Of Custody and Guardianship

by Ghostnic

Summary

Muggle High School AU
The summer holidays have just started, and with it comes the hardest battle Harry has had to face. He wants nothing more than to live with Sirius and leave the Dursley's, but his relatives aren't so quick to sign away him, or more accurately his inheritance. As Sirius prepares for the custody battle to come, he turns to his cousin's ruthless yet successful husband Lucius Malfoy, one of Englands top Lawyers.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
The humidity in the air was felt by all the students and teachers in the school. The summer sun was out pelting full force leaving everyone sticky with sweat and running with short tempers. All the professors had seemingly given up on teaching, content to simply play whatever video they deemed fit well enough into the class’s curriculum.

In English, Professor Flitwick had played some sort of Shakespeare play which despite its promise of a modern setting and actors, was still just as difficult to follow. Within ten minutes Harry had given up all semblance of understanding and tuned out. Hermione, of course, followed the dialogue perfectly. Harry and Ron both knew unlike the other girls who were simply watching for the eye candy main actor, Hermione knew what was going on. She gasped when the two love interests met and patted her damp eyes when someone was shot. Harry and Ron, as well as most the boys in the class, murmured quietly between themselves, being shushed by the girls whenever they got too loud.

In history, a menial, mind-numbing documentary was played, which in truth was just as ineffective as listing to Professor Binns drone on, on any normal day. Harry and Ron had a running bet with Hermione the guy was a ghost. The man was ancient and looked to be over 100 years old, his pale grey skin too abnormal for him to still be alive. In history, Harry tried to catch up on the sleep he had lost the night before. Many others in the room had planned to do the same. Neville had started snoring within ten minutes of the class, and Nott and Zabini were attempting to shoot paper wasps into Goyle’s open mouth.

The last day of school followed much the same in all of Harry’s classes. He listened halfheartedly to Ron and Hermione’s summer plans. Harry knew they were trying to tone down their interesting plans for his own sake, but it still hurt to hear they would be gone all summer, leaving him alone. Hermione’s parents were going to take her to New York, somewhere she had been begging to go since Harry had met her in first year. Ron, for the first summer since Harry and he became friends, would also be gone, heading to Romania to visit his brother alongside the rest of his family. Unlike the two who would be travelling overseas, Harry would be stuck at home once again this summer. He refused to tell them his own plans.

“Are you sure you don’t want to tag along, mate?” Ron asked for the hundredth time, his eyes full of sympathy and something close to pity for Harry’s comfort.

The soft snores from the class was hidden by the monotone commentary running over whatever documentary was being played.

“Yeah, Ron, I’ll be fine. Besides, it’s not like I have the money to go overseas. Or even a passport.”

“But still.”

Harry knew if he asked him to, Ron would have stayed behind. He was just that sort of friend. One time when they were 13, Harry had run over to his farm after a major argument with Uncle Vernon. Ron hadn’t even questioned what had happened, simply taking Harry’s tearful eyes and bruised cheek for what they were. He let him stay as long as Harry needed, and Harry stayed as long as he could let himself.

There were other times, after that. Each time Ron had begged Harry to go to the police, had taken photos for evidence.

“Please, Harry, you have to leave!”
“I’m fine. No one will believe me if I go forward, and what if they did. I don’t have anywhere else to go.”

“Come and stay with us. Mum won’t care, hell she would have taken you in ages ago if you had let her.”

“It’s fine, Ron. It’s not that bad.”

He never believed Harry when he said that, but as far as Ron knew, it really wasn’t that bad. He and Hermione had only ever seen what Harry wanted them to. A split lip here, a black eye there. They didn’t know that was only the surface of it.

They were heading to science class after yet another mind-numbing class not even Hermione could pretend to be interested in. It was the last class of the day, the only thing that stood between them and the summer holidays. Ahead of him, Harry heard Seamus and Dean discussing their summer plans.

“After we go camping, Mum said we might stay a few nights in London, just bum around the city for a bit.”

“That sounds sick,” Dean responded. “I’m going to be around there for a bit with my family! I reckon if we get the dates right, we should be able to meet up for a few days!”

Harry’s chest felt constricted and he looked down to his shoes, counting the stairs as they walked down them. He noticed his shoelaces were untied and had a fleeting thought of tripping, letting gravity take over and violently pull him to the earth in an unforgiving and painful manner. Hermione and Ron flanked beside him, chatting about something Harry wasn’t paying attention to. Once again, the thoughts about what faced him this summer wondered through Harry’s thoughts. Fear pumped through his veins and he could feel his heart rate increase simply envisioning his Uncles enraged face blotched red and purple.

“Harry!”

He whipped his head to Hermione, humming in response.

“Honestly, you need to pay better attention to your surroundings. We’re here.”

Sure enough, they had arrived at hells gate itself. Inside loomed a more prominent threat than Harry had been envisioning. Inside, a vampire who did not understand or care for the use of shampoo, awaited them.

Hauling a deep breath, Harry entered the classroom, making a beeline for the backseats with Ron and Hermione. Science remained the sole class Hermione didn’t sit in the front.

“Now is not the time for your silly little conversations about whatever miserable plans you have made this summer.”

Those were the words practically shouted by Professor Snape as he entered the classroom in his usual dramatic fashion. Behind him the door slammed, and it took everything in Harry not to flinch from the noise. He refused to give the greasy git the satisfaction of his fear.

“You have not yet finished this school year, and until that bell rings and I have dismissed you, I will not here of any plans or conversation regarding the Summer holidays. You are here to learn. Is that understood?”

Silence answered Snape’s question.
“Very well. Get your textbooks out and turn to page 664. If you were foolish enough to have
forgotten your textbook this afternoon, you will be seeing me after class.”
Ron let out a humph of air next to him.

“Fucking git,” Ron whispered lowly to Harry, to which he responded with a grimace.

The class slowly started pulling out their books, manually flipping through pages. Hermione looked
the only one pleased to be given actual work on the Friday afternoon before summer break. Even
Malfoy and his crew looked like they had no intention of working, setting up in a small circle to chat.
As they worked through the lesson, Malfoy started talking, quietly enough not to be heard by Snape,
but loud enough for Harry to pick up.

“Mother and Father have made plans for us to travel to France again this Summer. I do love visiting
our summer home there,” he said, sticking his chest out as his group gave varying degrees of
responses. “What about you Blaise, Berlin again this year?”

“No, this year I am off to Australia. Something unexpected, but Mother’s new husband owns a
beach house on the coast. I intent to spend most my summer by the shore, see who can catch my
eye.”

Harry tried hard to tune them out, but it seemed every word they said got louder and louder.
Parkinson was giggling somewhat cruelly, and Malfoy’s obnoxious drawl continued throughout the
class. Harry knew by now Snape could hear but was choosing to ignore them.

“Potter. Potter!” Malfoy whisper shouted at him, turning around in his chair.

Harry tried to ignore him, but when he looked up Malfoy and his friends were all looked at him in
various states of amusement.

“So, where are you off to this holiday, Potter? The Bahama’s, Egypt?” Malfoy mocked; his voice
laced with sarcasm.

Harry put his head down. His chest had already been brimming with anxiety about the thoughts of
this summer, and Malfoys words succeeded in increasing the panic within him.

“Fuck off, Malfoy,” Ron whispered.

“Mr. Weasley! I said no talking. See me after class!”

Malfoy and his friends snickered as Ron’s face grew red. They turned around, smirks adorning their
faces. Hermione rolled her eyes and Harry shot his friend a thankful and sympathetic look.

The lesson crept along. To the others it was probably torturously slow, but for Harry, he was quite
content for the lesson to go on forever. The start of summer would mark a long, emotional trip and he
was not in any race to face off against this battle. When the bell finally rang, the class speedily
packed up. There were shouts of celebration and laughter of relief. Among it all, Harry, Ron and
Hermione stayed behind. Harry glum mood was even felt by his two friends who refrained from
joining in the celebrations.

Ron stayed behind to talk to Snape and Harry and Hermione stood outside the classroom door. They
watched as Professor Snape berated Ron, whose face was stained red.

“Harry,” Hermione said softly, hesitant.

Harry looked up from his shoes to her face, seeing concern and sadness.
“Is everything alright? I know you usually don’t like summer, but today feels different. Your more upset than usual.”

Harry wasn’t expecting this question from Hermione. Despite excelling at logic, Hermione usually lacked in emotional capacity, leaving most of the emotional talks in the group to be conducted by Ron. Trying his best to hide his shock from the question, and the fear and anxiety growing inside him, he strained a smile onto his face.

“I’m fine, Mione. Promise,” he coughed. She didn’t look convinced. “It’s just, Ron going away is going to be different. That’s all.”

Hermione nodded her head, her eyes looking at him with pity. She opened her mouth to say something, but Harry cut her off.

“Don’t tell him, please. I don’t want to ruin his holiday. I’ll be fine.”

Still looking unsure, she nodded. The door swung open, and Ron stormed up to them, muttering violently under his breath. They walked to the buses side by side, listening to Ron rant about Snape and his obvious bias.

“I mean, there’s no way he couldn’t hear those fuckers. No, no, its only me he hears. Wanker.”

Despite everything, Harry found himself laughing along to his friends’ complaints. The sun beamed down on them and Ron had long since shed his jacket, rolled up his sleeves and untied his tie. Harry had loosened his own tie and removed his jacket, leaving his sleeves rolled down. Hermione’s uniform was untouched, immaculate as ever. The three of them walked across the grass fields to the bus pick up zones, where most the school was now gathered. The rowdy mood was unmistakable.

When they got to the crowd, they hung together for a few seconds. Usually, they would all convene near the fence, standing there for the last few moments of the school day before heading off to their separate buses. Today, however, Hermione was being picked up by her parents and Ron was under strict instructions not to miss his bus, which had happened more than a few times when he had chosen to stay behind and hang with Harry, who preferred to wait for the late bus.

“Have a good holiday, guys. Take lots of photos for me, yeah,” Harry tried to sound as sincere as possible.

“Oh, Harry,” Hermione said before pulling him in for a hug.

Awkwardly, he wrapped his hands around her back and patted. Once she let go, Ron pulled him in roughly. When he let go, he ruffled Harry’s head, leaving his thick black curls even messier than before.

“I’ll be fine, guys,” Harry laughed, small and honest this time.

“Call me when you can, alright,” Ron demanded, and Hermione nodded insistently next to him.

“Yeah, course. Now get going!”

They both started to walk away together, glancing back at him from time to time. Harry knew they were talking about him in hushed whispers. It hurt to think about what they were saying.

He waited until they were both out of view before slipping into the crowd. He heard buses start to pull out, the heavy engines booming in his ears. Sweat started beading on his forehead as he walked out of the crowd and away from the school.
The good thing about Hogwarts had always been its location. It seemed no matter how far away you lived, it was only a matter of minutes by bus. It truly was magic, Harry thought. He couldn’t explain it, how his friends came from all over, small towns and cities, and each came to the same school.

When Harry had lived with the Dursleys, he had needed to catch a bus to school. It was always quick, but none of Harry’s friends travelled the same way as him.

He walked along the street path from the school into the city. He watched as more and more people passed by him the closer he got to the city, the unmistakable smell of thick air growing stronger. The walk only took 15 minutes before he arrived at his destination.

The house he stopped at was small. It looked like every other building in the street, with only a small space between the neighboring houses, and a small garden in the front yard. A large window with a seat on the inside of the house covered the front allowing him to see into a small living room. A footpath lead through the front yard, to the red front door. Across from the house was a park, lined with trees and park benches. Harry smiled at the sight of the house, his heart skipping a beat. The anxiety that had swarmed his chest calmed down as he entered the front gate.

With a soft breath, Harry walked along the path to the front door, reaching into his school bag to acquire keys. The set of three jingled as he put the largest into the red door and turned. The door opened silently.

Once inside, he shut the door behind him and stepped onto the wooden floorboards. He removed his shoes, and gently placed the keys on a small wooden table. With soft footsteps, Harry made his way to the kitchen, where he could hear soft muttering and the flipping of paper.

“Hey Sirius” Harry called.

Sitting at the worn wooden kitchen table sat Sirius Black, his godfather. His hair was pulled back in a messy bun that had strands falling out at various angles. He wore black jeans and a black shirt, his feet bare against the linoleum kitchen floor. His skin was pale. He was biting his lip as he held up a sheet of paper. The table was covered in documents and folders and books, all open at various pages.

Sirius looked up from the papers he studied, his expression turning from troubled to joyful as he saw Harry. A smile adorned his lips as he looked at his godson.

“How was school?”

Harry shrugged.

“We didn’t do much. Mostly watched movies.”

“God bless the last day of school,” Sirius chuckled, running his hands across his face, rubbing his eyes.

“How are you going?” Harry tried to say it nonchalantly, but his voice cracked on the last word. There was no mistaking his fear.

Harry’s shoulders were tense, curled up around his neck. He dropped his school bag to the floor beside him to relieve some of the strain on his shoulders. His glasses dug into the back of his ears, leaving him with a dull headache.

Sirius looked at him with red rimmed eyes and sighed. He stood from the chair and Harry heard his back crack several times as he stretched. He walked over to Harry with slow, deliberate steps, before
putting his arms around Harry, holding him to his chest. Harry felt the man sigh as his godson wrapped his arms around Sirius’s body.

“I’m making progress, I promise.”

They stayed together like that for what felt like minutes, neither willing to let go for fear the other would disappear. Finally, Harry pulled back. Sirius held onto him still, his hands holding his shoulders as he looked at Harry’s face.

“I may have found a lawyer, actually,” he smiled as he said it, but it didn’t reach his eyes.

“Yeah?”
"I'm going to meet with him tomorrow. See if he will take on our case.”

“Will he?” Harry whispered. He looked at his socked feet, one of his toes sticking out through a hole.

“Hey,” Sirius said, holding his hand against Harry’s cheek, pulling his gaze up until their eyes locked. “I promise you Harry, I will sort this out. You are never going back there. I am just making sure we have the best everything to make sure we win, ok?”

Harry saw the determination set in Sirius’s expression, and nodded.

“Ok.”

“Alright,” Sirius looked over to the kitchen and the pages covering the table. “Looks like it might be another takeaway night.”

Harry laughed softly, which in turn pulled a chuckle out of Sirius, who once again wrapped his arms around his Godson, squeezing tightly.
Sirius had bought the small apartment for Harry and him a few months back. It had been a year since he had been acquitted of the crimes he had been sent to prison for, and he was finally able to unlock his bank accounts to buy the home. He wasted no time moving in, and it was only a few weeks after buying the home that Harry moved in with him. The wallpaper was pealing throughout the entire house, the floorboards creaked with practically every step, and dust had covered the place. When Harry saw it for the first time, he had nearly cried from happiness.

“I know it’s not much, but we can work on it. Fix it up, you know,” Sirius had hovered next to him, his nervousness creeping into his voice as he showed Harry into the unfurnished living room.

“I understand if you don’t want to move in straight away, but I set a room up for you upstairs. Like I said, I know it’s not—”

Harry cut Sirius of by throwing himself into the man’s chest, wrapping his arms tightly around his body.

“It’s perfect.”

Harry had first met Sirius in July when he was 14, just having finished his third year at Hogwarts. Sirius was fresh out of prison and Harry was living with the Dursleys. It was at the end of their first meeting Sirius had asked Harry if he wanted to come live with him.

A meeting had needed to be organized by a social worker the first time. Harry had gone to an office based in London without the Dursleys knowing. He had dressed himself up, wearing his best jeans that only had one hole in them and a shirt that, although still big, didn’t hang off his shoulders like his others. He used the spare change he had found throughout his daily chores to buy a bus ticket and prayed the phone call he had received a week earlier was not just a practical joke. He truly hoped his godfather truly wanted to meet him.

When he arrived at the bright office, fluorescent lights shining off the white walls, he answered a series of questions from the lady at the front desk. When she wondered where his Aunt and Uncle were, he quickly lied, telling her they wanted him to have time with his godfather by himself. He had assured her they knew he was there and, to sell his lie, told her she could call his Aunt Petunia to check. She didn’t and Harry knees nearly gave out on him. Finally, the woman let up, and Harry went to sit in the waiting room on an old lumpy couch.

After a few minutes, a lady with kind brown eyes and black hair walked down the corridor with a clip board. Glancing around the waiting room, her eyes stuck on Harry, the only person there. She smiled and walked over to him. She wore a name tag that said Melissa.

“Are you Harry?” She smiled at him and Harry shifted on the waiting room lounge.

He nodded and stood to meet her. Her eyes crinkled as her smile widened.

“It’s nice to meet you. I’m Melissa. How are you doing today, sweetheart?” She held out her hand to his.
Harry blinked at the question, feeling his face go red. His chest was doing something funny, so he simply nodded. After wiping his sweaty palms against his pants, he shook her hand.

She chuckled at his reaction, not cruelly, but in a nice, understanding manner.

“Someone has been positively dying to meet you, Harry,” she said, gesturing for him to follow her. “He has been all sorts of nervous.”

As they walked down the corridor lined with a number of doors, Harry wondered about what she had said. Someone wanted to meet him. His godfather wanted to meet him. He felt like fireworks had been set off in his chest. There was a wave of nerves flush over Harry, his palms still sweating, and his heart racing. He still felt cynical about the whole thing, but the idea that this was all some practical joke was slowly fading from his mind. It was all too elaborate.

When Melissa stopped walking, Harry nearly ran into her, too lost in thought. She smiled; her kind eyes fixed on Harry.

“You ready, sweetie?”

Harry nodded.

When the door open Harry saw a man sitting inside on a small armchair. Upon hearing the door open, the man jumped to his feet and smoothed his wavy black hair down with his hand. He was dressed in a button up white shirt and a pair of black skinny jeans. He swayed on the spot as he looked at Harry and Melissa, and Harry was unable to read his expression.

“Harry, meet Sirius, your godfather,” Melissa said.

Harry sent him a small, nervous smile and waved.

It seemed that was all it took because Sirius was walking over to him, hurried steps and stiff movements. They stood together, face to face for what felt like minutes. Harry was sure Sirius was about to cry, his eyes watering and his sniffling giving him away.

“Oh Harry,” Sirius breathed, his eyes rushing over harry, taking all of him in. “You look just like your father. Except your eyes. You have your mothers’ eyes.”

Harry had heard much the same from all his teachers, but he never tired hearing about his parents, even if it was because of his own looks. It brought a true smile onto his face which in turn brought a wet laugh out of Sirius.

“May I hug you?” Sirius asked, his arms reaching out, stopping before touching him.

Harry hesitated before nodding. Sirius didn’t waste any time, wrapping his arms around Harry’s small frame. Harry stood awkwardly, unsure of what to do with his arms. His head was tucked under Sirius chin, and he could smell the man’s cologne.

When he was released, Harry took in his surroundings. The room was set up like it were a normal living room. Couches and chairs, a table, and toys lining shelves along the walls. All it lacked was a television. Harry noticed sitting on the small coffee table was a red and gold wrapped box.

“Come in, come sit,” Sirius said, gesturing his hands to the couch and coffee table.

Harry nodded. He became aware of how little he was talking and berated himself. Surely Melissa
and Sirius must have wondered if something was wrong with him. But as he tried to come up with something to say, he ran blank.

He walked over to the makeshift living room with Sirius. Melissa split apart from them, heading to a chair in the corner of the room.

“I, um,” Sirius turned to face him, looked away, looked back, and then settled on the present sitting on the table. “I got you a birthday present.”

“You got me a present?” Harry couldn’t keep the disbelief from his voice. His birthday had been a few days ago. He had only even received presents from Ron, Hermione and some years Hagrid, Hogwarts agriculture teacher.

“I hope that was alright,” Sirius grabbed the present, holding it out to Harry with shaking fingers.

Harry let out a small laugh and grabbed the box gingerly. He sat down on the couch as he started removing the gold ribbons. Sirius sat with him, far enough away so as not to crowd Harry, but close enough to see the contents of the box when Harry opened the lid.

Inside was a small leather-bound book. It looked old and Harry ran his fingers along the front.

“It’s a photo album, from when I was in school with your parents. I found it in storage and thought maybe you might like it.”

Harry’s eyes started to sting. He removed the album from the box, slowly opening it to the first page. Sure enough, a picture of his parents smiled at him, his father’s hair a mess just like his own, and his mother’s dimpled smile aimed at him. Next to his father stood a much younger Sirius in a leather jacket.

Harry sniffled.

“Thank you,” He breathed. “Thank you. I don’t, um, well didn’t have any photos of them. My Aunt and Uncle don’t like to talk about them.”

He looked over to Sirius, who looked as teary eyed as Harry felt. His expression was soft, open, and Harry felt a new wave of tears threaten to fall.

“Would you like to know more about them?” Sirius asked. “I’ll tell ya, I have some stories about your father that’ll leave you pissing yourself. Oh, sorry, language.”

Harry laughed at the man’s vulgarity and nodded his head.

“Yes, please. Tell me everything.”

Harry spent most the day there with Sirius, Melissa patiently watching over the two. He learnt about his parents, and why he had never been able to meet Sirius until now. He learnt how Sirius had been falsely accused of murder and had spent the past twelve years in prison. Sirius told him about how when he had been released four months beforehand, he had wasted no time. He spent the time between then and now undergoing psych evaluations and different procedures all in hopes of finally getting to see Harry again.

Harry told him all about school, his best friends Hermione and Ron and all the adventure they had. He told Sirius about the time he and Ron had skipped school to visit Hermione when she had been sick in hospital when they were 12. Harry talked about everything, except the Dursleys.
When the day was finally ending, the sun starting to sink in the sky through the window and stories between the two thoroughly told, Sirius brought up the topic of Harry’s homelife.

“I don’t know if anyone told you,” he started. “But before your parents died, they made me your guardian.”

Harry watched him as he spoke, listening as Sirius’s voice trembled slightly.

“That means that if anything were to happen to them…”

Harry waited, anticipation running through his body, making his hands shake.

“I know you live with your relatives, of course, and I understand if you wanted to stay with them,” Sirius said. “But… if you ever wanted a different home … well my name has been cleared now.”

Harry felt like it had suddenly developed a career as a gymnast.

“What, you mean, I can come live with you?”

“I understand if you want to stay with your Aunt and Uncle but-”

“Are you made?” said Harry, his voice croaky and low. “Of course I want to leave the Dursleys. When can I move in? Do you have a house?”

Sirius frowned at him, before his eyes brightened. He let out a disbelieving laugh.

Sirius looked over to Melissa.

“Can we do that?”

Harry looked over to Melissa as well, pleading with his eyes for her to say yes. She looked between the two of them, and for the first time, Harry noticed she was not smiling. She stared at him, and Harry couldn’t decide what she was thinking, only that something was puzzling her.

Finally, she shook her head and raised her eyebrows in thought.

“Well, as long as your current guardians sign the legal documents required, it should be fine.”

Harry felt an excited scream develop in the back of his throat and he fought to keep it down.

“Of course they will. Uncle Vernon is always saying he wants to get rid of me. This is perfect!”

Harry didn’t notice that both Sirius and Melissa were now looking at him in concern. He was too caught up in the euphoria of hope.

It was that moment that Sirius looks back on now that he hard Harry safe in his care. The quickness of Harry wanting to move in with what was basically a stranger was the first warning sign of his godson’s abuse. It would be months later, the Dursley's refusing to sign the documents, and Harry showing up on his doorstep with a black eye and bruised arm for everything to finally add up in Sirius’ mind.

It was then he knew he wouldn’t stop until Harry was legally allowed to stay with him. He would never let those monsters get away with hurting his godson, and he would die before he let them get their hands-on Harry’s money.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry I had to indulge in a bit of background. The next chapter is back to it all.
Thanks for reading.
Please feel free to comment any thoughts, comments. Don't be mean :).
Morning routines

Chapter Summary

One of the things I have always headcannoned, is Sirius being really good for Harry in the way that he lets him act his age. Most adults see him as the savior of the wizarding world, but for Sirius he has always just been Lily and James' child, his godson, which is what I wanted to show in this chapter. Let me know what you think. Comments are always appreciated!

Harry awoke to the morning sunlight streaming in through his open window. It was the kind of light that hinted at either an early morning or a rainy day, cloudy and unsure. Harry stretched in the bed, feeling the soft sheets brush against his skin.

He reached over to his nightstand, brushing his fingers against the round edges of his glasses. Harry picked them up and shoved them onto his face, welcoming his sight.

His room was not large, nor was it small. A double bed sat against the wall furthest from the door and above it was a square window. The duvet was a simple blue colour with matching sheets. Opposite his bed was a dresser. Despite having four drawers, Harry had only managed to fill one. When he had moved in, he had only brought his school stuff; homework, uniform, books, and the photo album Sirius had given him for his birthday. Sirius has since taken him shopping, but Harry refused to get more than was strictly necessary. A spare set of clothes and his school uniform was all he had needed at the Dursleys.

Harry sat up in bed. The covers fell to his waste, and his bed-shirt hung off his shoulders. The morning air formed goosebumps along his arms. He pulled his legs to the edge of the bed, his bare feet hitting the wooden floor. He could feel the accumulation of dirt beneath his feet and made a mental note to vacuum his floor later in the day.

He knew Hermione and Ron’s planes had both departed by now. Hermione said she would be leaving the Friday night, the time her family had found would fit perfectly for the different time zones. Ron would have left early this morning. His parents had learnt the trick to saving money on flights was to leave at times others believed humanly impossible. Ron had been complaining about it for weeks on end until Ginny had called him a crybaby after listening to ten minutes of his whining.

As he walked out of his room and down the creaky stairs, Harry’s mind stayed on his friends. The idea of not telling them everything that had been going on with him left knots in his stomach. Especially when he thought how he had never even told them of Sirius’s existence.

When things had first come out with meeting Sirius, Harry had refrained from telling his friends. There was a barrier in his mind that cut off his words whenever he thought of telling them. Ron and Hermione had faced everything with him. They were the closest people to him and the only people that knew how the treatment of the Dursleys affected him. He knew he should have told them he was safe with Sirius, had been for the past months, but something stopped him every time. Something inside him thought telling them everything would cause it all to disappear, a jinx, that would break the spell and send him packing back to the Dursleys.
Then the matter of the custody battle had arose and summer was quickly approaching, Ron and Hermione already planning to leave, and Harry had shut them out. He tried to convince himself it was for their benefit, to protect his friends from the shitfest that was his life, but there was a part of himself that knew otherwise.

Telling them would cement everything, and Harry couldn’t cope with the reality that was coming for him.

Harry made his way to the kitchen after descending the stairs. There was a small hole in the floorboards near the fridge which he avoided from habit. The window above the sink looked out into the small backyard full of overgrown grass and weeds. Harry made a mental note to get started on the yard work now that he was out of school.

From the fridge he pulled out a carton of milk and eggs. He opened one of the cupboards and pulled a pan out tactfully to avoid making any noise. He had much experience from making breakfast for the Dursleys, who did not appreciate early mornings. Gathering all the equipment, he set about making scrambled eggs.

By the time he heard Sirius start to descend the stairs, the eggs had finished cooking and Harry was portioning them onto two plates.

He sat at the table, shoveling eggs into his mouth when Sirius walked in, yawning and rubbing his eyes. His hair resembled Harry’s, the black mess fluffy and sticking up in different spots. As Sirius shuffled into the room, Harry monitored him, checking if he had stayed up too late. When he went to the cupboard to obtain the instant coffee, Harry knew he had. The man hated coffee.

“How did you sleep?” Harry asked anyway.

Sirius turned to him and shot him a tired smile.

He slurped his coffee as he moved to sit across from Harry at the small wooden table.

“As well as any other night,” Sirius responded. “What about you?”

Harry shrugged. His eyes felt puffy and he wondered if there were bags under them. He had stayed up late last night, watching the light shine from Sirius room through the cracks of his closed bedroom door. He fell asleep shortly after the light finally shut off around 1 AM.

“I have that meeting today,” Sirius said, used to Harry’s non answers. “I’m heading into London around nine if you want to come with.”

They didn’t live too far away from central London. If Harry wanted to go, it would only be a quick bus trip to the town.

“Who’s the meeting with?”

Sirius shifted in his seat. His eggs were barely touched. Harry’s plate was cleared.

“One of my cousins’ husband. He’s one of the best lawyers around. Hopefully I can convince him to take our case.”

“Do you think he will?” Harry asked through a mouthful of eggs. “I thought you said you didn’t get on with your family.”

“I don’t,” Sirius coughed. “But hopefully we can work something out. This particular cousin is a
little more reasonable than the others.”

Harry nodded. The clock on the microwave chimed at the hour, the lights reading 8:00.

“I might come with you, if that’s ok?”

Sirius grinned at him.

“Of course, buddy. You better go get dressed. I can clean up all this.”

Harry started to protest, but Sirius shot him a look that told him it would be useless. He laughed at Sirius’s determination, before running up the stairs to the bathroom.

The second floor consisted of three rooms. The master bedroom, which was Sirius’s room, the spare room, Harry’s, and in between them the bathroom, complete with a bath and shower. Harry made quick work showering himself, mostly using the water to wash the sleep from his face. Once he emerged, he looked in the foggy mirror and attempted to flatten his wet hair. It refused to smooth out.

Harry left the bathroom with a stream of fog following him. He headed to his bedroom with his red towel wrapped around his waist. He made quick work opening his drawer and pulled out a pair of black jeans and a black shirt.

When he walked down the stairs, he could hear Sirius humming along to a pop song on the radio. The static cut the song out every few minutes, but the tune was kept up by Sirius’s deep voice. Harry stood in the archway between the living room and kitchen. He bopped his head along to the music, smiling at Sirius own movements.

Sirius turned to face Harry his movements becoming more exaggerated as he looked to his godson. Sirius brought the dishes scrubbing brush up to his lips to use as a pretend microphone.

“In the midnight hour, I can feel your power,” Sirius sang along to the words, his voice growing louder and deliberately bad. “Just like a prayer, you know I’ll take you there.”

He pointed at Harry, rolled his shoulders, bounced his head. Harry laughed, loud and uncontrollable. Sirius strutted towards him, still singing along. He grabbed Harry’s hands, pulling him into the living room. Sirius twirled around him, still holding the scrubbing brush to his mouth singing the words. It wasn’t long before Harry joined in, singing off key and loudly. They danced and twirled around the living room, Sirius prompting Harry’s movements.

When the song fizzled out, Harry stopped his movements awkwardly, still smiling a smile that shone through his eyes. Sirius heaved in exaggerated breaths. He held his hands on his hips.

“Got to love Madonna,” Sirius chuckled. “I used to bust a move to that woman when I was your age, I tell you.”

“You’re that old?”

“Oi!” Sirius exclaimed, with no true heat in his voice.

Harry chuckled. Sirius wiped his wet hands along Harry’s face, causing him to yelp.

“Serves you right,” Sirius laughed. He sniffed, then looked down to himself.

“Guess I better get dressed.”

When they finally left the house at 9:08, they walked side by side to the bus stop. Sirius was dressed
much like he had been when Harry had first met him, button up shirt and jeans. He had his hair pulled back into a bun as he usually did, and his face was clean shaven.

Despite the abundance of money Sirius had hinted at having, he had never wanted to indulge in anything more than the simple life. Or so he had told Harry. This was why instead of moving into his old family home, which was practically a mansion, Sirius had bought the small unit they now lived in. It also explained why they took public transport. That, and Sirius was still working on fixing his bike’s engine.

When the bus arrived, Sirius payed for both his and Harry’s ticket, and ushered Harry to the back seats.

“It’s where the cool kids sit, Harry.”

Harry just smirked at his godfather.

They rode to the city in mostly silence. Sirius tried to start up a game of spotto, but only one yellow car passed them on the short trip. The bus smelt stale and the engine sounded dodgy but the two never complained.

When they arrived at the city center, they departed from the bus, Harry thanking the driver as they passed him. Sirius walked with confident steps through the streets. Harry tried to keep up with his quick pace while watching everyone around him, dodging left and right to get out of other’s way.

They quickly came across a generic multistory building. The people entering and leaving it all wore three-piece suits of various designs. One man even wore an eye monocle, which both Harry and Sirius found amusing. Sirius ushered him into the revolving doors before Harry could comment on the place.

They entered into a large lobby. It looked to be furnished like a rich person’s house, with gold trimming along furniture and luxurious cabinets. Ahead of the them was a receptionist desks.

“Harry, can you go and wait over there for me?” Sirius pointed to a couch by the corner of the room.

Harry nodded. He wanted nothing more than to stay with Sirius and his hand itched to hold onto his godfathers. He refused the urge, berating himself for acting like such a child. Without a word he went to sit on the green lounge with silver trimmings set up in the corner of the room. As he sat, he watched as his godfather spoke quick words to the receptionist before making his way to the elevator.
Sirius stormed up the hallway, refusing to let anyone stop him. A lady called for him to stop but he shook his head and kept travelling. Although he had told Harry about the meeting, Sirius had omitted telling his godson it was not a booked thing. He hadn’t wanted to worry his already anxious godson. Sirius had noticed the deepening bags under his eyes and the vacant stares aimed at nothing.

Reaching the end of the hallway, Sirius quickly scanned the various doors and their name plaques. On the left, he saw the name he was after; L. Malfoy. Without thinking twice, he ripped the door open.

Inside, Lucius Malfoy was sitting behind his grand office desk. The desk was vacant of all files, instead holding only ornaments and picture frames. The man himself sat in a large leather office chair, platinum hair pulled back in a ponytail and his office phone pressed to his ear. He looked at Sirius with wide eyes and a thin pressed mouth.

“Excuse me, Winfred, I am going to have to call you back.”

Sirius stepped into the office. His eyes were locked with Malfoys. Behind him, Sirius heard the patter of running footsteps.

“Sir,” a young woman burst into the room, her hair in disarray and her breath shallow. “Sir, you can’t be here. I am so sorry Mr. Malfoy, I tried to stop…”
Malfoy held up his hand, halting the woman’s rant.

“Mr. Black. To what do I owe the displeasure.”

Malfoy placed the phone down on his desk and ushered the woman away with a small wave of his hand. She left quickly, shutting the door behind her. Sirius’s expression remained stoic.

“I need a lawyer.”

Lucius smirked at him, his eyes cruel and disinterested.

“My, that didn’t take long. It’s been, what, a year since you left jail. Already falling back into bad habits, I see.”

Sirius clenched his hand into a fist, tightening it as hard as he could, before releasing his grip.

“Not quite.”

Sirius walked towards the desk and sat in one of the armchairs without invitation.

“I need custody of my godson. His relatives refuse to sign the paperwork and are taking the matter to court. I need a lawyer that will make sure I win,” Sirius closed his eyes. “Sad as it is for me to admit, you are my best option.”

Malfoy looked at him with disinterest.

“There are plenty of other lawyers you could be bothering with this. I hardly see why you have come to me.”
Malfoy rose from his seat. He opened his desk draw and pulled out a small file. He began flicking through it, content to ignore Sirius.

“If you take on our case, I will make it worth your time,” Sirius said through gritted teeth, trying to keep the desperation and anger out of his voice.

“Do you think I care what you can pay? I am the most sought-after lawyer in Britain, Black. I don’t need to take on any case for the money.”

“No,” Sirius agreed. “But I am not paying money.”

At that, Malfoy looked up from the file he was rifling through. He raised an eyebrow.

“You married my cousin, Narcissa Black.”

“Yes,” Malfoy rolled his eyes. “I am aware of my wife’s relation to you. As disturbing as I find it, I hardly see how it matters. I am not about to help you out of familiar obligations.”

Sirius smirked.

“No, but you might do it if your wife knew she would receive all of the Black family’s priceless heirlooms, including the manor.”

That got Malfoys attention. He closed the file and placed it face down on the desk. His eyes roamed over Sirius, who didn’t shy away from the other man’s piercing gaze. His suit jacket was placed over his chair, leaving the Malfoy in his white button up and black vest. He fiddled with the cuffs of his jacket as he mulled over what Sirius said.

“What makes you think my wife would be interested in that silly stuff?”

“She practically begged me for it when Mother died. Didn’t you hear?”

Begged was an exaggeration. Narcissa had screamed at him he was unworthy of the family title and assets. He could still remember saying she wished in were him who had died, rather than Regulus. Sirius had never said as much, but he agreed with everything she said. Still, the slight exaggeration was enough to interest Malfoy, who sat down in his leather chair, eyes assessing Sirius.

“Alright, Black. Tell me, if I were to take on your case, what makes you think you could win. Who in their right mind would trust you with a child?”

Sirius didn’t have to think.

“Lily and James Potter, that’s who.”

Malfoy stilled and for the first time since Sirius had stormed into the room, he saw a crack in Malfoys mask. Malfoy sighed.

“The Potter boy,” he grumbled. “Of course.”

“You know about Harry?”

Sirius neck tightened at the thought and his eyes narrowed at Malfoy.

Malfoy hummed, closing his eyes.

“Mr. Potter attends school with my boy, Draco. I believe they are in the same year.”
Huh, Sirius thought. He remembered his cousin had been pregnant the same time as Lily, but he never thought much on the subject. For the first time in a long time, he felt hopeful about their situation.

“So you will take our case?”

“The wish of Lily and James Potter for you to have custody over Mr. Potter before you became an ex-convict will hardly hold up in a court of law, Mr. Black,” he raised his chin, looking down his nose at Sirius.

Sirius felt his heart rate increase. A sharp anger was building in his chest and his breath was coming out in short huffs.

“This isn’t a case you can win, especially if the family Mr. Potter has been living with for the past 13 years refuse to sign over guardianship. I am sure they would do a much better job at parenting the boy than you, anyway. Its best you give up.”

“Fuck you,” Sirius spat, leaping to his feet. The anger he had been repressing for the past few months came surfacing up and was bellowing out of his mouth before he could think.

“If they have done such a good job, then why did Harry show up on my doorstep covered in bruises. That boy is fucking terrified of that family and the very idea of going to live with them again has sent him into multiple panic attacks. If you really think they could do a better job than me, then I got a full fucking file of photos that proves otherwise.”

Sirius was panting by the end of the tirade. His throat was sore from his hoarse shouts and he was unable to control the shaking of his hands. He closed his eyes and disappointment washed over him. He was upset with the situation, and with Malfoy, but mostly himself and his outburst. He wanted to punch Malfoy and keep screaming at him. He wanted to weep and hold Harry close, never letting him go.

“The family abused the boy?”

Sirius opened his eyes, ready to start screaming at the man in front of him, before he saw Malfoys reaction. His jawline set and his eyes narrowed, Malfoy looked the angriest Sirius had ever seen the man. Even his cheeks were tinted pink again his pale white skin, something that Sirius had only seen once on a prank gone wrong against Malfoy back in High School.

Sirius nodded. Exhaustion swept over him and he sunk back down into the chair.

“And you have proof?”

“Harry’s friend made him take photos. I have a copy of them,” Sirius stated softly.

Malfoy gave one sharp nod. He paused for a couple of minutes before speaking again.

“Give me everything you have on the case. I am not saying I will take it, but I will see if there is something I can work with.”

Harry waited down in the lobby on the seat Sirius had asked him to wait on. To pass the time, he watched the people coming into the lobby through the revolving doors.

An old lady with a fur coat had strutted in, walking up to the receptionist with a rather demanding
presence. She started yelling at the poor lady behind the desk the moment she reached it. Harry
couldn’t make out the words, but he watched the woman behind the desk floundering for the phone.
After her, a man with a large round belly and a handlebar moustache bounced in, his booming
footsteps enough to shake the floor. He stopped to talk to a man heading out, his jovial laugh echoing
throughout the first floor.

It had been thirty minutes since Sirius had left him, and his bladder was making itself known as full.
Harry shifted around in his seat but when it became apparent he would be unable to hold it any
longer, he stood. He walked over the receptionist with soft footsteps, hyperaware of the soft clicks
his movements made against the marble floor.

Harry stood at the desk, quietly waiting while the woman finished typing on her computer.

“Excuse me,” Harry said once she finally looked up. “Is there a bathroom I can use?”

The woman looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

“My godfather is in a meeting upstairs. He told me to wait here.”

Finally she nodded, pointing to the end left wall where a pair of doors resided in the far corner.

He quickly made his way to the bathroom.

When he returned to the lobby, he started to head back to his seat when her heard a voice he would
recognize anywhere. An unmistakable drawl that had Harry’s skin crawling.

“Mother,” Draco Malfoy said. “When we get to Paris, will we be heading straight to our vacation
house, or can we visit Grandmother first?”

Draco Malfoy stood at the reception desk wearing a white button up shirt and a pair of slacks. His
hair was gelled back in its usual style. Beside him stood a tall woman with hair as
blonde as Malfoys. She wore an elegant black dress and a brown fur coat.

“I think its best to decide when we get there, darling,” she responded without looking up from the
form she was filling out.

Harry stood as still as possible. His eyes were wide, and his mouth had fallen open. He was
struggling to decide if he should sneak past them and head back to his seat, or to slink back into the
bathroom, when he heard the elevator doors ding. From the opening doors emerged Sirius and what
looked to be an adult Draco Malfoy. Harry figured it was Draco’s father.

“Father,” Draco exclaimed cheerfully.

Harry was right. Draco’s mother finally looked up from what she was doing. When her eyes caught
on her husband and the man next to him, her entire body stilled.

“Sirius,” she said sharply.

Harry stood away from them all, watching the emotions run through Sirius’s face. His eyes were
trained on Mrs. Malfoy who hadn’t taken her eyes off of him.

“Cissy,” Sirius said, surprised. “It’s been awhile.”

Sirius and Mr. Malfoy walked over to Draco and Mrs. Malfoy. The four stood beside the reception
desk, Sirius and Narcissa’s eyes locked, Mr. Malfoy looking between the two and
Draco looking thoroughly confused. Draco was the one to break the silence.

“What are you?” He demanded.

“Draco! Don’t be rude,” his mother admonished. She still had not looked away from Harry’s godfather. “This is my cousin, Sirius Black.”

Draco looked up and down at Sirius, an unamused expression adorning his face. Harry felt his chest start to burn with anger. He clenched his jaw and ground his teeth together. He was so caught up in his anger at his high school arch nemesis, he didn’t hear the group’s conversation until his name was being spoken.

“I’m actually here with my godson, Harry. He was waiting for me over there by the…” Sirius trailed off as he looked over to the couch he had left Harry on, finding no trace of the boy.

The Malfoys all followed Sirius’s gaze, Lucius and Narcissa delicately turning their heads, Malfoy straining his neck.

“Um,” Harry coughed to get their attention. “I’m over here.”

They all turned to look at him, Sirius looking relieved as he glanced over Harry. The gaze of all the Malfoys had Harry shrinking his neck into his shoulders. His wide eyes shifted over all of them, and his stomach felt ill.

Harry’s eyes stuck on Draco, who looked puzzled at seeing him. The unfamiliar setting only threw Malfoy off for a few moments though, and it didn’t take long before his trademark smirk was being directed at Harry. Malfoy’s eyes were shining with gleeful mirth and he started to open his mouth, Harry knowing he was about to make a smartarsed remake at his expense. Before the words came out though, Malfoy’s father spoke.

“Mr. Potter,” he stepped up to Harry holding his hand out. “My name is Lucius Malfoy. I am going to be your new lawyer.”

“What?” Harry disbelieving.

“What!” Draco shrieked.

Chapter End Notes

Draco, bullies Harry: Is this flirting?

Sorry this chapter was a bit rushed. I kind of imagined that as much as he is a bad dude, Lucius Malfoy does not condone child abuse, and so when he found out about Harry’s relatives and saw him his ’Cut Throat Dad Mode’ kicked in.

Let me know what you think.
A week had passed since Lucius Malfoy had agreed to be Sirius and Harry’s lawyer.

Throughout that time Harry had thrown himself into the housework. He had managed to clear most of the backyard by mowing and weeding the extravagant mess. He helped Sirius find furniture for the living room, which they collected from a small op shop not far from their house. They found a nice red couch and comfortable brown armchair that Harry placed near the small fireplace. Sirius had even bought a small television, which they watched together most nights after dinner, flicking through crappy reality shows and overdone soap operas. By the end of the week, Harry had even fixed the hole in the kitchen floor while Sirius was out one day.

Throughout the days Harry was doing the housework, Sirius was meeting with Mr. Malfoy about the upcoming custody hearing. A letter had arrived on the Tuesday, and although Harry hadn’t been allowed to read it, Sirius had told him a court date was set three weeks from now. On the days Sirius met with Mr. Malfoy, he came home with slumped shoulders and takeaway containers, intent to ignore Harry’s insistence that he would cook. During that week, Sirius’s eyes were permanently rimmed red from exhaustion and his hair remained frizzy and ungroomed.

On the Friday afternoon, Harry overheard a one-sided phone conversation between Sirius and Mr. Malfoy. Despite talking in hushed tones, Harry could hear the stress in Sirius’ voice.

“I understand, Malfoy,” Sirius whispered. “Why didn’t you just send them off without you? It isn’t like they need to stay for this.”

Harry was sitting at the top of the stairs hugging the railing while he listened to Sirius.

“I know, I know!”

Sirius was getting frustrated, his volume rising.

“Soon, alright! The longer Harry stays out of this, the better it is for him. He doesn’t need to know all the details, ok Malfoy.”

Harry bolted to his room the second he heard Sirius hang up the phone. When Harry heard his godfather walk past his room later that night, he pulled the covers over his head and pretended to be asleep.

By Saturday, Harry had worn out and irritable. Each night he slept less and less due to nightmares about his Uncle and he had already spent his days cleaning everything in the house that could be cleaned.

Each day before he left for his meetings with Malfoy, Sirius encouraged Harry to head out, go out with friends, do anything. Each time Harry told him the standard response.

“I don’t mind doing the housework. Besides, Ron and Hermione are both away.”

“Surely you have other friends,” Sirius said every time, to which Harry always responded,
“Not really.”

It was on the Saturday morning when Sirius had enough.

Harry was sweeping the wooden living room floors in jagged, frantic movements when Sirius came flouncing into the room.

“Put down that broom, my dearest godson!” Harry stilled immediately, propping the broom up against the wall.

Harry wore the same shirt and jeans he had been wearing the day before. His hair was even messier than it usually was and there were smudges on his glasses that he was too lazy to clean. When he looked at Sirius, Harry noticed for the first time in the week, the man had pulled his hair back into a ponytail and shaved his face.

Harry hummed quizzically, unsure how else to respond to Sirius’ comment.

“Today we are doing something special. Today, I have planned one of the greatest surprises and you will ever receive in your life, Harry!”

Harry squinted his eyes, unsure where the conversation was going. Sirius was buzzing with a chaotic energy that Harry had become accustomed to.

“What is it?”

Sirius rolled his eyes, still smiling a knowing smile.

“Well, it wouldn’t be a surprise if I told you,” Sirius practically sang. “Come on, let’s go!”

With that, he practically skipped to the front door. Begrudgingly, Harry ran a quick hand through his hair and followed him.

They were walking down a crowded street lined with various shops when Harry lost track of Sirius.

After leaving the house, they had walked for over 20 minutes, Sirius talking fast and cheerily, Harry listening contently. It was nearing half an hour of walking and Harry was starting to tire from the distance. He was unsure why they couldn’t have just taken a bus. Between the pull of the crowd pushing Harry forward and backwards, and Sirius’s quick, excited strides, it was inevitable they would be split apart.

Harry didn’t immediately worry when he lost sight of Sirius in the crowd. His Aunt Petunia was known for losing track of him when she took him and Dudley grocery shopping with her. The first few times it happened, Harry had panicked and cried, but his Aunt always found him before heading home, piling bags of groceries into his arms while reprimanding him for not staying with her. It was never intentional that Harry separated himself, and before he was seven, he realized she was purposefully losing him. One less thing to worry about. Soon enough, he knew to wait for her outside whatever shop she was visiting, ready to pick up the bags she shoved in his direction. Dudley always stuck his tongue out at his cousin, chewing on whatever treat his mother had bought him while Harry struggled under the weight of all the bags.

Despite his experience with being lost, this was the first time he had been separated form Sirius in a crowded area. Harry could feel his breathes coming out shorter and he felt the swell of panic bubble in his chest. Due to his short stature, Harry was unable to look over the height of the adults
surrounding him to spot his godfather. Harry knew the man couldn’t be far off as he had been next to
Harry only a moment ago. Harry thought about calling out for Sirius but was unsure he would be
loud enough over the sound of traffic and travelling footsteps.

It was then a large, heavyset man bumped into Harry, shoving his shoulder and causing him to
stumble.

“Oi, watch it!” The man’s deep voice yelled at him.

He barely had time to apologies before another body was knocking into him, sending him flying to
the ground. He could feel the sting of his cut palms before he saw the red cuts.
His arms began to shake violently, making it harder for him to pull himself up from the ground.

He was no longer lying on a footpath. In his mind, Harry saw the inside of his cupboard, the dark
room suffocating him with its stuffy, thick air. He felt the already tight walls closing in on him. He
could hear his uncle yelling, spitting his words through heavy breaths. Even as the shouts got louder,
ringing in his ears, Harry was unable to make out the words.

Harry didn’t know how long he was stuck to the footpath. He could feel footsteps walk around and
over him. He was unable to move. His legs felt stiff and immovable and his arms were jello. The
longer he stayed down, the surer he was that he was going to die, either from the stampede of people
who were soon to get sick of stepping over him, or from suffocating.

He was coming to accept the though of his own death when a hand gripped his forearm tight enough
to bruise and pulled him up. He felt strong arms grip his midsection, and panic overwhelmed him. He
was being pulled to the side of the footpath near a building when the ringing in his ears gave way to
words.

“Harry, come on, look at me,” soft words were being spoken in his ear. A hand was pressed to his
chest, just over his heart, and instead of panicking, he found the gentle touch
comforting.

When his eyesight refocused, he was expecting to see Sirius hugging him from behind. He was not
expecting to see a ragged man dressed in an old suit with rushed patch jobs fixing the torn fabric.
The man had sandy brown hair and kind hazel eyes. He was encouraging Harry to breathe,
demonstrating the breathes by counting.

Once the panic and fear subsided, it took a moment for Harry to recognize the man in front of him.

“Professor Lupin?”

The man gave him a tired smile.

“Hello Harry.”

Harry was about to ask the man a question when he heard Sirius shouting his name from up the
street. From the side, Harry was now able to see Sirius in the crowd. His godfather was frantically
searching for him, shoving people out of the way as he looked. Harry lifted his arm up, waving
slowly for his godfather to see. He could tell the moment Sirius noticed him, relief spreading across
the man’s face as he threw his back and ran through the crowd to his godson.

Sirius wrapped his arms around Harry the second he was close enough. Harry could feel the tremble
in Sirius’s arms matching his own shakiness. Sirius pulled back to look at his face.

“Don’t do that!” He demanded.
“Sorry,” Harry mumbled.

Sirius sighed, before beginning to pat down Harry.

“Are you hurt? What happened?”

Harry released a shaky laugh. He grabbed his godfather’s wrist before he could continue fussing.

“I am fine Sirius, it was nothing. I just tripped over.” he lied. “Professor Lupin helped me up.”

Finally, Sirius noticed the other person in their presence. When his eyes caught onto the man, Sirius’ body stilled. He no longer looked at Harry. Instead his eyes were locked on Professor Lupins. Sirius’s expression was harrowing, and Harry was taken aback by the heartbreak that crossed through his godfathers’ eyes.

“Remus.”

Harry’s eyes squinted, and he looked to Professor Lupin, shocked to find the man looked as lost as Sirius. Professor Lupin didn’t respond to Sirius. Instead his mouth had fallen open and looked to be struggling for words.

“You two know each other?” Harry asked, breaking the depressing staring competition the two had going on.

Sirius tilted his head at Harry’s question, finally breaking eye contact with Lupin as he looked to his godson. The look made Harry feel like he had asked a silly question.

“Yes, Harry. We know each other.”

It was Professor Lupin who answered him, drawing Harry and Sirius’s gaze back to him.

“Hello, Sirius,” his voice was hoarse. “It’s been awhile.”

Sirius was incapable of talking, instead jerking his head in attempted nod. Everyone remained silent for a moment, listening to the honking of cars and shouts of pedestrians as they waited for someone to speak. Sirius had gone pale and his eyes were still bulging.

“Sirius, are you alright?” Harry asked his godfather, lifting his hand to pat the man’s arm.

‘Huh,” Sirius said, before shaking his head in a manner resembling a dog. “Oh, uh, yeah, I’m fine, Harry. Sorry.”

Sirius smiled an unconvincing smile, lips wobbly and eyes glassy. He cleared his throat.

“Right,” he said abruptly. “Uh, thank you, Remus, for helping Harry out. I got a bit excited, and lost track of him.”

Professor Lupin gave him a small smile. His eyes still looked lost.

“Sounds like something you would do,” despite the teasing nature of his voice, the words were soft.

They stared at each other a little longer. Harry was beginning to feel like he was intruding so he averted his eyes from the two, studying his shoes and quirking his lips in discomfort. After a few moments, he cleared his throat, hoping it would distract the two men.

Sure enough, it worked.
“Right, uh, well. Are you living near here now, or…?” Sirius stumbled over the words.

“Uh, yeah. I moved back a couple of years ago,” Professor Lupin answered, rubbing the back of his neck. “I got a job teaching at Hogwarts, actually. It’s how I recognised Harry.”

“Oh,” Sirius breathed. “Harry’s not mentioned you.”

The two fell silent, and Harry felt the need to apologies for never mentioning Professor Lupin to Sirius. It wasn’t that he didn’t like him as a teacher, in fact he had become one of Harry’s favorites. It was just the topic never arose. Harry opened his mouth to say something when Professor Lupin started talking.

“Where are you two heading in such a rush, anyway?” Professor Lupin asked.

“The kennel,” Sirius said automatically at the same time as Harry responded, “It’s a surprise.”

Harry tilted his head. What. He looked at Sirius.

“Wait, what?”

“Crap,” Sirius swore. “I wasn’t meant to tell you that!”

Professor Lupin laughed softly, holding his hand over his lips. Sirius groaned, smacking his forehead.

“I see you still can’t keep a secret, Sirius.”

“What?” Harry repeated, completely lost.

“I was doing so well!” Sirius exclaimed. “We were almost there! You’re getting the blame for this, Moony. You got me distracted!”

Sirius pointed his finger at Professor Lupin who only laughed harder, holding his hands up in surrender. The two had overcome all awkwardness, and the friendly nature between them was unmistakable. There was the same tension there as before, but now Harry knew it was not hostile.

“Nice to see you haven’t changed a bit, Sirius,” Professor Lupin said.

The words sobered the two up. They regressed back to their sad staring until Sirius finally spoke.

“Right, well. I suppose we better get going Harry,” Sirius’s eyes hadn’t left Professor Lupin, and neither looked ready to say goodbye. “This dog isn’t going to pick itself.”

“Wait,” Harry looked at Sirius, his eyebrows furrowed. He ran the sentence through his head, key words dog and pick playing over and over again. “You’re not kidding? We are getting a dog.”

“Figured you could use a new friend, seeing as you kept telling me Ron and Hermione were away.”

“No way!” Harry shouted shrilly, ignoring both Sirius and Remus who chuckled at his reaction.

He played the interaction through his mind, pinched himself to check he wasn’t sleeping.

“Are we actually?” He asked in disbelief.
Sirius had a mischievous grin across his face, and he glanced to Professor Lupin who was trying to hide his own amusement.

Harry would deny it afterwards, but when Sirius nodded, he screamed from excitement.

Chapter End Notes

Surprise!
Finally managed to write Remus into the story. Hope you enjoyed the chapter, there will be more of him to come!
Let me know what you thought!
Harry found the kennel to be both a joyful and exhausting experience. After saying goodbye to Professor Lupin, something which took much longer than was normal, Harry and Sirius headed up the street to a small vet clinic. The interaction between the two men was something Harry made a mental note to ask Sirius about later, but at that moment he couldn’t keep his mind off the thought of getting a dog. Harry had been buzzing the entire walk, continuously asking Sirius if this were a joke, if he was sure, and could they really get a dog.

Each time Sirius patiently explained that no, this wasn’t a joke, yes, he was sure, and yes, they could really get a dog. He even said Harry would be the one to pick it. When they entered the small clinic, Harry noticed it smelt of sterile cleaning products. Despite not seeing any animals he could hear the chitter of barking and a resurgence of excitement bubbled in his chest.

Sirius walked up to the lady behind the desk, who gave him a beaming smile. She was beautiful, her blonde hair shining with each movement and her white teeth displayed in her perfect smile. She managed to make the red and black vet scrubs fashionable. She didn’t look much older than Harry, and her badge said trainee.

“Are you Sirius?” She asked. She spoke with a French accent.

“That’s me,” Sirius responded, sending her a charming smile.

“My name is Fleur. We spoke on ze phone earlier.”

She reached her hand out and Sirius shook it. Her nails were painted red.

“It is lovely to meet you Fleur.”

“I am glad to hear you will be adopting from us. Is this your godson you were telling me about?”

“Yep, this is Harry,” Sirius said somewhat proudly, Budding Harry forward by the shoulder.

Fleur’s gaze fell on Harry and she gave him a kind smile. He shot back what was meant to be a smile but better resembled a grimace.

“’Ello Harry. Are you ready to come and pick ze’ puppy?” She asked Harry.

The question sounded like something you would ask a child, but Fleur managed to avoid sounding condescending, her tone closer resembling excitement on Harry’s behalf. Harry nodded, this time managing a true smile.

She led them out the back through a small door behind the reception desk. As they walked through the corridor, Fleur chatted about the dogs available for adoption.

“We have older dogs that have been with us for years. Zey are just dying for a forever home, but if it is a puppy you have your heart set on, we have a few breeds available as vell.”

“We aren’t really sure what we are after,” Sirius answered. “But I bet Harry will know when he sees
them.

He smiled down at Harry who suddenly felt an overwhelming surge of pressure. It was such a big decision and he was beginning to worry he might choose wrong. What if he picked a dog that destroyed everything, and Sirius decided to get rid of the dog and Harry for choosing it. As the thought consumed Harry, Sirius and Fleur continued talking about the options available.

They walked down the corridor into a small room lined with metal fences. Inside the fences, blocked off from each other’s cages, were several dogs of varying sizes. The majority looked to be a mixture of breeds with no definite features of only one type of dog.

There was a litter of small sandy coloured dogs in one kennel, the mother dog overlooking her four pups with disinterest as the young ones yapped and fought each other. Next to the litter of pups was a small white ball of fluff that Harry couldn’t be sure was a dog. A few cages up there was a droopy eyes elderly dog that had large droplets of drool accumulating in its mouth. The cacophony of barking was becoming overwhelming and Harry struggled to think.

“Ze noise can be a bit much,” Fleur said over the barking. “Don’t worry though, take your time. If you see someone you like, I can let zem out and you can get to know zem a little better.”

Harry was struggling to make his next move. He looked over the cages and his heart swelled at the idea of leaving all the animals here. He was shaking his head, eyes wide and searching over the kennels, when he heard a small arwhooph that garnered his attention.

At the very end of the room, in the last kennel, sat a large black dog with scruffy hair and large paws. He was large enough to be a mastiff, but he looked to have another breed mixed in him as well. He lay with his belly flat on the cold concrete floor. His eyes watched the humans in the room, but he made no move of interest towards them. Not even his ears twitched when Fleur spoke.

Harry was intrigued by the dog’s attitude and walked slowly towards the cage, kneeling to get a better look at the scraggly dog.

“You like this dog?” Fleur asked in her thick accent.

Harry nodded slowly

“Is he ok? Is there something wrong him?” Harry asked, glancing away from the dog to Fleur.

“No, not at all,” Fleur responded. “That lovely boy is Snuffles. He is beautiful boy but has been here a very long time. One day, he stopped getting up when we brought people in. He lost hope of adoption. It has been very sad.”

Harry’s heart clenched at the thought of Snuffles losing hope someone would take him away from this place. He thought of his cupboard and how he would be if he were still stuck in that horrendous tight space. Harry wondered if he too would have lost hope.

“Can I say hello to Snuffles?”

Fleur looked shocked, her eyes gone wide. She fumbled for her keys.

“Of course, of course,” She knelt with Harry to unlock the cage. “Like I zay, he is a lovely boy.

Snuffles lifted his head as he heard the fumbling of his metal cage being opened. He looked at Harry and Fleur, and his tail thumped once on the concrete floor. Fleur cooed at him.
as she reached in to grab his collar. As she tugged gently, Snuffles got to his feet. He hung his neck low and slunk forward out of the cage. Harry stood and noticed Snuffles easily came to his waist in height. Fleur attached Snuffles to a lead and started leading the boys out of the room.

“It is best to meet away from other puppies. Too overwhelming, oz’erwise.”

She walked Snuffles and the boys out of the small room and into a tiny fenced off yard. Harry and Sirius stayed a few steps behind her and Snuffles, who kept looking over his shoulder at the two, tail between his legs.

“Ok,” Fleur started. “Harry, would you like to take ze lead.”

She handed the red rope out to Harry. He took it slowly.

“Sirius, ve will stand back and let zem meet.”

The two walked a few steps away from the boy and dog. Harry stood with the rope in his hand. Snuffles was sticking low to the ground and it wasn’t long before he was planted to the grass like he had been the concrete indoors.

“What do I do?” Harry asked Fleur.

“Get to know ‘im. Slowly sit and gently pat Snuffles.”

Harry did as directed, and slowly sunk down on the grass strip next to Snuffles. He gently reached his hand over to dog’s large black head and gingerly ran his fingers over his ears. Harry repeated the movements until the dog eventually lifted his head to look at Harry.

They sat like that for a few moments, Harry gently running his hands over Snuffle when something seemed to click in the dog’s head. Snuffles leapt to his feet, knocking Harry’s hand out of the way. Harry started to panic at the sudden movements, jerking his hands to his chest, when Snuffles long wet tongue ran itself over Harry’s face.

A startled laugh escaped Harry and he soon had a lapful of dog as Snuffles buried his nose into Harry’s neck and started sniffing. Harry’s laughter got louder and soon Sirius was joining him with loud joyous barks of his own. His neck felt completely wet as the large dog ran his nose over Harry’s face.

“Zat is why he is called Snuffles,” Harry heard Fleur say over the excited sniffing next to his ear.

It didn’t take long for Harry and Sirius to make the decision. Snuffles was the dog for them. The adoption process was quick. Fleur was close to tears, kneeling and hugging Snuffles a number of times before the papers were signed. When they were finally ready to leave, Fleur having set them up with everything they could possibly need into two paper bags, Fleur made them promise to take care of her big boy.

“I promise,” Harry said standing straight. He held onto Snuffles lead. “I can even bring him back for visits if you like.”

Fleur engulfed him in a tight hug, nodding at his words.

“I would love zat, Harry. You are a very kind boy.”
Harry blushed as she let go of him. He could feel Sirius waiting to tease him as they left the store, a sly smirk across his face.

Sirius carried the two brown bags, smiling at his godson as they walked down the street. Despite being an enormous dog who was probably much stronger than Harry, Snuffles did not pull against Harry’s grip. Instead, he contently walked between Harry and Sirius with his head held high and his tail wagging. The walk home Harry repeatedly thanked Sirius, gushing about Snuffles and how amazing this surprise had been.

They were a street over from home when Sirius stopped. Harry noticed a few steps afterwards, and gently tugged Snuffles to a stop as well. Patiently, Snuffles sat at Harry’s feet, his butt brushing Harry’s leg. His mouth was open, his tongue hanging out and his breathes panting.

“What’s wrong Sirius?”

Sirius sight was caught on a small shop across the road. The small parlor was open, and Harry could see inside the shop to its vast array of ice-creams. Sirius’s smile didn’t reach his eyes and when he looked at Harry, he jerked his head in the direction of the shop.

“What do you say we celebrate our newest family members adoption with some ice cream?”

Harry smiled shyly and nodded.

They walked across the street and set themselves on a table outside the small shop. Snuffles flopped to the ground when Harry sat down, his tail slowly wagging whenever he brushed his hands over the hound’s head. His fur was scraggly, and it felt like he had rolled in sand.

“I’ll go order while you wait with Snuffles,” Sirius told Harry. “What flavor would you like?”

“I don’t mind. Whatever you get is good.”

“Hazelnut it is!”

Harry looked at the sign above the shop when Sirius walked away. It read Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour.

They were sitting under the shade of a white and red swirled umbrella eating their ice-cream when Harry remembered their earlier interaction with Professor Lupin.

“Hey Sirius,” Harry’s ice-cream was dripping down its cone towards his hand. “How do you know Professor Lupin?”

Sirius licked the edge of his ice-cream, before quirking his lips. He paused at the question for a few moments.

“We grew up together,” Sirius started. “He went to school with your parents and me, and well, we were close. Did he never mention knowing your parents?”

Harry tilted his head in thought. There had been conversations where Professor Lupin had mentioned his parents, but it had never been any different than Professor McGonagall reminiscing to him.

“Well, after everything that happened, your parents dying and me being sent to prison, he and I lost touch.”

Sirius paused. Harry didn’t speak, sure the man had more to say.
“It was my fault. When I went to prison, I was in a really dark place. I was mourning your parents and I was so angry at myself for being stupid enough to believe Pettigrew. I just couldn’t handle seeing Remus. The guards would tell me when he had come to visit, and I just couldn’t let him see me like that, so each time, I just refused visitation. Eventually he stopped coming.”

Harry thought over what Sirius said. His heart ached for the man in front of him who had to endure so much heartbreak in his life.

“Do you miss him?” Harry asked.

Sirius hummed, nodding absentmindedly. His eyes were unfocused, and he looked lost in thought.

“You should call him. He looked like he missed you too.”

That broke Sirius out of his trance. He looked at his godson and plastered on a fake smile.

“Kiddo, you gotta eat quicker. Your ice cream is melting!”

Harry let the subject go, laughing along with Sirius. However, he didn’t miss the thoughtful looked that passed over his godfather the rest of the walk home.

Chapter End Notes

Hey!
I am going to apologise for my terrible attempts at writing Fleurs accent, because that shit was hard and inconsistent! But I wanted to put her in there to maybe set up some stuff up for later on.
So, yeah, Snuffles is a little homage to Sirius Animagus’s form, because how could I not put that in, so I hope you like that.
Thank you for all the kudos and comments, you guys! <3
Anyway, I promise there is more wolfstar and some actual drarry to come, its just been hard setting everything up! I promise I will get to it asap!
Snuffles settled in well with Harry and Sirius the following week.

Each day Harry walked Snuffles through the park across the street, played with him in the backyard, and fed him the vet approved amount. Snuffles, it turned out, ate quite a lot. By the following Sunday, the dry food had all but run out, and so had the last of the wet food.

Harry spent Sunday afternoon unsure how he was going to tell Sirius. After already having spent so much adopting Snuffles and buying all the things he needed, Harry was starting to worry Sirius would think it was all too much. There was a small part of him that thought perhaps Sirius would send Snuffles back.

That night Harry had been unusually quite throughout the meal. He had noticed Sirius shooting him worried looks, yet his godfather refrained from voicing his worries. Afterwards, he slunk up to his room, ignorant to the fear Sirius held in his eyes. Entering his room, Harry quietly shut his door and started pacing, careful not to step too hard to avoid making any noise. He began muttering under his breath and gestured with his hands as he rehearsed how he would tell Sirius Snuffles needed more food. After twenty minutes, he had worked himself up to the point of peak anxiety, convinced Sirius was about to yell at him, to blame him for everything. Harry’s shoulders were tense, and his hands were clenched so hard they had turned white.

He made his way down the stairs slowly, careful not to make any noise. He walked into the open living room and paused. Sirius was sitting with his back to Harry on the couch watching the television. The room was dark, only lit by the dull light emanating from the television which played a generic quiz show. Harry took a deep breath. He walked to the side of the couch and placed himself in the edge of Sirius’s sight while making sure he in no way blocked the television. That had never gone down well with Uncle Vernon.

When Sirius failed to notice him, Harry opened his mouth to force the words out. Before he managed though, he heard a small boof, and looked down to see Snuffles spread across the couch and Sirius’s lap. He was cramped in the small space but looked in no way close to moving. He wagged his tail as he lolled his head back to look at Harry.

“Oh, hey Harry,” Sirius said with a smile. “Want to watch with us?”

Before he could answer, Snuffles let out another small boof, as though agreeing with Sirius’s question. Sirius laughed and ruffled his ears.

“By the way, I meant to tell you. Snuffles is running low on dog food. I am going to head to the store tomorrow to pick some up, so don’t worry. Can’t have our favourite pupper going hungry, can we?”

He scratched under Snuffles chin, who started thumping his leg in response.

Harry stood still, his heart beating loudly in his ears. Then a bubble of relieved laughter escaped his chest. He couldn’t stop the smile spreading across his face as he shook his head. His eyes felt damp, and for reasons he couldn’t understand, he felt like crying.

“Oh, buddy, are you alright?” Sirius was sitting up now, looking at Harry with concern.

Harry couldn’t help how wet his laugh came out. It sounded like a sob, and Sirius quickly shoved
Snuffles from his lap, standing up to approach Harry.

“What’s wrong? What happened?” his voice was sharp, urgent, and Harry shrunk in on himself.

“It’s nothing,” Harry sniffed, hanging his head to keep Sirius from seeing his face. “I was being stupid.”

“Harry, don’t you dare say that,” Sirius placed his hands over his shoulders and shrunk down to view Harry’s face. “If something has upset you, it isn’t stupid. Please, I want to know what happened.”

With rushed, choked words Harry explained his worries about Snuffles food to Sirius. By the end of it, his face was bright red, and he expected his godfather to laugh at him.

Instead, Sirius wrapped his arms around his godson, and slowly rocked them both, hushing Harry as more tears escaped his eyes.

“Listen to me Harry. That is never going to happen. I love you and I love Snuffles, and I am never letting either of you go, alright. I promise you.”

Harry nodded into his godfather’s chest. He took a few deep breaths and settled himself.

“Are you feeling better?” Sirius asked, rubbing a thumb over Harry’s cheek.

Harry nodded.

Alright, then. Do you want to watch some telly? This bloke isn’t far of winning and I want to see if he gets the money.”

Sirius led them over to the small couch. He shoved Snuffles over, who huffed before resettling his head in Sirius’s lap. Harry stuck to his godfathers’ side, resting his head on the man shoulders. Sirius wrapped his godsons’ shoulder and ran his other hand through Snuffles fur. The family sat together like that, watching a wheel spin on the telly.

Harry woke up on Tuesday morning sweating. His window was open all the way and he had only slept with a sheet, but a mix of the summer heat and nightmares had left his bed shirt soaked. He headed straight to the shower to clean himself, knowing he would have to do a load of washing throughout the day.

Breakfast was a simple affair. Sirius had beat him down the stairs and set Harry up with a bowl of cereal. Harry sent him a quick thankyou before sitting down and drenching the crunchy flakes in milk. Harry could hear Snuffles playful barking from in the backyard.

“Harry,” Sirius tone was different to his usual cheery attitude. He leant against the kitchen sink, looking at Harry.

Harry hummed at him through a mouthful of cereal.

“Mr. Malfoy will be coming around today. He wants to run through some things with you.”

Harry dropped his spoon in the bowl. He struggled to swallow the cereal in his mouth.

“Why?” He choked out.
“Its standard. You don’t have anything to be worried about. He just needs you to answer some questions,” Sirius voice was strained.

Harry nodded. His appetite was gone.

They spent the rest of the morning floating awkwardly around the house. Harry tried to keep busy, but he couldn’t keep his mind on one set task. He went to walk Snuffles, but before he could find the lead, noticed dirty dishes in the sink and set about cleaning them. After that, he headed upstairs to help Sirius with the washing, but got halfway up the stairs when he remembered he was about to walk Snuffles. He never did find the dog lead.

When Lucius Malfoy knocked on the door, Sirius all ran down the stairs, opening it after two thumps.

“Lucius,” he greeted, shaking the man’s hand.

“Black.”

Malfoy stepped into the hallway, his cane thumping against the floor with each step. He looked around the home, sniffing the air.

“What a…,” He paused in thought. “…charming home you have. ‘

Sirius hummed, not rising to the bait. He showed Malfoy into the living room, gesturing for him to sit in the large leather brown chair. The man looked affronted at such an offer, but after a few moments, simple etiquette and manners won out and he slowly slunk himself down onto the edge of the seat.

Harry watched the whole thing happen from the top of the staircase, which was soon becoming a regular spot for his spying. His heart was pounding, and he wanted to run to his room and barricade the door. He didn’t.

Instead, when Sirius called him down, he took the stairs slowly. He made no noise. Harry peeked into the living room where Sirius was setting the coffee table up with tea and biscuits. He waited at the edge of the room behind the wall.

“Harry, come sit.”

Sirius placed a tray of biscuits onto the table top, not looking up from what he was doing.

Harry stepped into the room, his eyes trained on Mr. Malfoy. The man looked like he had been sucking on a sour lemon, his lips pinched, and his nose scrunched slightly as he looked around the room. When he saw Harry, he stood up. The movement was sudden, and for a startling moment, thoughts of punishments and pain ran through Harry’s mind, causing him to jump back a step. Seeing his reaction caused Malfoy to still, posed in a crouch halfway between fully standing and sitting. The two stared at each other for a few moments, Harry’s eyes wide, Malfoy’s calculating, before the man slowly sat back down. He put his hands up in a gesture of peace, looking like he was trying to calm a frightened animal.

Harry scowled, and moved the rest of the way to the other couch. He slumped into the seat. His face was red, and his thoughts swam to how ridiculous Mr. Malfoy thought he must have looked. Harry tried to avoid the man’s gaze, instead watching Sirius pour tea into a mismatched tea set. When he was finished and had handed out beverages to everyone in the room, Sirius sat next to him. Mr. Malfoy held his cup in his hands, before putting it down on the table without taking a sip.

“Shall we start?” Mr. Malfoy said with a drawl. He sounded bored. Like he would rather be doing
anything but this.

Harry looked to Sirius before nodding.

“Very well,” Mr. Malfoy started. “I am unsure how much your godfather has told you Mr. Potter, but I have reviewed your case and come up with a way that will grant Mr. Black with full custody.”

Harry sat forward.

“Really?” He couldn’t keep the shock from his voice.

“However,” Harry’s heart sank. “It would require you to make a statement about the abuse you suffered at the hands of you Uncle and Aunt, which, if necessary, we will use to press charges against them.”

They sat in silence after those words. Harry stared into space, his eyes unfocused. A deep fear settled within him, twisting his stomach and making him nauseous. Distantly, he could hear Sirius talking to him, could feel him rubbing his arm. The touch made his skin crawl, but he couldn’t bring himself to shrug Sirius off.

It was in the silence that Harry thought about his life with Sirius. Harry remembered when he had first stepped into the home and how content he had felt, how safe. He thought of Snuffles and the nights Harry had snuck him up to bed with him, and how Sirius definitely knew what was happening but let him do it anyway. He thought of the spontaneous dances Sirius would pull him into, or the stories he told about Harry’s parents. He thought of leaving all this behind for the cold, locked room that held promises of punishments and pain.

“Can you promise me?” Harry breathed the question, unable to make his voice go any louder. At Sirius and Malfoys looks he continued. “Can you promise me if I make a statement I won’t have to go back there.”

They shared a look and as Malfoy opened his mouth to answer, Harry cut him off.

“Because if you can’t, I won’t do it. If I do this and they win, he will kill me.”

Sirius looked stricken and close to tears, but Harry kept eye contact with Mr. Malfoy. The man stared back with a blank expression. Eventually, he lifted his chin and gave one short nod.

“I guarantee, Mr. Potter, you will not be going back to those people.”

A chill ran over Harry, and goose-bumps covered his arms. It was with that reassurance that Harry nodded. The meeting continued.

“Very well. Now before we continue, I need you to tell me everything your relatives did to you. We will not use all of it, but to represent you to the best of my abilities I need to cover all bases. I can’t do that unless I know all the facts.”

There was something within Harry that wanted to refuse telling Malfoy anything. It was a deep fear that was sunk within him after too many of his Uncles threats. How could he tell this man all the moments of pain he endured? How could he be trusted not to let Harry get hurt by them again? But, Harry knew his life with Sirius was depending on him and the truth of his life with the Dursleys. He knew, if he didn’t speak up, then this was just another victory his Uncle had over him, and the thought of that infuriated Harry.
Harry shot a look to Sirius whose expression was unreadable. Harry shook his head slightly, unsure what to say.

“Um, I don’t know, where… or what…” Harry stumbled over his words.

“Just start at the beginning. Tell me when it started, what they would do, anything,” Mr. Malfoy said in what was the most comforting way he possibly could. It still came out stiff.

Harry thought about when it had all started, but as he thought, he couldn’t be sure there ever truly was a point that things began. It had just always been. So, he started with his first memory.

“Ok, well, when I was little, they used to lock me in my cupboard…”

“Your cupboard?” Malfoy asked, alarmed.

Harry shrunk his shoulders.

“Yeah, that was my room. The cupboard under the stairs…”

Malfoy didn’t interrupt after that. Instead he listened with a blank face. His grip on his cane was so tight his hand was pale, and his lips were thinly pressed, but other than that he let no emotions lose.

Harry told him about his life with the Dursleys. He spoke of the daily chores that were too much for any four-year-old to handle and the punishments he received for not finishing. He spoke of his Aunt Petunia and her frying pan, and his Uncles punishments that usually entailed a few punches and days locked in his cupboard. He told Malfoy and Sirius things he had never told anyone, such as the time his Uncle put him in hospital with a concussion and three fractured ribs. Harry had been forced to tell the nurses he had fallen down the stairs. All the stories led up to his final night with his relatives and him running away to Sirius.

After it all, the three were emotionally and physically exhausted. Malfoy asked minimal questions and remained stoic. Sirius looked on the verge of murder and had to excuse himself into the kitchen for a breath. Harry couldn’t blame him. He had never delved into so much detail about his relatives, and the experiences were rushing back to him, causing his hands to shake.

It was late in the evening that Malfoy left, the sun sitting low in the sky. He promised to return throughout the week to get started on Harry’s statement and to meet with Sirius in preparation of the upcoming court appearance. Sirius saw him to the door. Once he was gone Harry went up to his room. He laid on his bed with tired, itchy eyes that refused to shut.

It wasn’t long before Sirius joined the two, sandwiching Snuffles between them as he reached over to hold Harry’s hand.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you everyone for the Kudos and comments!
Next chapter finally has Draco in it so stay tuned.
Lucius Malfoy spent most days at their home that week, running over Harry’s case. The days were spent gathered by the kitchen table preparing Harry’s statement. Each afternoon, after Malfoy had left, Harry would go to his room with his shoulders slumped and his feet shuffling. He would collapse on his bed the second he reached it. Most times Snuffles followed him, jumping up on the bed and rubbing his wet nose along Harry’s face. Those nights Sirius bought dinner up to him, and they ate together in Harry’s bed. Some nights he stayed, Sirius and Snuffles both falling asleep with Harry, staying with him until morning.

By Friday afternoon, Mr. Malfoy decided they had gotten enough from Harry for his statement. The words sparked relief in both Harry and Sirius. That week had been one of the hardest the pair had faced, and Harry’s nightmares were the worst they had ever been. He had been walking around with deep bags under his eyes, yawning constantly. Sirius was no better.

The court date was issued for the following Thursday. That was six days away. Just under a week. Mr. Malfoy believed he could give them a victory within one week, max. Harry tried to believe him, but exhaustion had settled deep within him. Reality seemed far away these days, and Harry was struggling to stay afloat with the emotions washing through him.

At the end of the Friday session, Mr. Malfoy collected the files that littered the kitchen table. He chatted to Sirius, scheduling the upcoming week meetings.

“I think it is best we meet every day leading up to the hearing, Black. There is no such thing as being too prepared.”

Sirius nodded along to the words. He handed files over to Malfoy. Harry began washing the plates they had used for lunch. When Malfoy had collected all he needed, he stood up straight and looked to them both. Harry was expecting to hear the usual goodbye. However, Malfoy said something unexpected.

“I was wondering if I could ask a favour of you, Black. And you, Mr. Potter.”

Malfoy didn’t sound as though he were asking for a favour. His back was straight, and he looked down at them both.

Harry stilled. He looked to Sirius who had gone pale at the words. He didn’t look surprised. Deep within Sirius, he knew there would be a price for Malfoy help. He had known ever since the thought of asking Malfoy for crossed his mind one desperate afternoon when Sirius knew he was losing the fight for Harry. Now, it seemed it was time to pay up. Sirius gave a single nod to Malfoy, his eyes calculating.

“Don’t look so tortured, Black. It isn’t that kind of favour.”

Harry quirked his head. He wondered what ‘that’ kind of favour was.

“It’s about my boy, Draco,” Malfoy said. Harry’s furrowed his eyebrows. “Ever since we cancelled our holiday, he’s been… testy.”

Sounds like Malfoy, Harry thought.
“He’s been driving Narcissa up the wall since school ended. I was hoping you wouldn’t mind him coming here with me a few days this week. We think it would be good for him to be around people his own age. Also, it will give Narcissa a break.”

Sirius mouth hung open as he thought of what to say. He turned to Harry.

“Well, I don’t see a problem with that…” Sirius said, completely baffled at the request. “Harry, what do you think?”

Harry thought no. He had enough of Malfoy at school, he didn’t want to spend any of his holidays with the boy. Surely, one of them would end up with a bloody nose within ten minutes of talking. It wouldn’t be the first time.

But then Harry thought of all the things Mr. Malfoy was doing for him, to keep Harry safe and away from the Dursleys. He couldn’t just say no… could he?

“Malf- Draco doesn’t even like me. Why would he want to spend time here?” Harry asked, hoping it would get him out of the arrangement.

Mr. Malfoy didn’t even take time to think before answering.

“I promise, Mr. Potter, my son will be on his best behaviour as a guest in your house,” Mr. Malfoy said. “I believe it would be good for him to get out more and I would like that to happen someplace I can keep my eye on him. Even if just for a day.”

Harry knew there was no way he was getting out of this. Begrudgingly, he nodded.

“Excellent,” Malfoy picked up his suitcase and cane. “Draco and I will arrive in the morning at 10 30, if that suits you both.”

Without waiting for confirmation, Mr. Malfoy walked to the front door and let himself out.

The next morning Harry was filled with dread. The moment he woke up he was exhausted and the thought of spending the day with Malfoy felt like a nightmare spilt over into the real world. Yesterday afternoon, Sirius had checked Harry was alright with the arrangement. He assured Harry he would call Mr. Malfoy and tell him they had changed their minds if Harry wasn’t comfortable, but Harry wouldn’t let him. It felt too much like cowering away and Harry wouldn’t let Malfoy have the satisfaction of scaring him.

So, as 10:30 rolled around, Harry was a tight ball of stress and Sirius was no better. The only thing keeping them from both snapping was Snuffles pawing at them for attention. They waited in silence, sitting across from each other at the kitchen table.

As always, Mr. Malfoy arrived right on time. The thud of the door only cemented Harry’s bad mood, and he sunk low into his chair, resting his arms and head on the table. Sirius walked to the front door to greet the Father and son, shooting Harry a small look.

When he walked into the kitchen, Harry thought Malfoy looked as pleased to be there as Harry was having him here. His eyes roamed the house in disgust and his lip was curled as he surveyed each room. He looked like a miniature lawyer, dressed in Khakis and a button shirt. Mr. Malfoy looked much the same as he usually did, dressed in a three-piece suit and carrying his cane and briefcase.

The man set his things down on the table top and shucked off his suit jacket.
“Morning, Black. Mr. Potter.”

Sirius nodded, and Harry mumbled a half-hearted response.

Mr. Malfoy shoved his son’s shoulder.

“Morning,” Malfoy grumbled. He barely spared a glance Harry’s way, instead throwing disgusted looks around the house.

“Very well,” Mr. Malfoy sighed. “Mr. Potter, this meeting will not require your presence. Draco, you won’t need to be here either. I suggest you both find something to do while Black and I sort things out.”

“What would you have me do, Father?” Malfoy drawled out. “I doubt there is much to do in a place such as this.”

Anger swelled in Harry’s stomach. How dare Malfoy judge his home. After all, the boy was probably raised in a haunted mansion filled with dark, incriminating relics. Harry was about to politely tell Malfoy he could go fuck himself and leave when Sirius spoke.

“Why don’t you two get out of the house and take Snuffles for a walk?” Sirius suggested.

“That sounds like a splendid idea. Boys, off you go,” Mr. Malfoy said, gesturing them to the door in dismissal.

Malfoy scrunched his nose in disgust and even Harry, who loved walking Snuffles, thought the idea repulsive. Yet, it was better than sitting around the house where Malfoy could potentially overhear details about the case Harry didn’t need him knowing. With that, Harry rounded up Snuffles.

“Let’s go Malfoy.”

The blonde rolled his eyes but refrained from responding. He followed Harry and Snuffles out the door.

The two didn’t speak to each other until they were two streets over. Harry thought things were going quite well, until Malfoy opened his mouth.

“So, do your friends know Saint Potter has fallen from grace?”

Snuffles had stopped to sniff a nearby bush, and Harry tugged on his lead to keep the hound moving. Not taking the hint, Snuffles continued sniffing and Harry was forced to stop. Malfoy stopped as well, only a few steps ahead of them.

“What are you on about, Malfoy?”

“I was just wondering if your friends knew you were a criminal. I mean, there are a lot of reasons why someone might need a lawyer, but you must have been truly desperate to go to my Father for help. Was your case too impossible for anyone else to consider taking you on?”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“I’m not a criminal, Malfoy. Like you said, there are a lot of reasons someone gets a lawyer.”

Malfoy tweaked his head to the side, still smirking that irritating smirk. How Harry wanted to punch it off his face.
“So, Granger and Weasley don’t know about all this?”

Harry huffed, managing to finally extract Snuffles from the intoxicating scent of the bush. He refrained from answering Malfoy’s question. He still felt guilty about not telling his Ron and Hermione about his custody hearing. He tried to console himself by thinking they were off enjoying themselves without having to worry about Harry and his troubles.

“So, it is bad! You would have told them if it wasn’t,” Malfoy looked delighted. “How far off prison are you? Oh, how many years are you going away for?”

“I’m not a fucking criminal, alright!”

“Well then tell me what my father is representing you for, if not to keep you out of jail.”

Harry furrowed his eyebrows.

“What, he hasn’t told you?”

Malfoy huffed and rolled his eyes.

“That would be an ethical violation on his part, Potter. My Father is not an idiot.”

Harry laughed at that, a mix of relief and satisfaction.

“So, you have no idea what he is representing me for? My god, that must be killing you.”

Malfoy looked like he had sucked on a lemon. Harry saw the outrage of not knowing eating at Malfoy as they walked. Harry let out another short laugh, and Malfoy’s cheeks began to tint pink.

“I know why he is representing you,” Malfoy finally shot back. “Your godfather is handing over the family mansion as payment. It becomes ours even if you lose. In fact, I doubt my father is even trying to win your case. Why would he bother?”

Harry froze. Snuffles pulled gently against him to keep going but Harry stayed rooted where he was. Malfoy, who had kept walking, noticed Harry had fallen back. He didn’t look back, instead waited for the dark-haired boy to speak.

“Your father said he would make sure we won,” Harry said, shaking his head.

“What, and you believed him? My father only cares about himself and his family. Don’t delude yourself Potter, he doesn’t care if he wins your case.”

Finally, Malfoy looked back, smirk on his face, ready for whatever retort Potter would respond with. He expected to see anger in the boy, unbridled and fierce like he always looked when they fought. He was not expecting the pale, shaking boy he saw.

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Harry’s breath was erratic, and his wide eyes looked at Malfoy in shock. He thought over all the things he had told Mr. Malfoy to help win their case, the statement he had made against his Aunt and Uncle. He tried to wrap his head around his thoughts as he realised Mr. Malfoy could have been lying to him about winning. Harry had not known what Sirius was paying and he certainly didn’t doubt Mr. Malfoy was capable of double crossing them. As the thought washed over him, Harry could feel his Uncle’s hands around his throat trying to wring the life out of him.

“Potter?”

Harry’s ears were ringing. He didn’t notice as Malfoy slowly approached him, and he certainly
didn’t see the concern alight on the other boy’s face. He didn’t react to the other boy’s presence. Not until Malfoy reached his hand to tap Harry’s shoulder.

“Don’t fucking touch me!” Harry snapped.

Harry stumbled back a few steps. He dropped Snuffles lead from his grip, holding his hands out, signalling stay back.

“What the fuck, Potter? What is wrong with you?”

Harry looked around frantically, and then, without warning, took off sprinting, leaving Malfoy with Snuffles on the side of the road.

The shock of the situation kept Malfoy from acting immediately as he watched Potter disappear from his view. Instead, he played the interaction through his head, uncomprehending to what had caused Potter to react so bizarrely. It was a large booming bark that broke him out of thought. He noticed Potter’s beast barking at him, its eyes focused on Draco as though rousing on him.

“What?” Draco demanded, looking incredulously at the dog.

The hound bit his pants, roughly tugging him forward. When he heard a sharp rip, Malfoy swore. He picked up the rope attached to Potter’s dog, and immediately the beast pulled him forward, just about jerking his arm from its socket.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this was a bit rushed. Thanks for all the kudos and comments!
Tracking down Potter proved a long and tiring process. Malfoy would have surely given up by now, if not for the insistent pull of Potter’s beast. The dog had its head low to the ground sniffing, completely ignoring the person that held his reins. Each time Malfoy tired, the beast pulled harshly, causing him to jump forward and keep walking.

The summer sun had turned Draco’s cheeks pink and his hair was damp with sweat. He had long since rolled up his shirt sleeves. Passing shade granted short relief from the summer sun, but it didn’t last long. He mumbled under his breath as he walked, cursing Potter and his dog for putting him through this. Yet, regardless of his discomfort, he couldn’t keep the twinge of pain aching in his chest each time he thought about how frightened Potter had looked before he took off. Draco had never imagined seeing Potter in such a state.

Even at school when he was being belittled by Draco’s godfather Severus, Potter never looked frightened. There was always an air of defiance about him. There was a fight that shone deep in Potter’s eyes daring someone to try him. And Draco did. He had been fighting with Potter ever since the boy vetoed him over friendship with Weasley. He had rejected Draco’s handshake with a cold sneer and sharp words cementing what would become one of the greatest rivalries of Hogwarts.

Though he could never admit it to others, Draco had always been disappointed by Potter’s rejection. It was why when he saw Potter with Weasley and Granger at school Draco didn’t hold back. He sniped at Potter and his friends until the other boy rose to the bait. Draco knew well how to get a rise out of Potter, and he always enjoyed the fight given by the other boy.

Sometimes, there was the odd day Potter came to school oozing misery looking for Draco with sharp words spilling from his mouth. There was always something different in Potter when he was the one starting the fights. Like his heart was not in it, and he was only looking for a distraction. And who was Draco not to comply? He shot back harsher words and violent jabs until both of them were left sore and upset, serving weeks’ worth of detention.

The heat from the pavement was starting to seep into Draco’s shoes and the beast had been leading him for so long, his legs were starting to tire. They continued along a footpath that ventured away from all manmade buildings and led them into a small forest. The trees were spaced out far enough that Draco could still see around him easily enough, but there was no hint of mankind in the area. Draco could hear the calls of birds flying above and the chirp of crickets around him, but he could not hear the chatter of people, nor the familiar rush of the city.

Soon the footpath ceased to exist, and all that marked the path for Draco was the patchy grass and dirt under his shoes. He walked until the trees became larger and dead leaves soon covered the earth’s floor. His head jerked each time he heard a new noise, his eyes searching for the threats around him. The large black dog was still attached to Draco by the rope, and he held it tightly, like it could be used as a shield should the need arise.

To the side, Draco heard the rustle of leaves. It sounded like a large creature scuffling along the forest floor and Draco let out a small ‘eep’ as he jumped violently, dropping the rope attaching him to Potter’s dog. Snuffles took that opportunity to sprint in the direction of the noise, leaving Draco behind to the dangers of the imposing forest. Draco couldn’t do more than watch as the beast galloped into the forest out of his view.

He was in the process of deciding whether to go after the dog or bolt from the area when he heard a small voice and booming barks.
“Snuffles?”

It was definitely Potter. Draco was sure, even if he could barely hear the other boy over the excited yaps of the beast.

Draco stepped through the bushes in the direction Potter’s dog had ventured in, careful to avoid stepping on anything caked in mud. His shoes were already riddled with dirt. Damp twigs brushed against him and scratched his arms, and Draco scowled as he violently pushed them out of the way.

When he finally caught sight of Potter, he saw the boy’s frame slumped against the trunk of a thick oak tree in a small clearing. Snuffles was standing over him, blocking most of Draco’s view. He stepped forward to get closer to the two, and as he did, Draco stepped on a large branch. The branch emitted a large snap, and tripped him, sending him flying into the open space. He didn’t notice Potter or Snuffles look at him as he stumbled over his own feet.

“Nature doesn’t suit you, Malfoy.”

Draco scowled as he looked up at Potter. He was ready to snap off some quick-witted remark about Potter’s lack of parents when he saw how the other boy looked. Sitting slumped against such a large tree accentuated how small Potter was. The bags under his eyes were deep and he looked like he hadn’t slept in months. Dirt covered his clothes and scratch marks marred the boy’s arms and face, likely caused when he ran off blindly into the forest.

The fight left Draco along with his breath. Instead, he just grumbled to himself, cursing the branch that had tripped him. The dog flopped to the ground and curled up next to Potter, putting his head in the boy’s lap.

“What are you doing here?”

Potter looked at Draco with calculating eyes. Draco tried not to twitch under the stare.

“What, would you rather I had let your dog roam the streets by itself?”

Absentmindedly, Potter ran his hands through Snuffles hair. He didn’t respond, and irritation was swimming in Draco’s chest.

“What the fuck was that all about, Potter? Why the hell did you run off?”

The dark-haired boy looked away from Draco. Instead, he focused intently on his hands as he patted the beast. Draco huffed at the boy’s refusal to answer.

After a few minutes standing awkwardly in the bushes, Draco moved. He walked to the other boy, his strides confident even if his feet wobble when he stepped over the branches littering the clearings floor. When he finally stood above Potter, he stared hard at the boy. Potter looked to be preparing for a fight, his eyes narrow and his mouth pressed thin. Yet, instead of antagonising the boy, Draco simply turned and sat beside him.

“I can’t believe you made me look for you for over an hour.”

Draco picked off a few weeds that were clinging to his pants. He could feel Potter looking at him.

“Didn’t ask you to follow me, Malfoy.”

Draco shot him a look which Potter responded to by rolling his eyes.
They sat together like that for a few moments, listening to the sounds of nature around them. Draco could appreciate the serenity that came with the place. The fresh air blew past them with a hint of chill, pushing leaves from the forest floor and sending them flying. The bark of the large tree brushed against his back, but it didn’t hurt. It was simply a reminder of the tree’s sturdiness.

“Is your dad really not trying to win our case?”

Potter spoke barely above a whisper and the words cut off on the last syllable, but Draco heard him. The dark-haired boy picked at Snuffles fur, eyes trained away from Draco. Still he could see Potter peeking at him every now and then.

“I never said that, Potter.”

Potter furrowed his eyebrows.

“I said it didn’t matter if he won or not, not that he wasn’t trying to win,” Draco rolled his eyes. He didn’t like the severity of the conversation, and so he reverted to what he knew. Teasing. “Is that why you freaked out? Afraid you might actually go to jail?”

He had been hoping for a fight. Instead, Potter sunk even further into himself. His shoulders were hunched, and his face was still sickly pale.

“I’d rather go to jail then where I will be going if I lose this case.”

Draco couldn’t help the twinge in his chest at those words, nor could he hide the concerned expression cross his face.

“Why is my father representing you, Potter?”

This time, when he asked, there was no malicious intent strung through his words, only concern.

“Why would I tell you, Malfoy?” Potter sounded exhausted. “You’re just going to use it against me and tell all your friends. The whole school will be talking about what a pathetic loser I am in no time.”

“Come on, Potter, give me some credit. My insults are way more original than that.”

That pulled a small huff from Potter.

“Look, I won’t tell anyone, Potter. I promise.”

And Draco meant it. He stayed quite as he watched Potter think over what he said.

“Do you remember that time we were playing football against each other and I broke your nose?”

Draco tilted his head. He did remember that game. He had been making fun of Potter’s lack of hygiene, claiming he had got it from his mother, when Potter threw the first punch. Draco’s father had demanded Potter be cut from the team, but Dumbledore claimed Draco was just as much at fault. Turns out, they had been in front of the teachers stands when the fight started. In the end neither of them was suspended from football. However, they each had to serve two weeks detention.

He had no idea why Potter was mentioning it now.

“You didn’t break my nose, Potter. It was just bleeding,” Draco said defensively, tilting his chin up. Potter gave him a knowing look. Draco huffed.
"What about it?"

"I don’t know," Potter picked some more weeds out of Snuffles hair. "I guess it was the first time I noticed your parents always come to your games."

Draco squinted at Potter, unsure where this was going. He made a gesture with his hands for Potter to continue.

Potter sighed and rolled his eyes.

"Well, I mean, your dad cares so much about you, he tried to have me off the team just for punching you. But, like, if my relatives ever saw you do that to me, they surely would have baked you a cake or some shit… or made me bake it."

"What are you on about, Potter? I just met your godfather. I’m pretty sure he would get sent back to jail if he saw me hit you. That man was giving off some serious overprotective vibes."

"No, not Sirius. My relatives, Malfoy. My Uncle and Aunt."

Silence followed those words. Draco couldn’t explain the sharp twinge in his stomach. It felt like he had been tripped, the jolt from missing a step leading his body to believe he would fall.

"What about your relatives, Potter?"

Potter let out a frustrated noise. He ran his hand threw his hair, managing to make it even messier than usual.

"That’s why your father is representing me, Malfoy. To keep me away from them!"

Draco opened his mouth, and then shut it. He felt a chill rush over him despite the heat of the day.

"What did they do?"

Potter scoffed.

"It doesn’t matter, Malfoy. This is just about making Sirius my legal guardian. They refused to sign the paperwork, and things… escalated. Now, well, I just…I don’t…"

"Why wouldn’t they sign the paperwork?"

Potter responded with a dark, dry laugh that melted into a sombre expression.

"Nothing is ever that easy for me, Malfoy. Haven’t you noticed?" He paused for a moment.

Potter could feel Draco looking at him, waiting for more.

"Apparently, my parents left me some money when they died." Potter scrubbed his face. "I only found out when Sirius came around because the Dursleys never told me. When I turn sixteen my legal guardian has access to the accounts. The Dursleys don’t want to give up custody because if they do, they lose access to the money."

Draco thought over the words. He wasn’t sure how to respond to something that sounded so serious.

"They sound like wankers," is the response Draco went with.

It drew a laugh out of Potter, a short huff that turned into deep laughter. Seeing Potter throw his head
back, eyes closed caused Draco to smile. The situation felt so surreal there wasn’t much more Draco
could to than join in laughing.

"What’s so funny?" Draco said through his own breathy laughter, shaking his head.

The question only made Potter laugh harder. All the stress pent up in Potter seemed to be seeping
out. He still looked exhausted, but the tension within him was not as intense. Together they laughed
at nothing and everything, unsure what it was that seemed so funny in the first place.

When their laughter finally died out, they sat in silence regaining their breath. Potter was the first to
speak.

“Why did your dad bring you with him today?”

“Why do you want to know?” Draco shot back.

Potter gave him an unamused look.

“Humour me,” he said.

Draco thought about lying, about making some grand story up that made him sound cooler. But, as
he thought to what Potter had told him, he realised the other boy would not care for his lies.

“Right, well, Father didn’t trust me to be in the house by myself anymore,” Draco avoided eye
contact with Potter by examining the small rip marks on his pants.

“Why not?”

Draco cleared his throat.

“Well, Father cancelled our trip to France because of your case," He wanted to stop talking and leave
it at that, but he could feel Potter wanted more from him, so he continued.

“There isn’t all that much to do at my house, and because it’s the school holidays there hasn’t been
much to keep busy with. I already finished off our library collection and you can only practice so
much Football without any opponents.”

Draco stopped and took a deep breath.

“So, a few days ago I tried to take up baking.”

Potter let out a bark of laughter and Draco felt his face heat up.

“You tried to bake something? I don’t think I would have ever imagined you in a kitchen, Malfoy.”

Draco rolled his eyes.

“Right, yes, well... there wasn’t anything else to do and all my friends are out of the country, so I
thought I would try something new. It seemed like it would be easy!”

Potter was smirking at him and Draco couldn’t keep the amusement from showing on his own face,
even as he tried to remain stoic.

“So, I was trying to bake a cake, because how hard could that be? And then, I, uh, kind of,
accidentally, set fire to the place.”
The laughter was back, and Potter had to hold his stomach as he threw his head back. Draco tried not to stare, but he couldn’t help but notice the other boy’s smile, his lips and his exposed neck. Something fluttered inside his chest, but Draco pushed it out of his mind, intent not to focus on his reaction to the other boy. Instead, he laughed along with the other until his stomach muscles ached, and his cheeks hurt from smiling.

They spent most of the afternoon in that clearing. Snuffles explored the area around them, revelling in the scents from all the different bushes, and the two boys talked about whatever meaningless topic they could think off. It felt surreal to them both, the fact they were enjoying the others company. It never seemed like something that would happen but as they sat together that afternoon, there was an unspoken truce. For those few hours, all their history of teasing and fighting was ignored, and they chatted like old friends.

It was Potter who noticed how low the sun had sunk in the sky. The light of the afternoon had taken on an orange haze that slipped through the cracks in the treetops.

“We should really get home. Sirius and your dad probably think we’ve killed each other by now.”

Draco didn’t know why he felt disappointed by those words. The thought of leaving the clearing and heading back to the real world didn’t seem so appealing when he thought about Potter and him going back to their old ways when they left. But, Draco knew they couldn’t stay here forever.

“Yeah, we should probably head back.”

As Draco climbed to his feet, he noticed the smirk adorning Potter’s face.

“What?” He asked.

“I’m sorry, I just can’t believe Draco Malfoy agreed with something I said. I really should mark this down on the calendar or something.”

“Oh, sod off,” Draco said with no real heat.

Potter picked up the lead still attached to Snuffles and together the boys walked back into town. When they reached the beginning of the footpath, Potter asked another question.

“Are you coming with your dad again tomorrow?”

The question surprised Draco, who stopped walking.

“Do you not want me to?”

“No, actually,” Potter shook his head. His eyebrows were scrunched. “I think I would like it if you came over again.”

“Oh,” Draco said. “Yeah, I can come over again tomorrow.”
When the boys finally returned to Harry’s house, Sirius and Mr. Malfoy were still stuck into paperwork. The clock in the living room read it was 10 past 5 and the afternoon sun soaked the house, the orange light seeping through the living room window. Snuffles collapsed on the living room floor immediately, his tongue lolling out the side of his mouth as he panted. Harry and Draco walked quietly into the kitchen while the two men sitting at the kitchen table continued their discussion.

“Remember, Black, that’s only a last resort. We won’t be pressing charges unless they force our hand.”

“Why not? They deserve to be charged after the shit they put Harry through. Vernon should be in jail!”

“Please don’t press charges against my relatives,” Harry spoke, drawing the attention of everyone in the room. “I’m barely making it through this court case, I don’t want to go through another.”

He stood beside Draco with his shoulders slumped. Dirt covered both their clothes and skin. The scratch marks on Harry’s face were bright red and his glasses were askew. Draco stared at the boy beside him. His eyes were wide, like he couldn’t believe the conversation they had walked into. From Potter’s reaction today, he knew this case was serious, but to hear discussions about pressing charges cemented everything he suspected about Potter’s relatives. It seemed all the tension expelled from Potter that afternoon had returned. The boy’s eyes were sunken, and his face was gaunt.

“Oh, Harry,” Sirius stood up. “I’m sorry, I didn’t know you were back.”

“What on earth have you two been up to?” Mr. Malfoy scrunched his nose as he looked at the two boys.

Harry and Draco both looked each other up and down. Draco opened his mouth to answer when Harry cut in.

“We had to chase Snuffles through some bushes. I think he saw a squirrel or something and went nuts.”

The men glanced at the exhausted dog, who continued panting on the living room floor. Draco sent a surprised look at Harry, who shook his head.

At the kitchen table, Mr. Malfoy rubbed his temples with long slender fingers. His eyes were closed.

“I think it best we call it a day, Black.”

Sirius nodded. He scrubbed his beard, the scratching audible.

“Are you ready to go, Draco?”

Draco was still staring at Harry with a puzzled expression. He couldn’t figure out why the other boy had lied for him. Harry was actively avoiding eye contact with him, focusing on the two men who
had started packing up the paperwork.

“Draco?”

“Yes?” Draco responded to his father automatically.

Lucius was staring at his son with a raised eyebrow and a small smirk on his face. Draco felt his cheeks heat up as a small blush painted his cheeks. He looked to the floor, inspecting the dirt that covered his shoes.

“What time will you be coming around tomorrow, Lucius?” Sirius pushed the chairs into the kitchen table.

“Same time, if that suits you.”

“Can Draco come over again tomorrow?” Harry asked. He fidgeted with the hem off his shirt as he waited for the answer.

Sirius sent a surprised look to Lucius. The other man looked just as shocked and sent a single nod back to Sirius.

“That’s fine, I guess.”

“Very well. We will see you both again tomorrow,” Lucius picked up his brief case and cane. “Draco, say your goodbyes. We’re off.”

Draco looked to Harry and felt the overwhelming need to apologize. He wasn’t even sure what he would be apologizing for. Today, for their past, for finding out why his father was representing the other boy. It all just became too much and guilt was swimming in his stomach, making him feel ill.

“Bye, Potter,” He mumbled instead. Then he looked to Sirius. “Thank you for having me over, Mr. Black.”

Sirius shot back an amused smile and Harry mumbled a response back to the other boy.

When they left, and it was just Harry and his godfather left in the room, Sirius couldn’t keep himself from smirking at his godson. There was a mischievous glint in his eyes.

“So, Harry,” Sirius voice was teasing. “How was your day with Draco?”

Harry groaned and turned away from Sirius in an attempt to hide his reddening cheeks.

“It was fine.”

“Well it must have been better than fine if you want him to come over again tomorrow.”

Harry threw his head back. He tried to keep himself from smiling, but he wasn’t completely successful. He went to the fridge and pulled out a carton of juice.

“He wasn’t a complete arse today, alright. That’s all. Besides, it was nice having someone to talk to about everything that isn’t you and Mr. Malfoy.”

“What, so he wasn’t mean to you today, and you decided he’s alright?”

“…yeah.”
“My dear godson, you set the bar very low.”

At that, Harry laughed, loud and sharp.

That night, as Harry lay in bed, he thought over his day with Malfoy.

His bedsheets covered up to his waist and one of his legs remained uncovered. He glasses were off, and he stared blankly at the dark ceiling. He could hear Sirius snoring down the corridor. It had become a habit for Harry to wait until the other man went to sleep before opening his bedroom door a crack. The door being shut caused him to think of locked rooms and bruises. Harry slept better knowing the door was open.

The idea he had told Malfoy of all people what was going on seemed so ridiculous to Harry. Not two weeks ago, the two had been at each other’s throat, using anything and everything against the other for whatever reaction they could illicit. And yet, today he had told Malfoy about his life with Sirius and the Dursleys. For whatever reason, Harry had trusted Malfoy. There were nerves fluttering in Harry’s chest, but he was surprised to find he did not regret his conversation with the other boy. In fact, something inside him felt lighter after talking to Malfoy.

Harry went to sleep thinking about the other boy’s laughter, unsure what the uneasy feeling building inside him meant.

The next morning came, and Harry was a mess of anxious energy. Today was different to the other mornings he had waited around for Mr. Malfoy, because this time, it wasn’t the court case he was worried about. It was Malfoy. The thought that yesterday was a fluke was rushing through Harry’s mind. Just because he and Malfoy had gotten on once didn’t mean it would become a regular thing. Right?

Harry was upstairs pacing in his room when he heard the knocking on the front door. It was Mr. Malfoy’s usual rhythm: Tap, tap…tap. Harry’s heartbeat spiked, and his hands clenched at his side. He heard Sirius greeting the Malfoys and knew he couldn’t stay up in his room any longer.

As he descended the stairs, the first thing he noticed is the two guest’s blonde hair. Like usual, Mr. Malfoy had his long hair pulled back, but unlike usual, there was no gel in the younger Malfoy’s hair. Instead, his hair fell normally, tousled and shining.

“Good morning, Mr. Potter,” Mr. Malfoy greeted Harry first, pulling off his jacket and placing it on a small hook Sirius had installed when they first moved in.

Harry noticed he had stopped halfway down the stairs, head quirked as he inspected the other boy. Shaking his head, he shot Mr. Malfoy a small smile and made his way to the bottom of the stairs. Harry noticed there was something different about Malfoy today. Rather than wearing what Harry had dubbed his miniature lawyer clothes, the other boy was dressed in a pair of black jeans and a dark green shirt. The shirt was well fitted, and accentuated any muscles on Malfoy’s biceps. It made Harry conscious of his own wardrobe, a pair of baggy blue jeans and oversized white shirt.

“Hey,” Draco said quietly.

Harry responded with a similar greeting.

It was a few moments before anybody moved from the doorway.
“Alright, let’s get to it!” Sirius said, sharply clapping his hands together.

The two adults walked quickly into the living room, already discussing the business of the day. Harry and Malfoy loitered in the hallway, standing a few metres apart.

“What do you—”

“How are—”

They both stopped talking to let the other go. Harry could feel his cheeks heat up, and he hoped his blush wasn’t obvious to the other boy. When neither of them started talking again, Malfoy tried again.

“How are you today?”

There was a pause. Then, Harry huffed, and all hints of nerves vanished from him.

“Don’t tell me you’re going to start being fake nice to me just because I have a shitty situation right now, Malfoy.”

Malfoy blinked.

“Get over yourself, Potter,” Malfoy said, looking offended. “I was merely being polite. Not everything I say is intended to piss you off. You’re just sensitive.”

“I am not! And you were definitely being weird about yesterday. You’ve never asked how I am,” Harry walked into the living room, turning his back to Malfoy. The other boy followed.

“Honestly, no wonder you and Weasley get on. Someone so much as mentions money and the other boy loses it.”

“Hey, leave Ron out of this,” Harry whipped around, pointing a finger at Malfoy.

Malfoy threw up his hands in a mock surrender.

“Christ are you always this moody, Potter?”

“Like you’re one to talk, Malfoy. Don’t think I have forgotten second year.”

They continued back and forth, sniping off comments about the other purely for the reaction. From the kitchen, Lucius and Sirius watched while setting themselves up.

“Should we be concerned?” Sirius muttered.

“Of course not. This is nothing,” Mr. Malfoy inspected a piece of paper he pulled from his brief case, ignoring the two boys in the living room.

“They do this a lot, then?”

Lucius didn’t respond other than raising an eyebrow at Sirius.

“Boys,” Lucius didn’t even raise his voice. The two stopped talking immediately. “If we want to get any work done today, you need to make yourself scarce. I cannot concentrate with you jabbering at each other all day.”

“What should we do then?” Malfoy asked.
He looked to Harry for an answer, who merely shrugged.

“‘What do you want to do?’”

“‘Honestly,’” Lucius sighed. He reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a black leather wallet. “‘There was an ice cream shop a few blocks over. Don’t come back for a few hours.’”

He handed out a $50 note to his son. Harry stared wide eyed at the money, but Draco didn’t hesitate to step forward and claim the money. He pocketed the note and quickly strode back through the living room to the front door.

“‘Let’s go, Potter.’”

Chapter End Notes

Hiya!
Hope you enjoyed this chapter, its more a filler I guess. Basically, Lucius knows his son.
Thank you for all the kudos and comments!
Hopefully an update soon, and Remus I promise!

End Notes

This is my first fic so I apologies for any mistakes. Honestly is been so long since I have read canon so I don't even know if the characters are acting oc. Any constructive criticism is welcome.
Please don't be mean :).

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!