to help him. So weak that he felt himself craving the younger Malfoy’s presence, even now.

He couldn’t stand himself.

The dormitory door began to creak open- Tom snarled and sent a violent hex at it, relishing in the sound of the stone wall cracking where it hit.
The door immediately slammed shut again.

Tom stood there, chest heaving, face contorted in rage.

He was so weak. He couldn’t stand himself.

And someone had almost seen him in his moment of weakness.

Tom pulled himself together.

He had to.

He had to.

He had to.

With a flick of his wand, he repaired the damage he did to the wall and door, and then went and opened the dormitory door. “So sorry about that,” he said, with a perfect, practiced smile. “I was attempting some particularly delicate magic, and you came at just the wrong time. I’m all done now, though, so you needn’t be concerned about coming in.”

Chapter End Notes

Tom's such a sweetheart wrapped in a layer of misery and I kinda want to hug him and punch him at the same time...
And, well, Harry's just in pain :)
Oops.
Good thing we have @bellachrome, leader of our local planetary skeleton army! Die today for free entry! If you die tomorrow it's sixty dollars!
^-^ Goodnight loves <3
In Which Two Souls Suffer Apart

Chapter Summary

Previously:
Harry has an encounter with a boggart that takes the form of his lost family not knowing him and breaks down, finally realizing that none of his family will know him now- that he may change the future to where they never existed. Upsetting all of Hogwarts, Tom realizes that (wow) he has emotions and sends Harry a potion before then regretting it.

Chapter Notes

More internal conflict and angst ^-^  
Because these idiots are doing /great/  
@bellacrome, you're doing amazing sweetie and I love you <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was only after a restless, nightmare filled night that Harry saw it.

The potion.

It was light blue, like a cloudless morning sky, and when he put his glasses on and uncorked it he paused. It didn’t smell all too different from a calming draught but…

Furrowing his eyebrows, he looked at the tag, which read:

For your Peace Of Mind.

And the scrawl was in Tom’s familiar writing.

Again he gives you a potion, this one probably of his own creation. This is the worst form of torture. Give me an Unforgivable any day.

Shushing the horcrux softly, he decided to take half the potion, see what its effects were and then take the rest later. Uncapping the top, he did so, and after a pause where he corked the potion again, a wave of relaxation fell over him like a blanket.

No more was he restless, mind whirling around about how much he’d failed his family, no this was… peaceful.

As if there was hope again.

As if everything would be okay.

With a soft smile, he flicked through the library compartment in his trunk and pulled out a book. Writing a note back, he tucked it in the book and did the same spell Dalton had used to send the note back to its sender.
He hoped that Tom would appreciate an annotated book on rare potions that he and Draco had written little notes in while they were bouncing from public appearance to public appearance after the war. It had everything from stupid jokes to dark spells they made when they were irritated with the ministry. As well, it also held a few more interesting points about the secrets of the ministry, secret rooms and tunnels included.

But he probably wouldn’t really care about those.

Plus- everything would be okay.

This book is all about two things, the Ministry and Potions.

Unfortunately, I only like one of those things and would rather see the other burned down to it’s fancy marble statues. Anyway as your potion was very much appreciated, my anonymous benefactor, this is a sort of a gesture of friendship.

My friend and I were bored when we chose this book to write in, but hopefully, you don’t mind the changes to the potions- Dray’s godfather was really much worse than us in his marking up books so it shouldn’t be too bad :)

-Harry

Tom was returning to his rooms to gather his school books for his next class when he saw it: a book, on his bed, with a note on top of it. Curious, Tom felt for malignant spells, but found none. Interested, he approached- oh .

There was no mistaking that sunlight and storm.

Harry.

Hands trembling, Tom grabbed the note and unfolded it, reading quickly- but was halted by one phrase.

" -my anonymous benefactor- "

Tom blinked.

What?

He read the note again, more slowly. But there was no mistaking who this... gift was intended for.

Harry had sent this to his anonymous benefactor. Apparently, even if Harry had suspected Tom of being the one to give him gifts, the idea of Tom giving him anything was so implausible that Harry had discarded the notion without a second thought.

Tom stared at the book, the note in his hand.
Harry sent this to his anonymous benefactor. Harry still had not sought him, Tom Riddle, out.

Harry cared more about the so-called unknown than about him.

*So Harry did hate him, after all.*

Tom grabbed the inkwell from his side table and hurled it against the wall. The glass splintered into a thousand pieces- the ink splashing outwards, painting the wall in the darkness of his rage- the broken shards falling to the ground, littering the floor with danger and pain- Tom stood there, face carved into a snarl, and *relished* in this small act of destruction.

(He could do *so much more*. But. He had to *wait*.)

Tom turned to the note in his hand. *"Incendiendo,"* he whispered. The note burst into flames, and he *reveled* in it.

The note burned out, leaving Tom with nothing but a desire for *more - more destruction more danger more let it out let it out let it* - and Tom turned to the book, intent on doing the same to this so-called gift -

But hesitated.

Tom left the room a few minutes later, after gathering what he needed. The ink from the broken inkwell still stained the wall, the shards at the ground where they fell, for the house elves to clean up later. And the book lay at the bottom of his trunk, wrapped in Harry’s shirt, buried under his clothes and school books and other things- a testament to his weakness and failure.

Cassiopeia had not woken from her dreams in a good mood.

No, seeing Harry suffer was not in her normally approved dreams, and that meant it was a vision, which just made it *so much worse.*

*She would not sit still, not when everything was in such a place of spiraling danger.*

During when she knew Harry would be having Astronomy with Moorvitch, she made her way to the astronomy tower. Locking eyes with the mentor that had helped her so much with her sight, she saw the woman’s lips thin, turning to Harry to send him out of the class.

The boy looked up, eyes questioning, but he picked up his bag and pressed a kiss to the professor’s cheek before grinning and scampering out when she cursed loudly at him for *‘being an insufferable brat.”*

Cassiopeia didn’t look over at the boy, just started walking and thankfully he didn’t question her until that were halfway down the main stairs. “Cassie. Want to tell me what’s upsetting you?”

The tone was the same she’d heard in whispers and visions when the boy was talking to his band of misfits, of broken warriors, and her hands clenched in order not to let her mask break. Clearing her throat, she cast a silencing spell around them. “You need to talk to Riddle. If this is not resolved… it will not end well.”

“He is-” The boy’s eyes flashed with something raw and hurt. “I don’t know what to do. I thought that the other day, with the potion… But well he’s still imitating a block of ice and I don’t know
Morticia was- as any snake that had been locked inside a stone chamber without company would be- very excited to be exploring the castle once more.

Harry sighed and rubbed at his face, glad that he’d taken the back way out of the Chamber and was traversing the old forgotten parts of the dungeon rather than going the way with all the students.

Thankfully Morticia was smart enough to null her deadly gaze at least.

“Will you be still?” He felt as if he had a fucking worm wrapped around his neck, the snake moving her head so she could inspect every wall and crevice they passed.

The snake looked at him with irritation in her green eyes and he wondered how alike they looked right now. “Son of Death is nervous to talk to this other speaker? Should Morticia be ready to bite them?”

With an exasperated sigh, he flailed slightly, before rubbing at his temples. “Just- just be nice, okay? I doubt that anyone will be attacking me.”

“Boring.” The basilisk didn’t go back to its hasty absorption of the castle though, instead just settling around his neck like a scarf and closing her eyes.

Her head was tucked in his hair, and he could almost see her being mistaken as a scarf. “Are you hiding?”

“Tell me when to come out to best scare two-legged children.”

He rolled his eyes, only giving a small huff in return to her statement. Making it the rest of the way down the secret passage Cassiopeia had told him about, he let Hogwarts open the door at the end of the long hallway for him, and smiled when her warm magic patted his head when he walked through the open door.

Scanning the part of the library that he’d come out in, he strolled calmly to where Cassie had told him that Riddle studied in a private section. Around a table out front of Riddle’s room sat Felix Rosier, Antonin Dolohov, and Orion Black.

Orion Black stood, a sneer on his face when he saw him. “What do you want Malfoy!”

“Morticia?” The snake rose from his hair, fangs glinting in the light when she hissed lowly. He looked at Orion calmly, ice layering his voice. “Tell Riddle I would like to have an audience with
him. I would appreciate it.”

“Let me eat the boy. That would make a statement.”

“He is a student, love. Please remember to be nice.” His sigh was long, even as he reached up to smooth at the scales on her head. He looked at the other boys at the table outside the door, who was gaping at him and tilted his head just slightly. “What? Never seen a snake before?”

“That’s a basilisk!” The boy stuttered out, terrified as if he didn’t want to look it in the eyes but as if he couldn’t look away.

Harry just hummed. “Wow... How observant.”

There was a small pause and then Orion slowly backed away to the door, apparently going to impart this news on Riddle. The other two boys stared at Harry for a long minute, then went back to their studying as if nothing had happened.

How rude.

He closed his eyes with a small huff at Marvolo’s words, and put his hands into his pockets, waiting patiently as Morticia wound herself around his small frame in her version of impatient pacing.

Orion came out of the room at long last, holding out a slip of paper stiffly. “There. Take it and leave.”

Harry took the note, eyeing it skeptically.

If you want an audience with me, meet me in an hour at the abandoned Xylomancy classroom in the north tower.

“What does it say? Can I eat the rude two-legged?” Morticia moved to look at the note.

Nodding to Orion, not in the mindset for all the boy’s moodiness, he folded the paper and put it back in his pocket. “No. We’re going to go study some twigs.” When the snake hissed, he rolled his eyes and turned back to the door to all the secret tunnels. “I’ll even resize you so you can better strangle the life out of me if you should want.”

With a pause, the doorway opened and the snake nodded. “You will keep me warm, Son of Death.”

“Please stop calling me that.”

Hissing laughter followed him into the darkened tunnels.

Harry pursed his lips, carelessly scratching out another line about obscure potions for Slughorn.

“-or I could go eat in the forest! You could come with me! I know you’d look beautiful painted in the blood of your enemies, little Lord!” Morticia wouldn’t shut up. Not for a second, and he’d just resigned himself to doing his homework while ignoring her and laying on her coils so she wouldn’t complain about being cold.
“I quite agree.”

Harry’s quill snapped. “Merlin!” Dropping his homework, he startled at seeing Thomas standing, cool as ever in the doorway to the abandoned classroom. Morticia reared back and he hastily moved to press a hand to her scales soothingly. “He’s not a threat lovely, please calm down, I was just startled.”

The snake huffed out a short hiss. “I should eat him, intruding on your space like this...” She eyed the boy.

“Actually, we agreed to meet here,” Tom responded. He adjusted the strap of his bag slightly, glancing aside, then back to Harry. “You wanted to see me?” he asked quietly, in English this time.

“Oh, sorry- yes-” Harry struggled out of the coils, ignoring Morticia’s hisses, resizing the snake and picking up his homework. He waved to a table with a strained smile. “Would you- er- like a seat?” He took a seat, ignoring Morticia who wound her way up the chair to lounge on his shoulders.

Wordlessly, Tom sat down. He pulled out his wand and cast several privacy spells of various kinds, before tucking his wand away and folding his hands in front of him, waiting for Harry to begin.

Looking at his ink-stained homework, Harry gave an absent sigh and picked up his quill, twirling it in his fingers nervously. “I’m not exactly sure where to start, but I know that should I not talk to you we would surely have not stayed friends and-” glancing up and then averting his eyes again, he muttered, “I would rather us stay friends.”

Morticia bobbed her head. “Speakers should stay together.”

Ignoring the way his cheeks flushed lightly at the snake’s words, he nodded slightly. “So I mean maybe it’s a testament to Hufflepuffs being stupid about not knowing when to give up a friendship and take a hint, but just with the late-night conversations and-” He fiddled with the quill, trying for words that seemed so hard to actually speak. “Well I mean you must care, even if just the tiniest bit! The potion you sent the other day was proof you have some semblance of emotion and-”

“What?”

Harry froze.

“Nice going, idiot.”

“Potion?” He felt as if his soul was leaving his body. “I mean- well your writing’s kind of distinctive and well who else would have made a whole new potion and-” He curled in on himself slightly in mortification. “Okay, you can kill me now.”

“I can still understand you, Harry.” Tom was decidedly not smiling, but his eyes were notably warmer than they had been when he had first entered the room. “My ‘distinctive handwriting’ aside, if, hypothetically, I sent you a potion, and you figured out it was me who sent you the potion, then why- still hypothetically- would you address a return note to an ‘anonymous benefactor’?”

Decidedly looking anywhere but the boy, Harry reached up to run his hand through his hair in a show of a nervous tick. “Well, wouldn’t it ruin the whole ‘ice prince’ exterior you have going on? Giving some type of gift to a Hufflepuff?”

“That didn’t exactly answer my question.”

“*The Son of Death is embarrassed.*” Morticia hissed in amusement.
“Embarrassed by-hypothetically-picking up on my ‘distinctive handwriting’ and ability to make ‘a whole new potion’? Isn’t that merely what they call being observant?” Tom tilted his head slightly to the side, and Harry couldn’t figure out if he was being mocked or not.

Harry glared at the snake who was trying to laugh hissing at him and gave a soft huff of irritation. “I didn’t- I didn’t want to expose that I knew you were the one sending the letters unless you wanted the fact to- well- be exposed.” Closing his eyes for a second at how childish that had sounded now that he’d said it out loud, he tried to re-order his thoughts. “Either way, does this mean that you don’t hate me? Because when you never took me up on that offer to visit again and your decision to try to intimidate a stone statue for the past few weeks…” He drifted off, trying not to fidget nervously.

He hadn’t felt this much like an absolute child ever since he and Draco had to sit down and hash out their issues after the war.

*Is it really that surprising? You are a child after all.*

Mentally shoving at the Marvolo, Harry finally risked a glance at Tom.

Tom was staring at him, dark eyes holding him captive in the intensity of their attention. “Harry,” Tom said gently, “You should know by now that I could never hate you.”

Harry decided not to say anything on the fact that Cassiopeia had looked pretty sure that should they not have made up, he would have apparently been in pain- probably under the torture curse or-

He flinched back slightly, brain recoiling from the memory of his nightmare. Pushing it aside with vigor, he nodded slightly. “O- okay.” Looking up, he saw something flash across the Slytherin king’s face, but it was masked too quickly for Harry to interpret it.

A long pause. Then, “Harry… is everything alright?”

Morticia prodded his cheek with her nose. “Speak, hatchling. Speak about your sleeplessness. Speak of your tormented memories.”

“No- no I can’t-” Harry stood as if to run-

“No- no I can’t-” Harry stood as if to run-

“Harry.” Tom stood as well, palms facing upwards. “I will not ask you to tell me if you do not wish to.”

Restless, something feeling like a sickening snake of uneasiness sliding around his chest, his eyes slid from the door to the boy in front of him.

“I will not even stay if you do not wish me to.” Tom’s quiet but sibilant tones carried easily in the otherwise empty room. “I ask, at least, that you let me make you a potion for your sleep or something to help.”

Worrying his lip, Harry shifted his weight. Tested the words that he wanted to say and then discarded them.

“If you do not wish to see me again, you have only to say so.”

“No.” His voice was strained, but insistent. “No, it’s really not that- just…” Closing his eyes for a moment, he took a deep breath. “I know that there are futures that everything will not turn out alright. And sometimes they bleed into the dreams of my past and I forget what is real for a while.” He looked away and switched tongues easily. “There are things that you and I both have done that everyone else in this castle would find horrifying. Things that we must face. Together.”
Tom’s cloak rustled against the floor as he stepped away from the table, straightening himself. “Perhaps.” He paused, then continued. “Between us, however, it is more likely that I have done such, as you say, horrifying things, than you.” He tilted his head slightly to the side. “Do not think to equate the two of us.”

His eyes were steady on the boy, looking—really looking—at him. He blinked slightly at what he saw, but couldn’t really be all that surprised. Draco had held the same look of a damned soul after the war, along with so many other of his friends. The weight that was the blood on the hands of the survivors was not an easy thing to carry.

Stepping forward, he reached out to put a hand on the boy’s cheek, noticing how his entire frame froze. “Do not think yourself worse than me.” His voice was a whisper. “You have not killed innocents yet, and should I have any say in it, you’ll never have that stain on your hands.”

Tom flinched away from him, his whole body shuddering from the movement, and straightened only to snarl at Harry with all the vehemence of a cornered animal. “You are sunlight, Hadrian Malfoy,” he spat, “and there is no comparing with that.”

He turned away, as if to leave, but paused. “And I killed my entire family,” he hissed, not even turning to look at Harry as he said it. “Do you not consider them innocent, when they did not even know of my existence?”

“Would you have killed them if they were?” Harry mused, wondering when his morals had gotten so twisted just for this one boy in front of him.

Silence stretched as they both waited for Tom’s answer.

“I would have,” Tom finally admitted, “if only because they were my family.” He opened the door. “Goodbye, sunlight child.”

“...Goodbye Thomas.”

And the other boy was gone.

Harry sat back down heavily and glanced to Mortica. “Now do you think he’s worthy of your master’s locket? Do you see why I must save him?”

The snake twisted around him, as if thinking. “He is unworthy of anything pertaining to you, young Master.”

“Fuck you.” Harry snarled, chest hurting even if he couldn’t actually give a reason why. He sat back down in the chair he’d been sitting in earlier and let his head fall into his hands. “Just-fuck you.”

The snake huffed softly, settling around his neck again like a scarf. “Maybe you cannot save everyone, Son of Death. Maybe that is not what you were made for.”

He ignored her, curling tighter in a ball, soft sobs echoing off the abandoned walls.

Tom stormed down the halls, cloak billowing around him as he made his way through the sea of students, parting in front of him like clouds rolling away for his descent. He could not care less about
them, vermin, filth that they were.

He made his way to the fifth floor, to a certain hallway.

*I need a solitary place.*

Turn. Continue pacing. The students sounded below him, boisterous and noisy, loud and happy in their lives. He hated them.

*I need a solitary place.*

Turn. Continue pacing. Harry’s eyes were green, so green, like someone had taken emeralds and crafted them into the finest dagger, a dagger that pierced straight through all Tom’s barriers and into his heart.

*I need a solitary place.*

Turn. A door.

Tom threw it open and entered. The door clicked shut behind him and shimmered slightly with locking magic, before disappearing altogether.

No one could find him now.

He leaned against the door, and slid down to the floor, all the tension and energy leaving his body as he stared blankly at the opposing wall. Breathe in. Breathe out. Feel nothing. *You are above feelings.* No emotions. No emotions. No-

-no use-

-all the tension he tried so desperately to get rid of again engulfed him like a tidal wave, and he convulsed, before dragging himself upright-

-no, he was better than this-

“*Incendiendo!*” Tom snarled, and the armchair the room had conjured across from him burst into flames, fire leaping and chasing and consuming what he had given to feed its voracious hunger. His entire body shook, even his wand hand trembling, and he could barely point his wand straight because of it. “*Incendiendo!*” He pointed elsewhere, setting afire a desk of drawers. He shivered, despite perspiring, the sudden blazes doing nothing to warm him up, despite it being boiling hot in the room.

*Who was this Hadrian Malfoy, to come into his life and wreck him like this?*

Tom screamed another violent hex, pointing his wand at the wall of mirrors across from him—just what he needed to destroy—his reflection his weakness his humanity *all that was keeping him from the greatness he knew he could achieve* - the reflective surfaces shattered, *bursting* outwards in a show of terrifying destructive *glory*, reflective shards whipping past him, embedding in his clothes, slicing at his face.

*He laughed.*

Finally, a pain he understood-

-not like the ache in his chest when Harry smiled at him, like a pull towards the smaller boy, like a moth seeking the moon, like their souls belonged together-*
-which was an idiotic, illogical, and utterly human idea-

-he didn’t even have a whole soul to give the boy.

Tom’s breath seized, and his laughter died in his throat.

He was so far from whole. So far it was truly laughable.

Tom stared at the broken mirrors, stared at the reflective shards littered around him. This was him. This was what he was.

He tried to choke out another laugh, feeling an almost-amused emptiness at the situation, at the realization, at all the things he tried so hard to deny and forget coming back again to haunt him, but his laughter caught in his throat. His vision blurred.

He clamped his hand over his mouth as a guttural howl escaped him, his eyes overflowing with tears and spilling onto his cheeks and over his hand. Mortified, horrified, he shoved his wand in his pocket and clamped his other hand over his mouth to muffle the sound.

The only option for him was to shed the chains of feebleness the cruel world had forced upon him and rise above the infantile emotional vermin he had to endure associating with.

And he was doing so well… until that fascinating, infuriating boy fell into his life.

Feeling drained and utterly spent, no screaming or rage left in him, Tom sat down amidst the broken glass. He pulled his legs to his chest, rested his forehead on his knees, and closed his eyes.

Shedding his humanity, his emotions, his pain, like an old snakeskin, was his only option.

So why, when he felt this pull towards the sunlight child, as if in some far-off place they were made to be together… why did Harry make him hurt so much?

Chapter End Notes

Can I just... give them both hugs? Like... please, babies, don't cry...
@bellacrome- your portrayal of Tom, as always, hits me right in the gut and steals my ability to breathe ^-^ <3

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