The Vow And Its Consequences

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Summary

Dudley Dursley demands to go to the fair, which happens to be in Cokeworth, where Petunia and Lily grew up. It’s also the place of residence where our favourite dungeon bat resides. They go during the summer holidays...needless to say the vow Severus Snape swore comes into play with long lasting ramifications. For who? Albus Dumbledore? Lord Voldemort? Severus Snape? Well everyone is about to find out.
Chapter 1

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 1

Dudley Dursley's Demands

The Dursley family were sitting watching television, it was the weekend and they were like any normal family. Spending time together, Petunia and Vernon sat with a cup of tea in their hands, Vernon and Dudley sat with an entire pack of biscuits on their laps. The boy they were ignoring was trying to blend himself into the wall in the corner. His legs were shaking with the strain of trying to remain upright. He was so tired, so very hungry and sore. Dudley had seen his father hitting Harry, and since then he'd taken every opportunity to do the same. When he was actually caught doing it, he wasn't as so much as scolded, and so Dudley assumed he was free to do it. He'd been kicking Harry's legs, which were now filled with bruises. Standing in the corner watching his relatives gorge themselves on biscuits and sitting watching TV made the little boy's heart clench tightly in pain. Sometimes the boy wished he'd been killed in the accident that claimed his parents life, just like the Dursley's always insisted he should have.

"MUMMY DADDY I WANT TO GO THERE!" demanded Dudley, upon seeing a commercial for a fair opening up in Cokeworth. Petunia went pale, just hearing about the place was enough to make her shudder in revulsion. She may have grown up there, but Petunia had never been happy, she'd been bitter for such a long time she couldn't remember the happy ones. Her parents were actually buried there; she'd never been to their graves. She hated the fact they'd fawned over Lily and never saw her for what she was. She glared at the boy from the corner of her eye; no doubt they'd have done the same with Potter. Her lip curled in repugnance, well she would make sure the boy knew his place, knew what he was. By the time they were done with him he'd never forget it. The fair came once a year; her parents had taken them all when they were younger.

"How about it Petunia?!" boomed Vernon, staring at his son in pride, he didn't seem to care that his four soon to be five year old was demanding so angrily.

"Do we have to?" asked Petunia, she'd rather not go at all.

"I WANT PIERS TO COME! I WANT TO GO EVERY NIGHT MUMMY PLEASE!" cried Dudley tears beginning to brim in his blue eyes, causing Petunia to quickly to go him, soothing him calling him all manners of sickening…er sweet names. Diddy dums came up a lot, she promised to let him go, that he'd have to wait until the fair was in town which coincided with Dudley's birthday. Perhaps she'd take Dudley to see his grandparents too. Maybe now her parents understood what happened to freaks.

"What about the freak?" asked Vernon, he didn't even spare a glance at the child same age as his own trembling in the corner. So he didn't notice the green eyed child flinch at the name he was addressed with. He didn't even know his own name, all he was called was 'Freak' 'Boy' 'it' and a few times 'Potter' when he was in serious trouble.

"The nasty Figg woman can watch it." said Petunia sniffing disdainfully.

"YES!" cheered Dudley, the tears forgotten.

In choosing to go back to her hometown she was unknowingly beginning an entire new life for a
nephew she'd never acknowledged. Too bad for Dumbledore, the Vow Severus Snape had sworn to him, would come into affect in ways he could never have imagined.

Far above the sky a woman with fiery red hair smiled for the first time since she'd died. She whispered a sentence into the wind knowing it wouldn't be heard but saying it anyway, "Soon my son, you will know love and be free." and there was nobody else in the world she'd have picked. Woe to all who dare try and harm Harry. If they did Severus Snape was going to bring hell itself down upon them to defend him.

Not that the black clad man had any idea, he was at that moment teaching students at Hogwarts. Waiting eagerly until he could go home, even if it was to a run down house he'd spent a miserable childhood in. Destiny and life had put them on a new path. All that was left was to decide what they'd do with that chance and their life.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The Dursley's take their vacation - destination Cokeworth.

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 2

Returning To Cokeworth

The Dursley family made a ruckus as they lumbered from the house towards the car. The past few months had flown in, at least it had for them, for Harry every single day was an eternity. While Dudley played games, with toys and had friends over, Harry was either in his cupboard or being forced to do things no child should. Polishing and dusting furniture, mopping floors, hovering, grabbing things the Dursley's wanted. Such as drinks, food, magazines and even the remote control that they were too lazy to get themselves. Pretty soon both boys were going to be at Primary school, once the summer was over with.

Dudley had already been attending the nursery, which he hated. He always got into trouble for stealing the other children's food and hurting them, because they wouldn't give him the toys he wanted to play with. He spent lots of time in the 'naughty corner' as the nursery teachers called it. Telling Petunia had just fell on deaf ears, she didn't believe or care what they had to say. Dudley though was starting to become more cunning when dealing with the nursery teachers. Harry hadn't attended nursery, but both adults realised he had to go to school. Much to their disgust, but at least they would get peace from dealing with the freak.

"Piers!" yelled Dudley, waving his hand at his best friend, his mouth filled with crisps. He dropped the empty packet, as his friend came running towards him. Piers had a power ranger's bag on his back; he was already opening it revealing his game boy within. Grinning widely they opened the door just about to climb in, when Patricia Piers yelled her son's name.

"Piers come here for a minute sweetie!" she demanded, smiling at her five year old son. She had been worried about letting him go with Petunia at first, since he was so young. Petunia had convinced her, and really, what sane mother would pass up the opportunity for a week of peace? Especially during the summer holidays. None would. Grabbing a handkerchief she wiped her sons face, of the remainder of chocolate on him. The rat faced child protested his face going red.

"Mum!" whined Piers; did she have to do that here? Dudley was going to laugh at him now.

"I want you to behave; I don't want to hear a single bad thing has happened while you are there. I will ground you for the rest of the summer if you get up to mischief. Listen to Petunia and Vernon okay? And no wandering off." said Patricia crouching down by her son her anxiety showing.

"I promise," said Piers dutifully, as his mum fussed some more, when Dudley's mum approached he made his escape. Running for the car, he gave his mum a wave before climbing in beside Dudley, as Dudley's dad buckled them in for the ride.
"You have my numbers? If anything happens get in touch, we will come down right away." said Patricia, "This is some spending money for him." she gave over one hundred pounds without blinking. Her husband made more than enough for them to live comfortably, while she herself was a housewife.

"Everything will be fine, I'll call when we get there, let you know we have arrived safely." said Petunia soothing the worried mother. She understood she was a mother herself, its just too bad she wasn't a better aunt.

"Thank you," said Patricia smiling sweetly, once again waving at her son, who was deeply engrossed in his game boy. She handed Petunia a small suitcase that held her son's clothes and few toys he'd wanted to take.

Petunia walked away, putting the case in the boot, once that was done she only had one more thing to do before they could get on the road. It was early morning and they wanted to be there before lunch, so they could go to a nice little restaurant and have something to eat.

Petunia closed the front door behind her, not wanting the others to see where she hid her nephew. "Boy get out of there!" she yelled her voice shrill and filled with hate, something little Harry was familiar with.

"Yes Aunt Petunia," said the little boy his voice barely above a whisper. He had learned long ago to keep quiet. He was hit when he spoke, unless he was spoken to first. Even at that he was still punished for a lot of different other things. No his voice did no good, it wasn't like Dudley. He didn't get what he wanted by yelling. The exhausted little boy hoisted himself up and exited the cupboard.

"Have you packed?" Petunia asked sneering at the freak; he was the biggest waste of space in her house. If it wasn't for Dumbledore's threat she'd have dumped him in an orphanage the night he was left on her doorstep. She had actually had to defend the freak to Vernon that night.

"Yes ma'am," said Harry his voice low, staring at the floor as if it was the most fascinating thing in the world. He never looked at his family's faces; he didn't like to see the scorn and disgust on them. He heard it enough in their voices, and Petunia hated looking at his eyes. Harry didn't understand why, but he avoided looking at her now.

"Then go get it!" she hissed shoving him back into his cupboard, Harry stopped himself falling completely by holding onto one of the shelves. He was surprised when she didn't slap him, but he grabbed his plastic bag quickly. Holding his bag in front of him like a lifeline. Inside were all the clothes he had, or rather had been given. They were far too big for him; Harry had never been given anything new. He had never received a birthday or Christmas present from them.

Curling her lip, she strode back down the hallway, ready to give the freak to Mrs. Figg. She couldn't stand the woman personally, she was weird, and had far too many cats it was disgusting really. She did watch the brat, so she was thankful for that at least. She just opened the door when ringing started up.

Sighing in frustration, she turned back, jerking Harry out of the way, causing the malnourished four year old to slam into the wall silently. He made no sound, just stood there like a statue as Petunia answered her house phone. Picking it up, despite the scowl on her face she answered it with a cheerful voice.

"Hello?" said Petunia answering the call.
"Hello Petunia, I'm sorry I haven't called before, I cannot take Harry for the week. I'm in hospital; I was transferred here earlier today. The doctors want to run some tests," said Figg a rattling cough tearing through her.

"But...you promised!" said Petunia gaping at the next wall completely stunned.

"I know, I'm so sorry," said Figg breaking out in a fresh bout of coughs.

"Its fine," said Petunia lying through her teeth, "Thank you." she hung up the phone without even wishing her well. She glanced at Harry, her eyes conveying a deep loathing that made Harry wonder if he was about to be beaten until he lost consciousness again. He was peeking at her through his long messy fringe. Petunia cut it for him, as she always never spent a penny on him.

She stomped outside, making a bee line for Vernon who was talking to a neighbour that was hanging out his window in evident curiosity. Petunia gave him a tense smile before turning to her husband and hissed to him quietly, "Figg can't take the brat! Vernon what are we going to do?!” she was very angry with these turn of events.

"We will have to take the freak," grimaced Vernon not happy about it either, but nobody else could take him. His sister refused after Ripper bit him, insisting the freak was bad blood. Petunia's friends were all on holiday, Figg had been their last option and she had backed out on them.

"Boy!" yelled Vernon as Harry appeared at the door, "Get in the car." without another word, Vernon and his five flabby chins entered the car slamming it loudly. Petunia got in as well, leaving Harry to hop in by himself. His small fingers struggled to put his seatbelt on, but he managed after a few struggles.

"MUM THE FREAK IS IN THE CAR!" screeched Dudley, his face filled with sadistic glee; the freak was in for it now. He wasn't allowed out the house, never mind in the car. He was sorely disappointed when his mother said nothing to the freak. He loved it when the freak got beaten, even more when he did it.

"I know sweet tums," said Petunia ignoring Harry's existence as they drove out of Privet Drive and into London's busy streets.

Harry watched the scenery going by, amazed by the colours and different noises he heard. He didn't twitch when Dudley began to cry that he was hungry twenty minutes into the journey. He did watch the two boys longingly as they ate the food Petunia had brought with her. He didn't get anything, he'd have loved a piece of chocolate, and it must be lovely judging by how quickly they ate it.

It took them an hour and a half to get to their destination; normally it would only take an hour to get to Cokeworth. Unfortunately it was summer, and tourists were flocking in and people were going places. Vernon found a parking space as close as they could get to the hotel, and they found themselves on their way to it. "Stay here, I'll pay for the room, keep the brat out of sight." grumbled Vernon as he lumbered to the hotel's reception to sign in. He didn't want to have to pay for the freak, and he couldn't care less about the boy having a bed.

"I'm here to check in, it's Dursley." boomed Vernon loudly and proudly.

Vernon quickly paid for the room, grabbed the key card and walked away without so much as a thank you. He jerked to his family, and they made their way up to their room. Dudley and Piers were jumping up and down with childish abandon. Harry walked with them, like a ghost but his wide green eyes were glancing around with amazement. He'd never been anywhere other than
Privet Drive. He was definitely glad Figg couldn't look after him...just a little bit. Figg was okay, she did look after him when his relatives went on holiday. She was always curt with him, he could tell she didn't like him, but merely tolerated him. He had no idea she had been sent to watch over him, and that she was failing at her job glaringly so.

Dudley and Piers began jumping up and down on the bed; Vernon put their cases at the bottom before going to have a sit down. Just as he did, his work phone began ringing. It was a work phone, because nobody ever called him on it other than his work. He had no friends, merely acquaintances and people he was trying to take on at work.

Petunia listened to the conversation; her heart sank with each word he spoke. She knew he would be leaving, and she'd be stuck looking after three children on her own. "What's going on?" asked Petunia stiffly.

"I have to leave for work, the Rainers contract has been moved up. I've worked at this for months, if I don't leave now someone else will get my reward. Pet, with this contract signed I will have a company car, a pay rise, a better position. My pension will be increased as well." said Vernon looking cross between excited and unhappy.

"How long?" asked Petunia looking deeply unhappy.

"A day or two, at the most." promised Vernon, "I will drive back straight after I promise."

"Alright, don't be too long!" said Petunia, warming to the idea of more money, a company car each year and plenty of money when Vernon retired. It was more for them to spoil their beloved son with.

"I won't!" claimed the obese man beaming proudly. Grabbing his phone, car keys, house keys and anything else he thought he'd need before leaving.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Petunia takes Dudley, Piers to the fair, reluctantly taking her nephew with them.

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 3

The Fair

Petunia felt as though she was going insane, Vernon had been gone for five hours and she was ready to blow a fuse. She had given them chocolate so they would quieten down, but afterwards it had just made them ten times louder. Even when they were occupied playing their Game Boys. She couldn't send them up to her son's room or even outside to play. They weren't in Privet Drive anymore, but a town she knew all too well and a place that her son didn't. For that she was grateful, this town wasn't what anyone would consider tourist worthy. She wished her husband was here, Vernon was the only one Dudley listened too. She hadn't been able to hear her soaps because of the racket. The place was a mess too, the couch pillows were strewn everywhere and the beds were worse.

"Boy!" screeched Petunia from where she sat; she didn't even turn to see where Harry was.

"Yes ma'am?" asked Harry quietly and solemnly, walking over to her from where he had remained standing for the past five hours, beside the hotel door.

"Clean this place up!" she barked, her lip curing in repugnance at the sight of the freak. She turned the volume up on the television and proceeded to ignore Harry, as he went around cleaning the mess her son had created.

"Yes ma'am." whispered Harry, his dead green eyes didn't even look up, he immediately began doing what he was told. Not even a thought of it was 'unfair' crossed his lips, because this existence was all Harry knew. His stomach growled fiercely, he had not had anything since last night. Even at that it hadn't been enough to settle his stomach. Just some gravy and a spoonful of mash potatoes that was long gone cold.

He fixed up the area nearest to his aunt first, before half an hour later going to the beds. Thankfully neither Dudley nor Piers were on them, but sitting on the floor at the bottom of them. He had just turned down the bed, with a great deal of difficulty, when he saw it, a small square piece of chocolate. He squinted his eyes, to see if what he saw was really what it looked like. Everything was blurry to him, but he thought that was how everyone saw the world. It was the complimentary pieces left by the staff at the hotel for their guests. Harry's green eyes widened, quickly looking at the boys then Petunia. Once he realised they weren't looking at him. He pretended to fix the bed a little more, and with a deft hand he picked up the mint chocolate and slipped it into his far too large trousers.

Harry couldn't help but be excited, he'd never tasted chocolate before, Dudley always had some and he liked it a lot. He got boxes of it for birthdays and Christmas' and scoffed them all within hours. He hastily did everything else he had to do, putting the pillows back up, and then of course
replacing the lamp Dudley or Piers had knocked over.

His fingers traced the sweet in his pocket, a small wistful look around him. He quickly but unobserved made his way to the toilet, locking the door behind him so nobody could get in. He sat down on it and quickly retrieved his prize, his lips twitching in a way that would disturb even Albus Dumbledore. There was something very...Slytherin about it. Then again Harry would have to be to survive the hell that was the Dursley's household.

He un-wrapped it without making any noise, his green eyes twinkling he bit into it. His first taste of chocolate, and it was lovely, he took his time eating it, trying to make it last as long as possible. He knew it would probably be the only sweet he'd ever get. Harry did not envision a life away from the Dursley's he was too young for such a thing. He did sometimes wish he'd not survived the car accident that had claimed his parent's life.

Sighing sadly, he scrunched up the wrapper before putting it down the toilet. He flushed it and watched it disappear; once he was sure it wouldn't reappear he left the room. His tongue tracing the chocolate remains in his mouth, as his stomach finally stopped gurgling with hunger. Right now he wished he'd stayed with Figg, at least there he would've been getting hit, made to clean up and he'd be getting three meals. It was the best part of being there, even if she didn't care about him. He could see she barely tolerated him, sometimes he saw her glaring at him in anger. What he didn't understand was it wasn't anger, no Figg was jealous of the fact he was magical. He was blamed for something he had no control over - no matter where he went.

Harry jumped when Petunia shouted, but it wasn't at him, "Boy's get jackets on it's time to go to the fair!" she told her son and best friend. They had some lunch brought up by room service, but dinner she had decided, they could have it while they are there. A hamburger at the stall, no doubt they were still full from all the chocolate anyway. Petunia glared at Harry, she knew she'd have to put something on the boy. She did not want people looking at her with disapproval, she was better than them all.

Going through her sons belongings, looking for a suitable zip up jumper for him. She wasn't going to give him her son's new jackets. She found one that would have to do, grabbing it she threw it at the child. Telling him in her shrill voice to put it on, a familiar scowl on her face.

Harry stared at it completely stunned; she had never done anything like this before. The only thing that kept him even remotely warm, if he could call it that, was his blue blanket. He had it for as long as he could remember, it did nothing for the cold especially during the winter. Slipping the jumper on he nearly gasped at how soft and fluffy it felt against his skin. He never got anything like this from the Dursley's. His aunt only ever gave him the threadbare horrible clothes Dudley was finished with. The decent stuff always went to charity, Petunia always liked to feel superior to those around her. All Harry knew was cold and coldness from his family.

"Ready mum!" claimed Dudley, not even caring when he saw the freak with his clothes on. For once he was too excited to care about the freak or getting him into trouble. Piers were just as excited as him, jumping up and down wordlessly. Neither of them had been to the fair before and they just could not wait.

"Very good, now boys, I do not want you wandering off or we will turn around and come right back here okay?" she told the boy's the look on her face conveyed that she was serious. "If you get lost I want you to go to a security guard and tell them, or one of the people working at the fair."

"Yes mum," "Yes Mrs. Dursley," chimed both boys, still grinning widely, hoping impatiently from foot to foot.
"Let's go, take my hands," warned Petunia, "Move boy." she snapped at Harry before they were all out of the hotel into the cool crisp night air.

Harry could see the fair from this distance, as he walked behind his aunt, cousin and Piers. Everything was blurry but the lights and music was unmistakable. Looking around in awe his awe became complete amazement, as the music thumped around him. The lights reflect back in his green eyes, unaware he had the same look of astonishment his own mother had worn when she had been the same age as him, walking on the very path his mother and grandparents had once trod on.

"MUM I WANT TO GO ON THAT!" shrieked Dudley his eyes wide with astonishment.

"Dudley you can't go on that sweetie, you are too young." said Petunia, giving her son a very seldom glare as if to say 'Do not start here'. Dudley pouted but surprisingly did as he was told much to Petunia's astonishment.

"Look why not try the ducks, see if you can win a prize?" said Petunia suitably distracting the children. Both boy's nodded their heads eagerly, running towards it, money paid they got their sticks and both picked a duck. Receiving a blow up hammer each, much to their excitement.

"Look mum can I play!" asked Dudley pointing towards the penny arcades, she nodded and give them one pound each, to get change to play in the penny arcade. She stood watching them both with hawk eyes, as they both had fun and enjoyed themselves for a few minutes.

Harry watched them playing on things all night, his heart lurched as he felt the familiar agony of pain. Every Christmas or birthday, he would see this happiness and wonder why he didn't have it. Wonder why he was a freak, when he was no different from Dudley. Wonder again why he had survived the accident, he saw people around him with their kids treating them all equally. He wasn't Petunia's he guessed it might be how aunts treated their nephews. He had thought that for a long time. That guess was about to be blown to smithereens. When he saw something... right in front of his eyes.

"Auntie Alice please let me go on the horse!" begged a child around his age, who was begging her auntie.

"Okay, but only one more ride!' she said exasperated, it's obvious the girl had been on more than once. Harry watched the woman pay for it, smiling at her niece as if she was the sun and moon. Watched her take a few pictures of her, as the girl waved back grinning widely.

Harry felt his throat constricting, why was he such a freak? Why did they think he was a freak? He was no different from Dudley. Ripping his eyes away from the sight in front of him, his heart aching more if possible. He dutifully followed his aunt and the boys as they went around the fair.

"What do you want wee one?" asked a man, Harry's head jerked up, realising he was at a van selling food. The smell made his empty stomach roll as it always did when he was making breakfast. He saw his aunt glaring at him, and he knew he was supposed to answer.

"Nothing, no thank you," he said swallowing thickly, as his stomach growled fiercely in protest to his statement.

The man in the van frowned; the three year old looked too skinny, if he had known his true age he'd have been more alarmed. As it was he had no idea, and he quickly put up Petunia's order and they moved on.

Darkness had well and truly descended on them, with the lights though it was deceiving. The boy's
went on a few more rides after their burger and chips, before Petunia finished off the night with a dummy and candy floss for them. Her hands were full of trinkets they'd won at the fair, or she had won for them. Teddies, balloon's, and of course their blow up balls and hammers. The older children were just beginning to venture in, and it was getting loud with drunks or that's what Petunia called them. She quickly began ushering them out the fairground and back towards the hotel.

"MUM I WANT TO GO EVERY NIGHT!" insisted the stubborn spoiled five year old.

"Let's wait until daddy gets back." said Petunia as she gratefully opened the door of their hotel room.

"NO MUMMY I WANT TO GO EVERY NIGHT!" Screamed Dudley, his eyes tearing up, and Petunia knew a tantrum was going to start. Harry edged away; knowing when Dudley got like that it was always him that suffered. Dudley hated being told no, and he prayed his aunt would agree.

"Alright my sweet-tums! We will go every night," said Petunia soothing her tearful son, petting at him, and giving him his prizes with a smile on her face.

The waterworks stopped immediately, and Dudley smugly stared at Piers who was staring at him in awe. When he tried that with his mum it never worked, both of them grinned and ran of to play with their toys.

Soon after Petunia sent both exhausted boys to bed, tucking them in and wishing them goodnight. Hoping her son did not pee the bed again, not here, it would be embarrassing. Exhausted herself, she turned the lights off, locked the door and made her way to bed. As always ignoring Harry's existence, she didn't care what he did.

Harry stood still for half an hour, before he heard the snoring; he knew Dudley would be up before his aunt. Dudley was his alarm clock; he made so much noise getting up that it woke Harry. Looking over at the couch longingly, he sighed and lay down on the floor, even the small mattress in the cupboard was better than this. Even if it was filled with holes, it was better on his battered body. Regardless, it was a weight of his feet, as he curled up shivering at the cold. The top half of his body was warm for once, since he still had the jacket on. Eventually the soon to be five year old fell asleep, wondering what he would get for his birthday. Dog treats? A coat hanger perhaps? Or maybe more of Dursley's old cast offs...he knew better than to expect anything now though.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Harry and Severus meet for the first time, will things finally work out for Harry?

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 4

The First Meet

It was going on the third day since they'd come to Cokeworth, Harry really was wishing he had stayed with Figg. Dudley and Piers had jumped him five times already, he was in so much pain and as always there was nothing he could do about it. Not only that but he'd had nothing to eat for three days, not since he'd had his small piece of chocolate. Everything was beginning to blur, and his body felt as though it was shutting down. The dizzy spells were becoming more and more frequent. Vernon had not made an appearance or phone call, and Petunia was in a foul mood, and Harry again paid the price for it. He was nothing but a punching bag for a family who hated him, and liked taking their frustrations out on.

"Petunia?" enquired a voice, as they made their way out of the hotel, Dudley and Piers wanted chocolate, something the hotel didn't provide. So she was on her way to the shops to get them something to stop her son from whining more. Only Vernon could control their son and more often than not Vernon just gave in like herself.

Petunia turned around and her eyes widened in surprise, she recognized her, only just she was so different from when she'd last seen her. "Sarah?" asked Petunia gobsmacked, she had left to go to America just fresh out of high school, at the age of eighteen. Sarah had been a friend to her during high school. Needless to say she had not expected to meet her here of all places.

"It's nice to see you again!" she exclaimed smiling happily at her old school friend. "Your sons?" she asked gesturing to the three boys she had beside her.

"Oh no, only Dudley is mine," said Petunia proudly, beaming as she clutched her obese sons shoulders. "There are friends of his." she didn't mention Harry being her nephew or being Lily's. She wasn't about to mention her sister, she loathed her more than anything else, even Harry.

"Are you staying here?" she asked looking at her watch.

"I am," she said smiling, it wasn't a smile Dudley was used to seeing, no it was actually a genuine one.

"Well I hope we get to talk some more!" she said, it was obvious Petunia was busy.

"We can now," Petunia immediately replied anything to get some peace and quiet from the children. She opened her purse and fished out ten pounds before handing it to her son. The shop was on the corner, there was no need for the children to even cross the road. Petunia warned them to stay nearby, and not to go too far.
"Yes mum," chortled Dudley staring at the ten pound his face almost splitting in two, he could buy so much with this. Piers was jumping up and down, he really loved spending time with the Dursley's. They were so much better than his own parents, who were very strict and didn't let him off with half of what Dudley did.

"Go on then," said Petunia shooing them off, as she wandered off towards Sarah eager for a good conversation and a gossip. They made a bee line for the pub inside the hotel and quickly ordered drinks. Harry backed away towards the stairwell, determined to stay out of sight. He couldn't take much more of his cousin's abuse, the jacket his aunt had given him had been ripped and torn, before Dudley had snatched it off him and flung it away somewhere. It had saddened Harry greatly, for he had really liked it. He had been so warm in it, and comfortable he would miss it.

He wandered through the halls, lost in thought, his mind replaying the scene from three nights ago. Wondering once more, what made him a freak? Why did his aunt choose to treat him that way? Why couldn't she have been more like the girls auntie from the fair? A broken sigh left his lips. Would he have been a freak to his parents too? He didn't like to think so. So deep in thought he passed a tray sitting at a door in the hotel, it broke his concentration, and he looked back, and his eyes widened in shock and amazement. The plate was almost full of food! Only one bite had been taken out of the burger.

Harry couldn't help but drool over the food, looking around he found the corridor deserted. Taking a deep breath, he nabbed the burger from the tray and ran until he came upon a stairwell. Exhausted, breathing heavily, and dizzy once more he slumped onto the steps his green eyes glinting in pride at his own accomplishment. The burger was bigger than his hands, it barely held onto the ends as he bit into it. By the time Harry had finished the food, his stomach was trying to rebel against so much food. Harry however, refused to let it. The burger had been the most he'd ever had, and he'd be damned if he let it come back up. Even if it made his stomach feel very full and uncomfortable. With all the pain Harry felt everywhere else, it was nothing really. Perhaps it had been worth coming here after all, he'd never had a burger before.

Harry remained sitting on the stairwell, ignoring the people that went by; he didn't get the opportunity to just sit down often. Petunia and Vernon would blow a fuse if he sat down, then plant chores on him. Calling him a lazy freakish brat and that he should have died with his parents. The words still hurt him, despite it always been screeched at him as far back as he could remember.

Dudley and Piers had already spent the money on food and a few comics, the food was gone and the comics read and they were both getting bored. When Dudley was bored, he always started his 'Harry Hunting' today was no different. It was going to be ten times easier when they were at school. Of course he knew he couldn't do it in front of the teachers. Dudley might hate school work, but he was sly when he wanted to be. If a wizard or witch saw him, they'd compare him to Crabbe and Goyle both senior and junior. Thankfully Dudley Dursley didn't have magic in which to torment Harry with.

"Let's go find the freak," decided Dudley, it was the only time he did any proper exercise, when he was trying to chase after Harry.

"He could be anywhere," said Piers more interested in the magazine than hitting Harry, the only reason he did it was because Dudley did. He knew his parents would have taken two layers off his backside if they knew what he did to the boy. He didn't understand why Mrs. Dursley let Dudley do it, yet his parent's didn't. It couldn't be that bad if Dudley's parents let him could it?

"He will be hiding in the hotel," said Dudley smugly, the freak never went far, unless of course he
was being chased. He loved tormenting the freak, and seeing him hurt, his dad did it all the time. He wasn't happy that Piers didn't want to join in, so he snatched the magazine from his hands and glared at him.

"Come on then," said Piers suddenly, he didn't like it when Dudley got angry at him. The last time he had punched him in the tummy, he'd gone home crying. Dudley had offered him a chocolate bar as an apology and it hadn't happened again. Piers wasn't about to let it either, he had so much fun with Dudley, he was visiting the fair! Every day of the week. His own parents wouldn't have done that, and Dudley's mum always gave them lots of sweets and food.

Dudley and Piers spent the next hour looking for Harry, for two five year olds they didn't give up easily. Normally children were easily distracted, but not these ones, they were determined to find him.

"Hey freak!" yelled Dudley a cat caught the canary grin on his face, Dudley didn't even know Harry's first name. He only went on what his parents called him, 'Boy' or of course 'Freak' he did not call him 'Potter' because he hadn't been around when it had been screeched at the child. He was only called Potter when they caught him using magic, which admittedly wasn't often. It was too busy keeping the malnourished child alive. It only came out under extreme circumstances when Harry was particularly emotional.

Harry turned to see Dudley grinning at him, his heart sank, oh no, not again, his hooded dead green eyes stared at them. Maybe he could outrun them now that he wasn't dizzy anymore. He had to try, so without more ado, he turned around and bolted down the stairs staying as far ahead as he could from his cousin.

He ran down the stairs, level after level until he got to the bottom, before running through the doors and down the corridors. Looking around fanatically, he realized there was only one way he could go to get out of their sight - out of the hotel. Running as if the devil himself was on his heels, he glanced back to see if he had succeeded in tricking them.

Stopping completely exhausted, his hands planted on his knees for support, as he drew in large gulps of air. Then he heard them, he hadn't thrown them off at all, looking back he saw them burst out of the hotel looking for him determinedly. Moaning, Harry took off down the road once more, passed the shops, across the roads and into the more...bleak area of Cokeworth. The houses were shabbily built, and some were even boarded up.

Eventually Harry's temporary energy began to wear off; the adrenaline no longer helped him. Dudley and Piers were gaining on him, and he knew soon he would feel even more pain. He had not been able to sleep last night, not for the pain in his hips, back and stomach and legs. It's where Dudley liked to kick him the most.

Harry jerked forward, as hands shoved him to the ground, his head smashed against the concrete. His arms weren't even given the time to comprehend what was happening, to actually reach out in instinct. Which showed just how quickly the entire thing had gone down. Harry felt nothing for a few brief seconds, before pain made himself known to him. Not only that but he could feel blood gushing down his face and into his top. Harry curled into a ball, shielding his newly injured head, but was surprised when no harm befell him. Instead he heard a voice, speaking so menacingly that he wished he could disappear. He had no doubt the man was talking to him, nobody spoke horribly to Dudley Dursley.

"If you dunderheads do not leave this instant..." said a voice, so sharp and fierce that Harry shuddered instantly. His voice had trailed off so menacingly that there was little doubt about what he meant. Even Vernon had never scared Harry so much, with his voice alone. He heard Dudley
whimpering in fright, much to Harry's astonishment. Peaking through his fringe, he saw the backs of the boys and heard the thudding of feet thundering off, the sound getting lower and lower the further they ran away.

Severus' eyes narrowed in on the child, he looked to be around three years old, and his clothes were far too large for him. He was a smart man; he realized the child obviously lived with the fat dunderhead he'd just chased off. Either that or the family knew each other, and this child received his clothes. He had always worn second hand, mismatched clothes as a child, but at least they'd fitted him. This child's clothes were almost swallowing him whole. Then he saw the blood, silently swearing, he removed a black handkerchief with S.T.S embroidered on it. Slowly approaching the child, but as he touched him the boy recoiled from his touch as if he had been burned violently him. Severus froze, it wasn't just because the child flinched so violently from him. No it was the magic he could feel emanating from the small child. No three year old child should feel that strongly of magic, normally it took three or four years at Hogwarts for magic to feel that way.

"Its okay child, I just want to look at your injury," said Severus soothingly, if any Hogwarts student had seen or heard him, they would have fainted. He wasn't by any means what the students considered a good teacher. He never spoke softly like that, but what they failed to understand was how dangerous a subject like potions was. Each professor of potions, had lost a few students in their times as a teacher. Even Slughorn had, and he wasn't talking about Myrtle. Severus' record was unblemished, and that's the way he wanted it to remain. He'd caused enough death as a servant of the Dark Lord.

"No," cried Harry, flinching away once more as he scrambled to his feet, running away from the kindness. Nobody had spoken to him like that before, instead of comforting him Harry just felt scared. His mind barely processed the kind words, all he could hear was the harsh voice telling Dudley to leave. As he ran he felt something in his heart tug, as if he missed something or someone terribly. At the back of his mind, something was yanking to get free, but for the life of him Harry couldn't think of what.

Severus watched the child get up, his concern for him churning in his gut. He was obviously extremely abused, to flinch before he had actually touched his skin. If the clothes were anything to go by he knew he was right. He had also noticed the child wouldn't lift his face up, wouldn't meet his eyes. Unfortunately he couldn't jump to conclusions. Quite a lot of people around here, couldn't afford to feed their children never mind cloth them. The child might have also been warned against strangers help. So before the child could get entirely out of reach he cast a silent tracking charm on him.

He'd observe him; if he was abused then he would step in. He couldn't let social services know, not with the child's magic already active. The boy would have to be taken in by a Wizarding family. Sighing in irritation, he cleared his mind, and went shopping he could have just called a house elf from Hogwarts but he liked cooking, it was similar to potions.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Hurts and Impending rescues

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 5

Shocking Information

Petunia was glad to have bumped into a good friend, her headache was gone, and she felt better about everything. Then again it might have something to do with her being a little tipsy. She'd been speaking to Sarah sharing her story with her old friend. How she'd gone off to London, taking up a typing job, how she'd met Vernon who was surprisingly at one point, lived in Cokeworth too before moving to London. She went over their engagement, and how romantic 'Her Vernon' had been when he proposed. How they'd moved to Privet Drive and had her little sweet-tums Dudley. Sarah said nothing about Lily for that Petunia was thankful. She doubted the girl would believe her if she said Lily had been a drunk, getting in a car crash. No Lily had been smart, and everyone in Cokeworth new that. It made her hate this small town even more, and she couldn't wait to go home. Turns out Sarah had married young, had a child of her own before divorcing and coming home. Her little girl was with her grandparents, as she house hunted, she had just signed out of the hotel before bumping into Petunia and planned on staying with her parents now that they were back from their holiday.

They soon parted ways; Sarah had to get back to her seven year old daughter after all. Petunia had called Dudley and Piers in; she noticed they were a little pale and shaken. She was about to ask them what happened, when she caught sight of Harry. Her jaw fell, before a curl of repugnance appeared on her face. "Boy!" hissed Petunia furiously, grabbing him by the collar and bodily dragging him up to the rooms. She was glad nobody was around, her face was pasty white. She couldn't let anyone see the freak like that! Blood was running down his face at an alarming rate. She didn't even feel a pull of sympathy for the whimpers coming from him, or the tears running down her nephews face. She was just furious that he dare show his face like that, especially here! She couldn't just put him in his cupboard and leave him.

"M'sorry, sorry," whimpered Harry knowing he was in big trouble, he knew without a doubt if they were back home, he'd have already been thrown in his cupboard. Petunia inserted the card into the slot and bodily dragged Harry through the rooms and flung him into the bathroom.

"Clean yourself up you useless good for nothing freak!" snarled Petunia throwing him the towel before walking out.

"Mum?" questioned Dudley his eyes were wide, normally he was happy to see Harry thrown about. Right now he just felt scared, by the man and the way his mum was snarling. He was after all only five years old, and thanks to Petunia and Vernon, who were trying to be 'Normal' were what people would call 'Monsters'. What kind of mother let her son see her treat a child her son's age so despically?

"Go play sweetie, I'll order some nice hamburgers from room service for you both," soothed
Petunia smiling comfortingly at her son. Her eyes were still dark as her thoughts were still on the freak. She knew she wasn't going to be able to take the freak with them tonight. Or any other night, that dent in his head would raise questions to why it hadn't been seen to by a doctor. She was seething, the freak ruined everything all the time, and the boy deserved everything he got in her opinion. Her eyes narrowed in satisfaction just wait until Vernon got here. He would put the boy in his place, she would, but she hated touching the freak. She spoke on the phone briefly before putting it down, glaring at the bathroom door, waiting on the boy coming out again.

"Room service!" someone called as they knocked on the door, bringing Petunia out of her thoughts. She quickly answered, giving him a tip before she closed the door on him. She went through to the bedroom and handed her son and Piers the food. Piers was less enthusiastic she noticed. Perhaps she shouldn't have gotten so physical with Potter while he was around. Who knows what he would end up telling his parents, a hundred explanations rushed through her head as she left the room sitting down with her own dinner. Dudley knew better than to open his mouth, she'd made sure of it. Chocolate was a good motivator to have against her son.

Harry fell with a thump, against the bath as Petunia slammed the door behind her. His vision was impaired no only by the blood but the dizziness was making him see double. He must have sat there for what seemed like an hour, but in reality it was only ten minutes. Harry hoisted himself up of the floor, grabbing hold of the sink and bath as the world span around him. It was bad; even Harry's young mind realized this. He had bumped his head a lot over the years. Either being pushed or shoved, or out right thrown - especially into his cupboard.

Harry turned the tap on, wetting the towel that had been thrown at him. Squinting at the mirror, he winced at the state of himself. He couldn't see properly, but what was evident was a lot of blood and a huge blooming bruise spreading across nearly half his face. Delicately, he began wiping away the dried blood, as new oozing liquid replaced it. Agony flared through him as he wiped at the wound, but he had no more tears to cry. After cleaning his face a few times the blood seemed to stop, much to Harry's relief.

His mind drifted back to the man, he realized now of course that he had been talking to Dudley, threatening Dudley. He had made Dudley scared! He'd made him run, nobody had done that before. His little mind found the entire thing amusing; his green eyes were dull as he continued to think of the strange encounter. The man, when he wasn't talking scary had been very kind. He regretted running, it would have been so nice to stay and listen to him talk. Little one, he recalled was what he'd been called. Nobody in his life had ever spoken so nicely to him, never mind with such a name. Little one surrounded his mind, echoing in the man's voice as a small smile appeared on his face. He would never forget his voice, or the words he'd spoken. Harry would make sure of that, he was so tired he just wanted to lie down and sleep. He knew he couldn't though; Petunia would kill him if he did. It was a good thing or Harry wouldn't have woken up. A wound as severe as his would have ensured that.

Harry had no idea at that very minute the man he was thinking about…was worried and thinking about him too. Even if he had known, in his current mind set he would not have believed it. Harry didn't believe anyone could love him. His life, such as it was; was all he knew.

Harry finally ventured from the safety of the bathroom, leaving the bloodied towel in the bin. Knowing better than to leave it in the sink, Petunia hated anything out of place. He should know he was the one having to tidy up after them.

"You are staying here boy!" snarled Petunia, as she gathered her purse and handbag, making sure the things she needed was in there. She realized the boys still had her mobile phone. Patricia had called earlier, wanting to speak to Piers and she'd forgotten about it. She could only hope they hadn't run up a large bill on it. "Boy's get ready to go!" she said in her normal over cheerful voice.
"Yes ma'am." said Harry leaning against the wall as the world began to distort.

"Ready mum!" yelled Dudley cheerfully obviously over what had happened to him.

Piers came out too, still ominously quiet, he'd been genuinely frightened by the man and the way Petunia had been. There was a difference between him and Dudley hurting the boy, than seeing an adult bodily dragging him across the room. He realized that if she could do it to the boy, she could do it to him.

"Then lets go," beamed Petunia, inwardly though she was worried about Vernon. She had not been able to get a hold of him. Not on his mobile phone, not at the house and not at Grunnings where her husband worked. She began to wonder why he wasn't getting in touch, and just what the hell he could be doing. Having an affair, injured, hurt or dead whirled through her mind.

Severus entered his small, shabby but comfortable home, he had the money to move he just didn't care to. He was alone, and he always planned on being that way. Spinners end was a perfect location for one such as himself. Not many lived in the area anymore; those that did were around his age. His mind wasn't on his food he was currently putting away. It was on the small three year old he'd seen just a few short hours ago. The head wound had looked particularly bad, if it wasn't seen to well…he dreaded to think what would happen. He might not like children in general, but he would never wish them harm. He would never turn a blind eye to their suffering either.

Shaking off his thoughts, he began preparing himself a meal trying and failing to forget about him for now. Unfortunately the food tasted like ash, his conscience was getting the better of him he realized. Pushing it away, huffing in exasperation, he stood up determined to get to the bottom of it. That way he'd know for sure and he could disappear back down to his potions. What still got to him was the magic, the feeling of it; the child was going to be extremely powerful. He wouldn't be surprised if he was already displaying accidental magic. Not that for a three year old it was unusual, but by his reckoning it was powerful accidental magic not just summoning things like children did at that age.

It was the prefect time of day to nose around; it was going on seven o'clock. The area was clouded in darkness; his wand fell into his hand with one swift movement. He then activated the beacon, which would lead him towards the tracking charm he'd placed on the child. He hoped he was wrong; he did not want to have to remove a child from its parents. As Head of Slytherin he knew that removing them was sometimes worse than the abuse. They believed they'd been dumped, that they weren't wanted; some preferred the abuse to being outright abandoned. It was a sad reality, and one that Severus was all too familiar with. He (and the head of houses at Hogwarts) was used to dealing with abuse in a child eleven and up, not such a tender age of three.

The beacon pulled him in the right direction; if he went in the wrong direction he'd feel cold. He knew he was on the right path, since he could feel the warm glow (heat) of the spell. He was surprised it didn't lead him far, more so when it appeared the child was in a hotel. Which meant he might not even be from Cokeworth, following the spell he frowned, as he tried to decipher where the child came from with his accent. To be frank the child had sounded too terrified, and he'd only spoken one word.

He stooped abruptly outside the room the child was obviously in, taking a note of the door number he ventured back down the stairs. Making his way to the receptionist he demanded in his usual teacher voice, "Who are the people staying in room seventy five?" it booked no disagreement. He thought about stunning her or compelling her to do what he needed.

"-I can't tell you sir," stuttered the poor woman, almost shaking, completely intimidated by the man before her.
Severus glared at her, but this was purely for show, he already had the information he needed. Her mind was an open book, and he had not even had to delve too far. People had been calling the reception complaining about the noise coming from the room. The Dursley's, it was not a name familiar to him. It wasn't a Wizarding family either, nor a Muggle born families name he knew. Being a teacher so long he knew each and every name of his students.

Now he wondered what to do, become invisible and observe the family? Or did he just cast a diagnostic spell? That would tell him everything he needed to know. He sneered at the woman before turning and leaving. He stood outside the hotel wondering what to do, his mind made up he went back home. He would need to prepare, in his rush to come here he had not brought anything with him. It wasn't often Severus Snape, potions prodigy, youngest potions Master ever, went anywhere without his beloved Potions.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Severus figures it out.

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 6

Shocking Revelations Long Time Coming

Severus Apparated home, despite it not being far from the hotel. He had made his mind up, he was by no means a healer but he knew how to cast a diagnostic spell. After all the times he'd been to see Poppy as a student then later as a teacher, never quite willingly, but the woman was like a bloodthirsty hound. She could pick someone feeling slightly ill out of a line. She was definitely good at her job. Severus shook of his thoughts as he grabbed his potions case, grateful he continued to brew the concealing potions, it turned someone invisible until the antidote was swallowed. Unlike an ordinary invisibly cloak, there was no magical sight that could give you away. He'd tested it during an order meeting, he'd entered with the potion in his system and even moody and Dumbledore hadn't noticed him. Once he had everything he could possibly need, he swallowed the potion and Apparated again.

With swift movements he backed away into the darkness, avoiding the Muggles coming his way. Sneering at them in a way only Severus Snape could, despite the fact they couldn't see him. Once they were gone, he looked around again before making his way back into the hotel. He was actually glad he came tonight, since they were not from around here, he had only a limited amount of time before they would leave. Severus stalked up the stairs to the room where the child had last been in, absent were the robes that usually billowed around him. Severus had no idea what awaited him in there, he was simply put in for the shock of his life.

Slipping his wand from his holster, he muttered a charm that would let him know every occupant in that hotel room. The results weren't what he expected, his brief confusion turned to rage so potent that if Muggles had been near they would have felt it. What kind of parents left a three year old child alone in a hotel room? His lip curled in disgust an image of his own parents rising to the forefront of his mind. They were probably out drinking, leaving the child by himself. The child should be at the hospital getting that cut checked.

Clutching his wand tightly, he closed his eyes and murmured a low 'Alohamora' and he slipped into the room. The door closed with an almost soundless click, as Severus observed his surroundings. The room was in total darkness, making it almost impossible for him to see anything. He stood indecisively for a few seconds, before he made up his mind. The child was magical so if his magic was detected at least they Ministry couldn't 'reprimand' him. That's all that would happen; Albus Dumbledore would never allow anything to happen to him. He was too valuable as a Potions Master and of course as his spy. He cast a small 'Lumos' that lit the area in front of him it didn't take him five seconds after that to find the child. He was lying slumped against the wall, curled up sleeping. Cursing angrily, he stalked over to the child, noticing the blood stained clothes. The wound was very bad, blood still oozed from the crater in the child's head. The bruise was taking up residence on nearly half his face, he definitely should have seen a doctor, and most
assuredly shouldn't be sleeping. He was no Medi-Wizard but even he knew someone who'd
discovered he should've been sleeping. He was no Medi-Wizard but even he knew someone who'd
recently hit their head shouldn't be allowed to sleep.

Pressing his cold hand to his forehead, he noticed the child was abnormally warm. A fever he
guessed, the child didn't stir which wasn't good at all. His worry it looked hadn't been for nothing,
this child was evidently neglected at best or worse abused. He pressed the tip of his wand against
the child's forehead and started whispering the words to the diagnosis charm, his wand trailing
down his body. A scroll unfurled from his wand, as he heard people outside in the corridor. He
paid them no mind, as he read the results in front of him. It confirmed every single one of his
suspicions, the child didn't need a Muggle doctor he needed a Medi-Wizard and urgently.

The parents be damned, he had to get the child to St. Mungo's immediately, and he was just about
to lift the unconscious boy when the door rattled. Cursing silently, he whispered 'Nox' and his
wand light disappeared just as the door opened. If he'd been shocked by the child's injuries it was
nothing upon seeing the woman when the lights were turned on. He knew that face, and for once in
his life Severus Snape was stunned speechless. His eyes closed in horror, as he finally connected
the dots and put everything together. The boy beside her was definitely not Harry Potter, he did not
have the tell tale scar upon his forehead. So it had to be the boy on the floor, this child was not
three years old but five. He had been so wrong; he understood now just how badly he needed a
healer.

"BOY!" screeched Petunia, staring at the boy on the floor with loathing that would have impressed
even Tobias Snape.

Severus stood up his entire being shaken with rage, this was Lily's son! He had sworn to protect
him. He should not have to protect him from his own bloody family. Grabbing the vial, uncorking
it he swallowed the anti-dote. He appeared as quickly as he'd disappeared earlier, his glare was so
ferocious that Dudley Dursley wet himself right there and then. Petunia paled and stepped back,
she'd forgotten about this freak, she could barely believe he was here in her hotel room!

"D-d-Dudley go through to the room," squeaked Petunia wide eyed, never removing her eyes from
Snape's towering enraged form.

Dudley didn't need to be told twice, Piers bolted right behind him just as terrified.

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't just hand you to the Dementor's to receive the kiss for
what you've done to Harry Potter, the most beloved boy in the Wizarding world?" asked Severus
his voice full of fury.

"He's a freak! Just like Lily was! She had to go and get herself blown up and we got landed with
him!" shrieked Petunia at the top of her lungs, red faced she stared defiantly at Severus, refusing to
feel guilty.

"Do not insult Lily in front of me," snarled Severus, his wand rising without him even being
consciously aware of it. Lily had always been his weak spot, even as a child. She had been the only
bright thing in his dull dreary life. He had loved her, unrequited as it was, it had never changed. He
had sworn an oath to protect her child. Dumbledore had told him the Dark Lord was not truly
defeated. He knew of the Prophecy, and right now the depth of his feelings he felt for the little boy
on the floor scared the hell out of the usually cool and reserved man.

"Do you know what it was like to wake up one normal morning and find the freak on my
doorstep?" she shrieked, her eyes widening at the sight of the raised wand. She wasn't stupid
enough to raise Lily's name again. She knew this freak had adored the ground her sister walked on,
with drunks for parents it was no surprise he'd seek out another freak.
"You are not normal," said Severus furiously, his magic lashing out, light surrounding the room, scaring Petunia even worse than when the man tried to kill her with a tree branch. She hated the freakishness! She just wanted to be normal, was that too much to ask? Yet inside she quailed with fear, she'd heard about the Dementor's she didn't want that. Plus her Poor Dudders would be left an orphan. "What you have one to that boy," snarled Severus pointing is long dexterous finger towards the prone figure on the floor. "Is not normal, if he does not get treatment he will die, YOU will have become a murderer, and YOU deserve life in prison. Either prison you end up in would be hell on earth. You know what prisons do to child killers, yet it would be mercy compared to what the Wizarding world would do to you." Severus was in Petunia's face now his voice low, yet still incredibly threatening.

Petunia paled drastically, her face pasty white, she looked over at the freak, she hated his very existence but she couldn't believe he was nearly dead. Snape was probably just messing with her, getting in her head, very successfully too.

"What would you do Tuney if I spelled all those wounds from your nephew, to your precious overweight, disgusting, sprog?" sneered Severus, he had been spending too much time with Minerva, she was the only one that used the term 'Sprog' a Scottish term if he wasn't very much mistaken. Ironically enough if he thought back, he'd realized it had been about the very same boy.

"You wouldn't dare!" choked Petunia, stepping back terrified, almost wanting to run and protect her son from the freak but she was rooted on the spot in fear.

"I wouldn't dare?" sneered Severus, his lips twitching, she knew what he was capable of yet she actually had the gall, the audacity to say he didn't have what it takes to do it? "I. Wouldn't. Dare?" he enunciated each word his face turning completely impassive.

"I didn't want the brat Snape," spat Petunia, "The crackpot old fool forced us to take him! I should have listened to Vernon and had him drowned the second he landed on our doorstep!"

Severus could barely believe the words coming out of Petunia's mouth, he knew she'd been angry at the fact she couldn't come to Hogwarts, and she'd taken it out on Lily. Severus personally found the entire thing funny, and he couldn't have cared about Petunia, but she'd upset Lily. Nobody upset Lily and got away with it. Everyone knew how much Petunia had hated the magical world after that, even Albus Dumbledore. The implications of his own words hit him like a ton of bricks. Dumbledore had sent Harry there; he had to know surely how the woman would treat her nephew. Which meant if Dumbledore had any inkling he had forced Severus to break the vow he'd sworn all those years ago. Just what the hell had he been thinking? Blood wards were not the only way to protect someone in the Wizarding world.

"Get the hell out of here Snape, get out!" hissed Petunia, "Dumbledore swore I'd never see any of your freakish kind when I took the freak in!" Petunia's face went slack, tears springing in her eyes as she stared at the man in disbelief. Her ears were still ringing with the slap Snape had just delivered to her face.

"You have the nerve to cry Tuney, after everything you've done to that child you cannot even take an ounce of your own medicine?" said Severus his voice filled with disgust, his hand tingling from where he'd slapped Petunia across the face. Spinning around he hoisted the still form of Harry Potter into his arms, "Tell anyone about this and I will tell the truth, it will mean the Dementor's come for not only you but your entire family." he threatened before he apparated on the spot.

Severus landed back in Spinners End, his mind overwhelmed by everything he'd seen, done and the ramifications of his actions this night. He had expected to help a three year old Muggle born abused for accidental magic. Instead he'd come home with Harry Potter, a five year old child, a
child he'd sworn an unbreakable vow to protect. To have left him there would have meant his magic being stripped from him. Not that he would have left him there anyway, he wasn't a bastard no matter what his students thought. Ironically enough they were too stupid to realize he'd protect them even to death.

He had to get Harry help, he was beyond his ability to heal, and if it had been a cold or fever he'd have no problem. He didn't know how much potions it was safe to give a five year old under malnourished child. He couldn't go to St. Mungo's the entire world would know, and he wouldn't get near him again. He truly feared that he'd be placed back with the Dursley's. Dumbledore obviously felt he had to stay there despite the fact he'd grown up abused.

His thoughts immediately turned to Poppy, but she would be duty bound to tell Dumbledore. Any suspicious injuries she came across were to be reported immediately to the Headmaster. He didn't know if she would keep it quiet, but no, Poppy and everyone else in Hogwarts adored the Headmaster. They didn't see the manipulative side to him. He had the very night he'd begged Dumbledore to save Lily, he'd been practically coerced into spying to keep Lily safe. Then manipulated into staying and teaching imbeciles at Hogwarts, with the vow and threat that the Dark Lord would be back. No he needed someone who would keep quiet about it, someone with enough money and connects to ensure they were afraid to break their word.

There was only one person he knew, that had that kind of reputation and power in the Wizarding world. It was tricky business to deal with Lucius though. Lucius might not want the Dark Lord brought back, but he would go to any means necessary to keep his family safe. Lucius had aligned himself with the Ministry, gaining power and status there despite the fact he was or rather had been a Death Eater. He trusted Lucius to some degree, but did he trust him with Harry's life? Looking down at the unconscious child, he realized if he didn't the child would die.

Severus could only pray he was making the right decision that it wasn't going to backfire on him. Narcissa wouldn't see any harm befalling Harry, she hated the course Lucius had chosen but could do nothing. Yet she had managed to get thought to her stubborn husband, he'd saw his first glimpse of remorse the same week Draco had been born. Perhaps being a father had changed Lucius, he'd never know because they didn't discuss it. It was just too dangerous really, despite the fact they were both brilliant at closing their minds off. He wasn't planning on leaving Harry's side; he'd protect him as promised.

He Apparated them to the gates of Malfoy Manor, keeping a tight grip on the child.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Shocking truths are revealed, none are good in nature.

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 7

Healers And News

Severus didn't even spare a glance around, normally he would, but these were different and difficult circumstances. He was grateful that the Peacocks weren't out and wandering, he had enough on his mind without avoiding or trampling over them too. Malfoy manor was an impressive sight indeed, it was obvious for all to see they liked to show and boast how much wealth they had. It's probably where Lucius had gotten his annoying habit of feeling superior because he had a lot of money. Truth be told, Lucius probably wasn't the wealthiest pureblood out there, maybe on the British Isles perhaps. One would never know most witches and wizards didn't boast about their money, it was quite dangerous to do. It's what had lead Lucius' father to being recruited, and inevitably his son. It was a good thing Lucius had a shrewd mind and good instincts when he bought percentages of businesses and of course did investments. The investments and businesses nearly always paid off. Severus shook off his thoughts, he shouldn't be thinking about Lucius and his shrewd mind when Harry was extremely hurt.

"Lady Narcissa someone is at the door," said Dobby.

"Who is it?" she asked looking up curiously, she had been watching her son use his toy broomstick. Despite the fact it couldn't go further than three inches off the ground, she still worried about him rather needlessly. Soft padding lined the walls and floors, keeping him safe from harm. She still kept an eye on him despite looking at her husband's house elf getting rather impatient.

"Master Snape," replied Dobby bowing low, waiting on his next order.

"Open the door and let him in at once," demanded Narcissa, she was very fond of Severus. He had a wicked sense of humour. He wasn't afraid to stand up to Lucius, which made her like him more. Not many people stood up to her husband, and she realized that Severus was Lucius' only true friend. The others were just scared brown nosers trying to make their way into Lucius good graces. It's why she had made Severus Draco's godfather; unfortunately Draco didn't have a godmother. Narcissa didn't have any female friends she could trust with her son's life.

"Yes my lady," said Dobby before he disappeared once more, reappearing at the big heavy door that guarded Malfoy Manor. Huge oak doors, heavy and warded from all spells that could see someone entering their home. Such as 'Alohamora' and the blasting spells that would rip the doors from its hinges. Dobby clicked his fingers and the doors opened, just as Dobby saw Severus coming up the steps quite quickly. In his arms he had a small figure of a child, Dobby watched him in alarm. His curiosity, still there despite his training.

"Get Lucius now," said Severus once he spotted Dobby.
"Master Malfoy is not home Master Snape," said Dobby, Master Malfoy was his Master, but he called Severus Master in honour of his title. He was the youngest Potions Master in Britain and the title deserved respect. He was widely respected in the potion community, and Dobby had many fellow friends and family who served people in the community.

"Narcissa then," said Severus, barely able to stop himself snarling at the house elf, he knew it wasn't the elves fault. In fact if it was Narcissa in that might make things go much better.

Dobby disappeared without saying anything further, not wanting to lollygag, it was evident from Master Snape's face this was important. He knew because Severus didn't normally glare at him in such a way. Perhaps having something to do with the child in his arms. "Master Severus needs you in the entrance hall right away Lady Narcissa," said Dobby as soon as he appeared in Draco's play room.

Narcissa sat up straighter, Severus had never, in all her years of knowing him needed her help. "Stay with Draco." said Narcissa, as she gracefully, yet hurriedly made her way out of the room. With speed and efficiency, that she hadn't used since the Dark Lord's defeat, she was down the stairs. She could remember running to her husbands shaking form every time he came back from a meeting. Sometimes Severus had to actually apparate him back, because he was unconscious. As she neared him, intending on hugging him she noticed the bundle in his arms. She was very confused, but she didn't demand answered she just asked Severus one question. She owed him a lot, and if she could repay it then she would.

People thought Slytherin's were evil, but what they seem to do is forget what the Sorting Hat says each year. Slytherin is where you will find your true friends, although admittedly during the dark times you couldn't tell. Between befriending you to inevitably join the dark side, to befriending you to know where your alliance lay. All the houses just liked to blame Slytherin for being evil, but it just wasn't true. The same was happening with Drumstrang, just because Gellert Grindelwald had been expelled from there and became a 'Dark Lord' it was ridiculous if they were going to go against everything because of one person then nothing and no-one was innocent anymore.

"What do you need?" asked Narcissa, her hand wiping the hair away from the child's face. She froze on the spot, he was injured, very badly so but why bring him here? Neither she nor Lucius were healers.

"Narcissa I need you to call your healer," said Severus swallowing thickly, each second they delayed could cost them heavily. "I shall pay for it myself if need be." he said with more force.

"Severus why have you not gone to St. Mungo's?" asked Narcissa walking over to the fireplace they had at the entrance hall of their home. The study held a fire, but it was just that, a fire. They only had one available Floo network connection and it was this one. They kept people away from the study, library and their rooms.

"It's Harry bloody Potter now if you won't help me I'll leave." snapped Severus his patience wearing thin he was exhausted. It was time for bed and here he was with his arms fill of Harry Potter! He just didn't know what on earth he could do.

"Ah, of course I will Severus," said Narcissa refraining from rolling her eyes in exasperation at her good friend. He had always had a problem with his temper, especially when teaching eleven year olds how to brew Potions. She threw the powder into the fire and shouted the name of her family's healer.

"Yes Narcissa is everything okay? Has Draco had some bad side affects?" asked Joseph Benoit. His accent was noticeable to Severus, he was Spanish? Why would they have a Spanish healer? Despite his accent he spoke fluently in English not brokenly like most foreign people did.
"Everything is fine with my family, but I need your services immediately," said Narcissa removing her head from the fireplace, she knew without hearing the chime that Joseph would be through soon.

"Spanish?" asked Severus wryly, he didn't know why he was so surprised.

"His father is English Severus, he was brought up by his mother, when he found out he went to claim his son, and ensure that he attended the best school, Hogwarts. He's been here since he was eleven years old." replied Narcissa slightly defensively.

"He has sworn an oath to keep silent hasn't he?" said Severus wanting confirmation from his friend.

"He has sworn an unbreakable vow Severus, does that satisfy you?" asked Narcissa knowing what was bothering him. She felt it too; Severus Snape was in her entrance hall with Harry Potter of all people. It dawned on her belatedly, that Harry was the same age as her son, yet the child in his arms looked two not five. Her face pale beyond anything, this was evidently not going to be an easy fix.

"It does," said Severus fully relaxing for the first time, just then someone stepped through the Floo network. He looked to be twenty eight years old, professional, seriously yet he had a small cheeky face that made him look younger.

"Dobby?" called Narcissa.

"Yes Lady Narcissa?" asked Dobby appearing out of nowhere.

"Where is Draco?" asked Narcissa.

"He is sleeping, I put him to bed," said Dobby, unable to finish as Narcissa spoke over him again.

"Go and tell Lucius his presence is required, tell him Severus is here also if it's needed. I want him back as soon as it's possible for him to leave." said Narcissa; she knew he was meeting with Minister Fudge. Thankfully house elves could appear silently, just as they could make themselves invisible to everyone around them. Lucius would be able to feel him though, since Dobby was bound to him. Dobby disappeared once again, realizing that it was going to be a very long night. Lucius hated being interrupted, at least by him anyway. Now that he knew who the child was, he realized how important it was. Harry Potter was injured; it was obvious to him that Severus Snape had found him. Lucius was going to get the shock of his life when he got home that's for sure.

"Come," said Narcissa, her delicate hands grabbing at her robes as she ran up the stairs, followed closely behind by Severus and Joseph. She took them into the only other room that had an en-suite. It was the guest room Severus used upon occasions when he stayed over, mostly on Draco's birthdays.

"I need you to do a full scan," said Severus bluntly, placing his bundle on the bed, he looked so very small in the four poster king size bed. He moved to the side to let the healer work, but stayed within sight of both of them. He trusted no one with Harry's safety, and with good reason.

Joseph immediately went over, and started the long complicated charm that would show absolutely everything. It took a lot of magic to do the spell, more if the person was seriously injured. Which it came apparent that this child was, and finally understood why he’d be called. Parchment came out of the end as soon as he finished the chant, far too long for a little child.
He took a look at it and his eyes widened, this was Harry Potter! What on earth had happened to cause such injuries? There was no mistaken it, this was abuse the results of very bad abuse. He was severely malnourished; nearly every bone in his body had been broken at one point or another. It was the worst case of abuse he'd ever come across. He was almost unsure of where to start! It was that bad. He grabbed his potions bag, grateful he always carried it around with him.

"You will use my potions, they are fresh." said Severus not wanting inferior potions to be used on Harry.

"Very well, I need a level ten internal injuries potion undiluted, undiluted junior Skele-grow." said Joseph.

Severus reached in for his own potions bag, which was then un-shrunken and ten times bigger than the healers. His deft fingers brought out the potions the healer required. Passing them over without saying anything, the healer immediately conjured up a small measuring cup. He measured out how much he could give to the child. With great difficulty he managed to coax the unconscious boy into swallowing it. He immediately did the same with the Skele-grow. He was able to give the child more of that since it was for junior children not adults. He did this as his mind whirled dangerously; there was something on that paper that turned his stomach. He would have to discuss it with them, and he hoped to get an answer.

"Does anyone know what happened that Halloween night? After the attack?" asked Joseph, as he cast a spell that would reduce the swelling on the boy's face. Another that would heal the cut, another that would stop infection. He was about to ask for a salve but Severus got there first. Handing it to him, he unscrewed it and carefully spread it across his face.

"Why?" demanded Severus his lip curling in repugnance?

"Well he's been living with Muggles since it happened, otherwise they wouldn't have gotten away with this plus the fact there's been no spells cast on him to imply Wizards or Witches had done this." said Joseph.

Severus smirked slightly well the healer was smart he'd give him that much. "Yes he has, with his family, maternal aunt and uncle." his face darkened just saying it. He wanted to go back and cause them all a world of pain. Once he had Harry safe perhaps that's what he would do.

"Nobody was left alone with the child?" asked Joseph.

"He was alone with Sirius Black before Hagrid retrieved him on orders of Dumbledore. As far as I am aware he was delivered straight to his family. Dumbledore and Hagrid was back for the celebration not long after." said Severus emotionlessly, he had been forced to attend it had been the longest and hardest night of his life.

"Someone cast a powerful binding block on his magic, which is stopping him from accessing seventy five percent of his magic." said Joseph. "The rest has been keeping him alive since he was a baby," he was furious with whoever did it, binding blocks were illegal, and for good reason.

"Seventy five percent?" gaped Narcissa looking stunned, she held onto the wall as though she was about to fall over with the news and it wasn't even her child. She put the dots together, there would have only been one wizard powerful enough to bind that much magic. She looked at Severus and saw he too had come to the same conclusion. He looked ready to murder someone, and she almost wanted to let him.

"There is also something else on this I do not understand, a foreign entity is in Mr. Potter, its dark
and evil...I do not know if it's a by product of the killing curse or some other failed spell?" said Joseph.

"Let me see," said Severus imperiously waiting on the parchment, he grabbed it and began reading; it was at the top right next to the killing curse. A frown marred Severus' forehead, whatever it was it definitely shouldn't be there. "Is there a way to find out?" he asked finally handing the paper back.

"A ritual, will tell you exactly what it is where it came from and how to get rid of it, if that is possible." said Joseph. The rune healing ritual, Harry would need to be in full prefect health for it. Until then they would just have to heal him as best they were able.

"We shall do it when we can, until then we must wait." said Severus. "Is there a specific potion he's going to need long term?" he already knew the answer to that. He wasn't a healer though so he awaited Joseph's expertise.

"Narcissa!" called Lucius his voice sounding frantic with worry.

"Excuse me," said Narcissa quickly leaving the room to go to her husband's side.

"He will need a nutrient potion for at least a year perhaps more," said Joseph, "He will need frequent small meals, his stomach will not be able to handle much at all. The damage it quiet extensive. He's much too small height wise for a five year old, so I'd say he'd need level ten potions to help with that. He will need a potion to help with the pain; nearly every bone is healing itself."

"How many doses of the internal injury potion will he need?" asked Severus, watching the healer look at his watch before taking Severus' potion case and feed him a blood replenishing potion. Unfortunately Harry would need the potions to be spaced out to avoid an overdose. He was so small that it didn't surprise Severus at all. They didn't usually have to worry about that with adults.

Joseph pulled out a clipboard and parchment, before he tapped it and writing appeared on the paper. "He will need them for three days; his body isn't functioning to its full capacity. It's important that he doesn't catch any more infections or illnesses or his body will completely shut down." Joseph also tapped it again; a potion for his eyesight was added to the list. Since Severus insisted on brewing them himself they needed to be put on the list. His eyesight was rather bad, no doubt not helped by the concussions he'd had.

"So he would not have made it to Hogwarts had I not intervened?" stated Severus.

"No Severus, I doubt very much he would have survived the rest of the week, he already had a bad fever and the starting of an infection." said Joseph, pulling out yet another potion to prevent infection and spelling it into his stomach. As an afterthought he pulled a fever reducer and did the same thing. Everything he was doing was being recorded on the parchment on the clipboard.

"Severus," said Lucius nodding his head, his mercury eyes staring at Harry as if he couldn't believe his eyes. This little boy had been the downfall of the darkest and most evil lord in the world - yet he himself lay almost dead by the hands of Muggles. This did nothing but reinforce the hatred Lucius had of them. Narcissa had filled him in on the way up, and he had heard the healer's last statement.

"Lucius," said Severus copying Lucius' movements.

"This is the potions and times he will need them, if you like I can stay," said Joseph. Here he was mostly speaking to Severus, but everything that needed done was already seen too. Everything else
could be done with someone not trained as a healer or Medi-Wizard. They would only be following his instructions that needed done precisely. "I will keep my Floo open in case of emergencies. If not then I shall be back tomorrow to check up on him at seven A.M."

"Thank you Joseph." said Lucius kindly, and it was kind for him. Of course Joseph was one he could say he trusted, especially with his family. If they or he was ever sick Joseph always came he didn't trust those at St. Mungo's. He only wanted the best help, and Joseph was the best in his field.

"No problem," said Joseph giving one last look to the sick child he was escorted by Narcissa to the Floo network and he promptly disappeared after speaking to her for a few seconds.

"Who did this?" asked Lucius his face a mask of fury. The thought of anyone hurting a Wizarding child riled him up.

"His family, the Dursley's." said Severus his eyes darkening with fury, he was almost tempted to put his Death Eater garb on and show them just what wizards were capable of. He could see by the disgust and anger on Lucius' face his thoughts were similar.

"They will rue the day they dared harm one of our own." said Lucius blankly, his mind conjuring up ways to deal with them.

"Legally Lucius, that will hurt them worse, trust me." said Severus, "They think themselves better than those around them," he had been so shocked by her words about drowning Harry he'd been rooted to the spot before he's slapped her for her malicious words. It had done nothing to stop his anger; in fact it was probably ten times worse.

"How is he?" asked Lucius eventually, sitting down on the bed, staring at the five year old, so much smaller than his own son. He carefully pulled the covers over him, keeping him warm. He touched his forehead reverently; he owed this small child more than he could ever repay him. Because of this child his son grew up without darkness, he shuddered at the thought of the Dark Lord in his home, touching his son. Oh no, he would pay for the healer, and he'd pay for everything Harry needed. After all the things he'd done in his life, it would be a small repayment.

"Dumbledore bound seventy five percent of his magic," said Severus his mind still unable to process that one.

"Did he unlock it?" asked Lucius immediately, his face paler than normal.

"No, it may cause more harm than good right now," said Severus angrily.

"You'd think it would help heal him faster," said Lucius thoughtfully.

"He's five," said Severus as if it explained everything, which strangely enough it did.

"Severus, Joseph suggested giving him half a mild sleeping potion so he doesn't wake up." said Narcissa, "He doesn't want Harry in any more pain than he needs to be."

Severus immediately poured out the required amount before helping the small five year old drink it. He would have to brew nutrition potions and of course the one to help Harry with his height. He found himself gently stroking the child's face, he had thought often of Harry since that night. None of it good, he felt extremely guilty about it. He'd assumed Harry was growing up knowing his birthright, spoiled because he survived something he shouldn't have. Something his mother hadn't. He couldn't have been further from the truth; he was nothing like his father except in looks.

"Come let him rest, I shall have Dobby watch him." said Lucius, Severus looked frankly exhausted.
"I'll stay." said Severus immediately; he wasn't going to leave the child's side. "Thank you for helping me."

"It's the least I can do for him Severus," said Lucius honestly, and they all felt the same regarding the child. If it wasn't for him, and perhaps his mother, the Dark Lord would have won.

"If you need anything Dobby will fetch us." said Narcissa kindly, placing a comforting hand on Severus' shoulder. No doubt Severus was feeling really bad right now, and the past he tried to keep in the past was coming back to haunt him. Lily had always been a weakness of Severus'. It was a good job they really cared about him, they knew his weaknesses and they could have exploited them or told the Dark Lord.

Severus merely nodded never taking his eyes from Harry, even when the lights dimmed as Lucius and Narcissa left. Severus continued to watch Harry, until his own body gave up the battle to remain awake.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Severus Snape has a decision to make - whether to raise Harry himself or have a family do so.

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 8

Talking

Lucius groaned as he finally sat up in his luxurious king size four poster bed, he just couldn't sleep. He looked over at his wife; she on the other hand was sleeping very peacefully. Grabbing his silver robe he put it on over his pyjamas and left the room. He went straight to his office, and grabbed two tumblers and filled them. Once that was done he headed back towards the guest room, where Harry Potter was currently staying. He was still trying to wrap his mind around it, who would have thought he'd have Harry Potter, of all people staying in his manor. He opened the door and observed that Severus was still awake as he'd predicted. When Severus was troubled he couldn't sleep, that was how well Lucius knew his only true friend. Who would have thought it? He certainly hadn't, in fact he had felt sorry for the first year. He had helped him as best as he could, without the black haired child knowing about it. To this day he still didn't know why, it had not been beneficial to him. He couldn't have been more surprised when Severus was initiated; he knew Severus was a half blood. It was only later that he'd discovered the Dark Lord's true blood status.

"Lucius," said Severus without even turning around, "I'm surprised you aren't asleep."

"Here," said Lucius handing him a glass of rare delicious bourbon he'd begun to love, courtesy of his father. Severus wasn't a man who cared what he drank, and so he accepted the drink. To be truthful he could use it right now, his mind was spinning as the ramifications of his actions built up in his mind.

Lucius pulled up a chair and sat down next to his friend, knowing how he felt, trapped, helpless, and overwhelmed. "There was nothing you could have done." Lucius said his mercury eyes solemn.

"For the last four years, when I thought of him I sneered and wrongfully assumed he was being spoiled. Not that I thought of him often, but still…I was wrong." said Severus bitterly, his bitterness was making his stomach rebel horrendously. Considering Severus always felt bitter, it was a surprise for it to make him physically sick.

"We all did, I mean he survived something others didn't, who wouldn't have spoiled him?" asked Lucius quietly.

"His family apparently," said Severus, his anger was steadily burning; he wanted to return to Cokeworth and kill Petunia. Then show Dudley Dursley what it was like to be bullied and stop a child turning out to be just like his bitter twisted mother.
"Leave them to me," said Lucius a vindictive grin spreading across his face. If there was one thing Lucius knew and it was how to destroy people, blackmail them, and threaten them. He wasn't by any means a good man, and he didn't pretend to be.

"I have no doubt your revenge would be better than anything I dole out." said Severus wryly, staring at the sleeping child unsure of what to do.

"That's because you'd just kill them," snorted Lucius in amusement, which was true, Severus had no patience whatsoever. Why he'd become a teacher he didn't know, then again that wasn't true. He knew why, Dumbledore had basically forced him into it with Unbreakable vows. Nobody could get out of them, not without loosing their life. It was the worst binding spell in their world; one could argue that loosing your magic was worse.

"True," smirked Severus sadistically, it's what he wanted to do right now. "What the hell am I supposed to do Lucius?" he finished his smirk gone replaced by worry. He had taken Harry but that's as far as his thinking had gone. He'd expected to drop an abused kid of at St. Mungo's now he was the caretaker of Harry Potter.

"That my friend is up to you," said Lucius quietly as he sipped his bourbon. "Is there anyone you could trust to bring him up? I could give them money it's the least I can do."

"You think someone could take Harry Potter in and keep quiet about it?" asked Severus dryly, staring at Lucius as if he'd lost his marbles.

"Perhaps with oaths we could?" suggested Lucius conceding Severus' point.

"You think they could raise him properly? Without fawning all over him? He'd come to Hogwarts worse than his blasted father." stated Severus shaking his head adamantly, it wasn't a road he wanted to travel down.

"Better than the alternative," said Lucius, if Severus hadn't noticed the Wizarding world would have been hit with the news that Harry Potter was dead.

"There must be another way," growled Severus. "Dumbledore cannot know, I never thought I'd be saying that." Lucius had always said it, but right now though for the first time Severus himself believed it too.

"Binding a child's magic what was he thinking? Especially Harry Potters!" he asked exasperated, he knew the child's future was going to be long and hard. It was obvious the Dark Lord wasn't gone otherwise Dumbledore wouldn't have forced him to stay or give another vow. Although it wasn't hard for him to figure it out himself, after all the Dark Mark was still there. Faded to the point of almost disappearing but still there.

"He's a manipulative old fool; I wouldn't be surprised if he had Potter's life already mapped out. The worst of it, he would succeed in moulding him to his exact specifications." said Lucius sneering in disgust at the thought of Albus Dumbledore.

"Would have," said Severus, now that he knew he wasn't going to let Lily's son suffer. Especially not for some god forsaken prophecy, that was only just one outcome of all possible futures. He believed that the future could go all manner of says, you just had to know what road to travel down. For all he knew Harry had already played his part, he would do what he could to keep the child safe as he'd promised Lily at her grave and the vow for Dumbledore.

"You do know the only person he could be safe with…is yourself? Most of the Wizarding world
adores Dumbledore, if they don't good chance they are Death Eaters." said Lucius, much like himself. He wasn't as sadistic as many of them, and didn't believe in the needless killings but he'd do anything to keep his family safe.

Severus snorted, "You think I could raise a kid?" his voice thick with incredulity.

"You are good with Draco," said Lucius pointing out the obvious.

"Yes, I am, but you know what? I can hand him right back over. I wouldn't be able to do that with him. I would be responsible for every aspect of his life." said Severus, it's a terrifying prospect.

One he didn't want to dwell on, but now Lucius had said it…it was getting under his skin. It was impossible really? What did he know about raising a child? He'd never wanted one; it wasn't something he'd ever dwelled on. He'd dreamed on having one with Lily, but he'd never consciously thought it. Someone couldn't help what they dreamed.

"It's easier than it seems, but you know what Severus? The rewards far outweigh the negative." said Lucius; it would give Severus a reason to live other than to destroy the Dark Lord for Lily. In fact now that he thought about it, he realized he rather liked the idea. All Severus did was teach students, read books, brew potions. Before all this bad stuff had happened he'd been inventing his own potions, own spells and actually living. Maybe if Severus did have Harry he might go back to actually living. Severus could be a great man, not everyone had the smarts to create potions and spells. It was as if the Dark Lord had sucked the life out of Severus. Severus had always felt things deeply; it didn't surprise him that everything he'd done was weighing down heavily upon him.

"He's Potters son, there's no guarantee I'd look after him properly," said Severus seriously, he wasn't at all sure if he'd try and get revenge on a dead man though him.

"You knew he was Potter's son when you brought him here, that was before you knew what Dumbledore had done." said Lucius, rolling his eyes at his stubborn friend. He placed his empty tumbler on the floor and settled back the tiredness was finally kicking in.

"Dumbledore placed him there, he had to have known how he'd be treated." said Severus tiredly. "He needed a healer, I didn't think beyond that, I do know that apparently I cannot trust anyone with him." not even Lucius, he'd give Harry up in a second to protect his family, they both knew it.

"Which means you need to raise him," said Lucius adamantly, it would help ensure he wouldn't do anything to Harry as well no matter what happened in the future. No matter what he would never cross Severus. Especially never someone Severus cared about, because he'd probably creatively torture him then kill him friend or not. He didn't have any plans right now, but he didn't know what the future held. Severus was very vindictive that way, forward about it not like him.

Severus just gazed doubtfully at the small form on the bed, he wasn't father material. His own father had been a drunken layabout, who'd been extremely abusive. That wasn't exactly a good example. He'd seen Lucius with Draco, it was the only scope of experience he had. He couldn't see himself being like him, he wasn't capable of that.

Of course he underestimated his capacity to love.

"Get some sleep Severus, we are going to need it." said Lucius standing up. He called Dobby to remove the glasses before heading back to his own bedroom, Narcissa was still asleep. He slid in and thankfully fell asleep quite quickly, it was well after three AM and his son would be up in four hours. Not only that but the healer would be back, and hopefully there will be an improvement on Harry's condition.
"Severus? Severus wake up!" said Narcissa shaking his shoulder.

Severus jumped awake, already going for his wand before he realized he was safe. He groaned when the pains in his neck made themselves known. He could smell the breakfast Narcissa had brought to him. More importantly, coffee, he needed it, he was quite frankly exhausted. He'd only slept a few hours that is if he was lucky.

"Joseph will be here in five minutes," said Narcissa, fully dressed putting the breakfast down for Severus to eat. Everyone else had already eaten, Severus hadn't come down so she'd put some food together for him.

"Alright," said Severus gratefully drinking the hot brew hoping it would wake him up properly. He needed all his wits around him, especially when the healer began talking. He needed to know how to take care of Harry properly. "Send him up when he arrives."

"Sure," said Narcissa, before she turned and left him to eat.

Severus looked over at the child as he ate his breakfast, if he wasn't mistaken the child looked a little less pale than he had yesterday. He seemed to have a bit more colour to his face. That could only be a good thing, but then again looks could be deceiving. He would know how Harry was soon enough. Speak of the devil, thought Severus, as a knock sounded the door.

"Come in," said Severus without his normal teacher snarl or sneer.

"Severus, how are you?" asked Joseph regarding Severus shrewdly, he was far too skinny and pale. He looked as though he needed a good night sleep as well.

"I'm good," said Severus curtly, he wasn't the sick or dying one in the room after all.

"Did he get the potions at the right time?" asked Joseph picking the clipboard up to find he had. He nodded his head in satisfaction, and performed a diagnostic spell on him to see what needed done.

"Of course," said Severus sounding highly insulted.

"He is healing extraordinarily well, I wouldn't be surprised if he's a natural healer…only his ability trying to heal himself rather than others." said Joseph. "Considering his magic is bound…he may well be the best we've ever seen." his awe was evident. It seemed he was the only one unimpressed by Harry Potter and his abilities. It just strengthened his belief that he had to take care of Harry. He couldn't let someone else get him and spoil him, turn him into a Gryffindor.

"Should he choose to pursue a career with it," said Severus bluntly bringing the healers attention back to now.

"Oh of course," said Joseph, "He won't need any more blood replenishing potions, he needs at least three more doses of junior skele-grow. At least two more for internal injuries. The nutrition potions will be needed until he's fully recovered and at the same height and weight as other children. No doubt he will need stomach soothing and sealing potions, to stop him being sick. He's probably never had anything substantial and the first time he does, I guarantee his stomach will rebel quite viciously."

"So he is recovering then?" asked Severus.

"Yes, very well in fact." said Joseph, "Other than the damage to his magical core because of the block."

"Damage?" asked Severus sitting up straighter, glaring at the healer demanding an explanation.
Would it affect Harry's magic later in life? Was it permanent, he was surprised by the extent of the worry he felt for the child. It wasn't because of the Dark Lord, or the part Harry was 'supposed' to play in it. No it was for the child himself.

"Don't worry; once his magic is released it will immediately begin repairing its core. The longer you wait the more damaging it is. That's why binding was made illegal in the first place. That and the fact magic is a gift and should never be bound in the first place. The more magic that's bound the more dangerous it is. Eventually it explodes, the core burns out and so does the Witch or Wizard the shock kills them. Whether they know they have magic or not it still affects them. I've always been interested in them, after a case came my way." said Joseph.

"Well that's good to know," said Severus relief sweeping over him.

"Well I shall take my leave, you wont need me again but Narcissa knows how to find me should you need anything else." said Joseph, the money was no doubt already in his account for his services.

"Thank you," said Severus he did appreciate everything the man had done.

"No thanks necessary I only did what needed done, as I would for anyone." said Joseph. First do no harm, the motto that both the Wizarding world and Muggle had together for helping others.

"If the price is right of course." said Severus.

"If you must know I help people who cannot afford it Mr. Snape, everyone deserves healing." said Joseph a little coldly at assumptions being made upon his character.

"I did not mean that how it sounded," said Severus slightly apologetically but he did not apologize.

"No problem," said Joseph before making his way out of the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

Severus sat back down again, staring almost blankly at the child on the bed. It was finally sinking it what he had to do. What he'd have to sacrifice to do. As he continued looking at him, he realised he owed it to the boy. He was partly at fault for his parents death, partly he said because the man responsible, directly responsible for their death was in Azkaban prison. The one that killed them was no more than a parasite thanks to the child who'd avenged his mother's death before she was even cold. He prayed to Merlin he could do it and not screw up.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Inheritances and plans to move into Prince Hall

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 9

Hunting For A House

"Narcissa can you keep an eye on Harry for me until I get back? He needs two potions in a hour." said Severus, waiting for Narcissa to answer, he wasn't one to take people for granted. Harry had not yet woken, and Severus decided it was time to get a new house. He couldn't raise Harry here, nor could he raise him in Spinner End. It wasn't a nice place to raise anyone, not anymore anyway. It was mostly abandoned, houses boarded up and the cobbles were coming away and the river nearby made it stink something terrible. If he was going to raise Harry, then he was going to do it right. Who would have thought he'd be buying a house? He certainly didn't. He'd always lived in Spinners End, it was enough for him.

"Where are you going?" asked Narcissa in surprise, Severus hadn't left Harry's side in two days, it must be important for him to leave now.

"I'm going to Gringotts to see about purchasing a house," said Severus, his cheeks going slightly pink by Narcissa's shocked look. Honestly did they seriously think he would have raised Harry in the run down building he currently stayed in?

"Of course Severus," said Narcissa, nodding her head in understanding. "Dobby? Look after Draco for me," she said, before making her way up to Harry's room. Draco was currently in his play room, it held everything a child could possibly want and need.

"Yes ma'am." said Dobby disappearing to tend to the young Master.

Narcissa entered her guest room, unlike her husband she didn't have trouble with Harry being here. No not trouble, but as in trouble adjusting to the fact the hero of the Wizarding world was here in their manor. To be honest she'd had more trouble with the fact he was abused. Not many magical children were abused, at least not in the magical world. They were cherished, punished accordingly when needed, sometimes overly so but never actually outright abused to the extent they were dying. Even Death Eaters cherished their children, what had Dumbledore been thinking? It was madness. Unfortunately the little boy on the bed had bore the brunt of it.

She had noticed subtle changes in her best friend, he had always been protective but he was unusually more so now. He must be planning on raising Harry himself, which meant Lucius would have to ensure it was done legally. Otherwise Dumbledore would be able to separate them. Lucius was already away, goodness knows what he was planning. Whatever it was she hoped it was long and painful for those child abusers.

He was so small; he looked years younger than Draco when in fact they were the same age. She
could remember reading the newspapers the day after it happened; she already knew something had gone down. Lucius had fallen out of bed and onto the floor screaming in agony. When he'd stopped they'd both seen that the Dark Mark was all but gone. Then the newspapers told everything, Lily and James Potter were dead and Harry Potter had done the impossible. He'd survived the killing curse cast on him by the darkest wizard of the age. She had looked at Draco and was overwhelmed with sadness, especially for feeling so much relief that the madman was gone.

Severus stalked into Gringotts, it was moderately empty, still too early for people to be coming in. "I need to speak to Ironclaw," said Severus standing proud and tall, demanding service right away. "Right away," said the Goblin, who Severus had no hope of identifying, "Follow me."

They walked to the right, two guards at each side both wizards and they walked on by. Unlike normal banks there were no seats, no welcome feeling to it. It was cold, secure and sterile like the pureblood's preferred it. The goblin gestured for him to wait as he went into one of the many offices. They had a quick conversation in Gobblygook before Severus was called in.

"How can I help you today Mr. Snape?" asked Ironclaw.

"I want to purchase a house, preferably today." said Severus immediately sitting down opposite the goblin. Getting straight to the point, not bothering with politeness and that's the way the goblins liked it. It would surprise Severus to hear that the goblins respected his no nonsense approach to everything.

"Anywhere specific?" asked Ironclaw.

"Preferably secure, and somewhere that's isolated," said Severus immediately, "And in the Muggle world."

"You already have properties fitting that description," said Ironclaw staring at Severus blankly.

Severus raised an eyebrow disbelief written across his face, "How's that?" scoffed Severus, he knew he'd never bought a property never mind several.

"You have inherited the Prince estate, did you not get our mail?" asked Ironclaw frowning at the thought of any of their mail being intercepted or lost. They prided themselves on their abilities and secretiveness. Nobody should have been able to get near his post; the owls were vicious if someone tried.

"I may have," said Severus, he didn't open his mail from Gringotts; they were just put into his drawer at Hogwarts or his desk at Spinners End. They were usually just statements; he already knew every single Galleon, Sickle and Knut in his account. If he had the Prince estate it meant his grandparents were dead. That they had either given it to him, or they had not left a will and it automatically came to him. "Why did I receive it?" he demanded.

"Your grandmother updated her will the day before she died, you received everything." said Ironclaw.

Why wasn't I invited to a will reading?" demanded Severus.

"You were," said Ironclaw bluntly.

Severus held his tongue; to be truthful he didn't know since he didn't open his damn mail. He would have to search through it all and find out what he could. If he didn't then he had to have a serious word with Gringotts. He knew if he hadn't come here he would never have known about
his inheritance. He'd been such a fool dismissing the letters as he had. "Let me see the properties," said Severus brushing his concerns aside.

Ironclaw began sifting through papers, grunting every few seconds before he handed him a small pile of papers. Each detailing the properties, even how many house elves inhabited them. It came as no surprise to see none were in use; the Prince family was gone, only he was left. He couldn't understand how his mother would give all this up, for a small house in Spinners End and a cruel sadistic bastard for a husband.

A manor, did he really want to raise Harry in a manor? Especially somewhere he didn't know? Then again the house elves would ensure nothing happened to Harry if he went somewhere he shouldn't. It was in Scotland that was a surprise, most pureblood families that had manors were in England. It was beautiful; Severus fell in love at the sight of it. Nobody could get them in it, although one was more secure than Prince Hall, which was what that property was called. Prince Pride was a bigger manor, with a lot more security, and a Fidelus Charm imbued on it. Prince Pride? Really that's what they'd called them they had been big headed. The one in Scotland hadn't been lived in since the sixties.

"Prince Hall will be the one I shall use," said Severus immediately, folding the paper and placing it in his pocket. He wanted to look more fully into them, at his own time. "How do I let them know to expect company?"

"The house elves are bound to you, just as the entire estate is, call one to you." said Ironclaw. "The names are listed on the property inventory." Ironclaw looked a little put out at that, creatures were treated terribly. Being a creature himself he knew how it felt, and he didn't like it. The goblin race was once renowned, revered even and now they were reduced to this? Nobody could blame him for being angry.

Severus fished the information back out, staring at the list until he found the house elves. He'd never had one before, this was all new to him, and Lucius was in for a shock. As far as he knew Lucius only had one manor in the UK. They had holiday homes, just like the Princes apparently.

"Flippy?" called Severus his lip curling at the horrendous name he had to say. They might as well have called it fish and gotten it over with really.

"Yes Master?" asked Flippy appearing before him, bowing so low his nose touched the floor. His eyes were large; evidently he had not expected to be called least of all here.

"Is Prince Hall clean?" asked Severus, "Get up off the floor." god he hoped the elf wasn't one of those bowing and scraping things. He hated the way they acted, it was disgusting.

"Yes Master," said Flippy looking excited at the prospect of serving a new Master.

"Then expect company some time today," said Severus.

"Yes Master." said Flippy waiting expectantly for a few seconds, when it became apparent he had nothing more to say, he disappeared.

"Here is an inventory of your new holdings, key's and cards." said Ironclaw handing everything over to the still slightly stunned man. Not that he showed it, he just wasn't his normally ironclad controlled self. "Is there anything else I can help you with?"

"No, may the gods grant you more gold Ironclaw." said Severus nodding his head, respectfully.

"You also Mr. Snape," said Ironclaw nodding his head in respect. Not many people greeted them
With that Severus placed his things in his inner cloak pocket. With that he left the office, passed the two wizards standing guard and out into the sunshine. He wasn't sure what his next step should be. Yet as he continued to stalk down the cobbled road of Diagon Alley he made his decision. Taking a deep breath, he Apparated to Hogwarts’ gates, hoping Narcissa had remembered to give Harry his potions. Also hoping that Harry hadn't woken up yet. He wanted to the one to explain everything; no doubt the child would be worried and scared.

Staring at Hogwarts, he hitched a ride on the coaches and found himself on his way to the entrance hall. He wondered if Dumbledore would dig deeper, or if he would accept it. He wanted Harry to legally be his for a few years before the old fool found out. Unfortunately Dumbledore had ways of finding out information, and Severus hated that. Ten minutes later the Thestral drawn carriage slowed to a stop. Hopping down he swiftly made his way down to the dungeon's hoping to get in and out without seeing anyone.

He was successful, it being summer it was no surprise really. Entering his quarters he sighed, he actually loved being at Hogwarts. Loathed teaching, but Hogwarts had always been his home. With skilful hands he began packing anything of value to him; the first to get packed was his personal letters and items in his office. Next was his personal lab, and of course his cauldrons, stirring rods and own ingredients. It took him much longer than he thought it would, shrinking everything down he locked his quarters securely and closed his office door. A feeling of melancholy sweeping through him, but he reminded himself he was doing this for Harry…for Lily too.

He immediately went straight to Spinners End, and did what he had to do there. Thankfully there wasn't much he wanted to take with him in the godforsaken house. Just more potion ingredients equipment and of course his books. The furniture was years old, and he didn't mind it being left there. He did put the food in the bin outside, not wanting the place to start getting mouldy. Once he was done he didn't mind so much leaving this place. He Apparated straight to Malfoy Manor, and went straight to Harry's room.

"How is he?" asked Severus.

"Still asleep," said Narcissa, regarding Severus shrewdly, he seemed to have a spring in his step. He had obviously been successful in getting a house. "Severus what are you going to do when you go back to Hogwarts?" she asked, it had been annoying her since he announced his intentions.

"I'm taking a few years sabbatical, after that who knows?" asked Severus.

"Dumbledore won't be happy," said Narcissa.

"No, he won't. It has nothing to do with him." said Severus grimly. "Where's Lucius?"

"I have no idea," said Narcissa, he never told her what he was up to outright, just in case anything happened. Lucius' number one priority was to keep her safe, and if she didn't know everything then she couldn't be implicated.

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Petunia sat trembling before the wizard in her home; all he had mentioned was the Dementor's. She had been terrified, so terrified she'd immediately packed up and took the boy's home when Snape had disappeared. Only to find her husband completely drunk and sleeping on the sofa. His mobile phone out of battery and the house phone unplugged. She would have been furious with him if she wasn't so scared.
"Sign it," said Lucius, "Both of them right now." his teeth bared in an animalistic manner.

Petunia's mind was whirling with the ramifications of signing those papers. What would the crackpot old fool think? Right now he's promised she wouldn't have to see another magical freak in her home, yet two of them had been there. She couldn't handle it; she was more scared of the man in front of her than Dumbledore. With shaking hands she signed the papers, giving up custody of her nephew.

"Don't think this is over," said Lucius "I want the boy's belongings."

Petunia's eyes unconsciously skittered towards the cupboard under the stairs. Lucius' eyes followed hers, his eyes flared angrily; they'd already packed his things up in a cupboard? Growling angrily he walked towards it, ignoring Petunia's feeble attempts at disrupting him. His eyebrows disappeared into his hair, Merlin people called him evil? They'd kept the child in a bloody broom cupboard! There was absolutely nothing worth taking. Just three plastic figures, a bed and clothes that obviously belonged to her pig of a son.

"I should kill you right now...but what I have planned...seems much more poetic right now." said Lucius fury written across his face.

"I...I signed the papers." stuttered Petunia weakly her brown eyes wide with fear.

"I'll be back," said Lucius viciously, glaring at Petunia so fiercely that she couldn't help but step back her legs shaking and barely able to keep her upright.

As soon as he was gone though she fell to the floor sobbing in fear.

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"My office," said Lucius as soon as he was back, they were all in the dining room having dinner. Minus Harry of course, who was probably still recovering, sleep was the best thing for that anyway.

Severus started at Lucius cautiously before getting up, abandoning the remains of his dinner. Both of them walked to Lucius' office, Severus noticed Lucius was extremely agitated. The blonde went straight to his drink cabinet and began filling a large glass full of whiskey.

"What happened?" asked Severus warily, something had rattled Lucius big time.

"They kept him in a cupboard Severus, a bloody broom cupboard." said Lucius his tone full of bitterness and rage.

"What?" choked Severus his eyes wide, unable to believe what he'd heard.

"I can barely believe it myself, the kid had a few plastic figures, a few broken crayons and paper." said Lucius, "And his pig of a cousins clothes, they've provided him with nothing in his life."

Severus sat down heavily shaking his head; he was beginning to realize just how far the abuse went. There was also the fact he would have to undo it all, the Dursley's had to pay for treating Harry like a house elf.

"I have the Prince estate," said Severus changing the subject.

"Really?" asked Lucius impressed, "At least you will have decent properties then."

"Yes, I'm moving into Prince Hall, taking a sabbatical from Hogwarts at least until Harry's eleven."
explained Severus.

"That will put the cat among the pigeons," smirked Lucius, wishing he could see Dumbledore's face when he realized Severus had left.

"Indeed," said Severus wryly.

"When are you going?" asked Lucius curiously.

"Tonight," said Severus.

"Here," said Lucius withdrawing the adoption papers, both magical and Muggle, since there hadn't been any magical tampering they were both legal. Lucius was feeling very smug at that.

"What are you doing with the Dursley's?" asked Severus, staring at Lucius in a way that told him he demanded to know.

"I have a man keeping tabs on them twenty four hours a day; I've bought Grunnings which might actually be profitable. Vernon Dursley will find himself without a job soon, and unable to get another." smirked Lucius wryly, he had a squib on his payroll that happened to be a cop. He was about to make Vernon Dursley a man nobody would want to hire. They wouldn't be able to keep up the mortgage on their property and would soon find themselves in a world of trouble. "He's also going to get a hold of their finances for me, I think they might be getting paid for Harry…if that's the case you need to get the Potter estate in order quickly."

Severus grimaced he wasn't a number cruncher; he knew nothing of running estates. Thankfully the Goblins did that otherwise he wouldn't know what to do. "If I must."

"You do otherwise my revenge won't go as planned if they are getting money from the Potter estate." said Lucius sniffing at the thought of something of his not going to plan.

Severus smirked at his friend knowing without reading his thoughts about what was going on in his mind.

"Let us know your Floo address as soon as possible," said Lucius, "Right now I'm starving and could use something to eat. Are you coming?"

"Yes," said Severus standing up, both men then headed to the dining room their conversation over.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Albus Dumbledore looses his Potions Master and Harry gains a father and godparents.

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 10

Harry's Going To His New Home

Severus became infuriated when he found no letter containing the will reading. He didn't even have a statement of the Prince holdings, which he should have received each month since he'd been given it. Someone had been messing with his mail, he just didn't understand it. His own personal vault statements got to him, it was highly suspicious that only the Prince statements weren't getting to their destination. His own personal vault was the one he'd opened up when he was seventeen years old. It had remained empty for a while, as he gained his mastery - he had lived hand to mouth during that time. That was nothing new to him; his family had lived hand to mouth too. It didn't help his father had drank most of it. Now it was very full, from independent brewing he did, and of course his wages from teaching idiotic students all year. Since it was a boarding school his wage was lower than a normal teacher's salary. His room and food being paid for before he received his wages. Not that he could complain, he got more than most of the teachers, as head of Slytherin he had more responsibility which meant a higher pay.

He sighed in exasperation, surrounded by parchment, some of scrunched up where his anger got the better of him. He was currently in Lucius' office trying to make sense of this mess. He would have to write to Gringotts; perhaps Ironclaw could send them straight to Prince Hall. If he didn't get them there then simply put he was going to go nuts. If it was just one or two letters he'd understand if they got lost, but not all of them. He had a sneaky suspicion something more was going on than met the eye. It seemed he wouldn't have known about his family money, even if he had been opening his monthly statements.

"Having trouble?" asked Lucius knocking before entering his study, aware that Severus was using it.

"I haven't even started, I'm just trying to make sense of this mess," said Severus smoothly straightening up now that he had company. He had asked to borrow the study to write the letter to Dumbledore about taking a sabbatical. Instead he'd found himself going through a years worth of mail from Gringotts.

"What mess?" enquired Lucius curiously, as he poured both of them a white wine. He passed Severus his goblet as he took a seat next to him. He didn't see Severus stressed often, and wanted to help him if he could.

"I never received the summons for the will reading when my grandparents died. I also discovered I've not been delivered a single statement regarding the Prince Estate," replied Severus sipping the wine; Lucius had excellent taste in drink. He had yet to be offered something he didn't like here.
"Highly unusual," admitted Lucius cautiously, "Perhaps there's a redirection spell on your mail. It was very illegal to do it, unless it was parents doing it for their children." In fact he was pretty sure that's what had happened to Harry Potter. Otherwise Privet Drive would have been covered in owls constantly; no doubt the child had a vault filled with letters and gifts at Gringotts. All the while he had been abused; it was a sorry state of affairs.

"I receive my mail every Monday morning," said Severus shaking his head negatively, "Which includes the statement for my personal vault."

"Severus Gringotts sends them out on Sunday morning," said Lucius staring at his friend in confusion. They were well aware that people worked Monday to Friday. Sunday was what they considered a day of rest, that's when Gringotts sent out their statements, monthly or weekly depending on how you request them.

"I always receive them before classes on Monday, it's why I put them in my drawer and basically forget about them. My week is just too hectic to think about opening mail that I already know." replied Severus. Plus on Monday morning his mood is just too sour and bleak, after spending the weekend brewing without worry, to back to teaching brats that had no desire to learn.

"Well I don't know why they'd want the letters, it's not as though they could get into your vaults." said Lucius, but it was a breech of privacy, he knew Severus loathed the thought of anyone knowing about him. Lucius didn't blame him for being confused and angry about it; he would be infuriated as well.

"That's beside the point," said Severus his lip curled in repugnance.

"I know," said Lucius wryly, he'd figured as much they were the both on the same wavelength at that.

"Well there's nothing to be done about it now," said Severus gathering his letters and placing them into a neat pile. He grabbed a piece of expensive parchment that Lucius used for his correspondence. It was much thicker than the normal paper people used, and less likely to smudge ink all over the place.

"I'll leave you to it," said Lucius swiftly getting up giving Severus privacy to do whatever he needed to do.

"Thank you," said Severus.

"It's no problem Severus, you know I'm here if you ever need help." said Lucius honestly, he may be a dick to most people but family and friends meant a lot to him. The thing with him, he didn't put a white hat on and sell himself of as a saint. Not like Dumbledore did, everyone knew what they were dealing with when his name was mentioned.

The same couldn't be said for Dumbledore. Unfortunately nobody saw what the Slytherin's did, and it wasn't just because they were 'Dark' as he would put it. No they saw a side to him from the second they were sorted until they left Hogwarts. He very prejudicially favoured his own house and looked down his nose at the Slytherin's. All just because Tom Riddle had happened to end up a Dark Lord, they were branded evil and Dark Lords or servants. It was no wonder Slytherin's felt as though they had no choice but to be evil and follow a madman's footsteps looking for acceptance. Acceptance they should have found at Hogwarts, they truly should have abolished the houses along time ago.

Albus Dumbledore was busy sorting through his mail, which being Headmaster and of course the
great and powerful 'Albus Dumbledore' it was quite a lot. He had already been at it for three hours and he was getting pigeonholed. Albus stared at the Quidditch pitch from his seat, it was so peaceful and quiet during the summer he thought his mind wandering. It's when he liked it best, helped by not having to keep his masks in place. He didn't have to act all powerful and genial. Every single one of his staff was gone this summer, other than Trelawney of course, who ever went anywhere. She hardly came out of her tower, and Albus was just fine with that. The less people she saw, the less likely she was to make a genuine prophecy and blow the cover he'd created for her. Hopefully nobody would believe her if she did go into a trance these days.

Even his Deputy Headmistress was gone for the summer, visiting her family in Scotland. Unfortunately that landed him with all the mail that went through Hogwarts. He had students to observe, ones that would receive the scholarships this year. They could only give four scholarships each year, to the most deserving students. Of course Albus ensured that they were all Gryffindor's the prejudice old fart that he was.

Just as he put down the finishing touches to his last letter an owl swooped in. Albus stared at it in irritation; his eye twitching slightly was the only outward indication of his anger. He removed the letter; the second he did the owl flew away not waiting on a response. He recognized the writing immediately, he read enough of it during the summer when he revised and looked over the curriculum for each teacher.

He opened it curiously, Severus never got in touch with him during the summer. This had to be a first; his first thought was perhaps the Dark Mark was getting darker…that Voldemort was back before he was ready. Or should he say before he had Potter trained.

Albus,  
I know this is a bit unorthodox but I am taking a few years sabbatical. I have been offered a position I couldn't refuse. They are looking for someone to run the most renowned potions lab in Genève Switzerland. Not only that I will have free reign, I will have the ability to buy any ingredient I can think of or grow my own. The money is also greater than I could accomplish in ten years at Hogwarts. Out of all the people they could ask, it was me and another opportunity like this will never come around again.

I've already packed, any sign of trouble and I shall endeavour to make my way back as quickly as possible.

Severus. T. Snape

Albus gaped at the letter unable to even mentally think of a single thing to say. He completely shocked to the core, there was no way Severus would up and leave. Severus owed his very freedom to him; he jumped from his chair and grabbed a handful of Floo powder. He threw it at his feet as he shouted his intended destination.

With fluid grace, that could only come with years of experience he stepped out of the Floo. He waved his wand and cleaned up the mess, looking around his heart sank. Severus had indeed packed, his books were gone. Albus knew how much Severus liked his books; he took them to and from Hogwarts each year.

"Severus?" demanded Dumbledore, listening for a reply, barely retaining his composure he went into the kitchen - then the room he used for making potions, hoping he was there brewing away. Yet no, there was nothing, and he meant nothing. The potions, cauldrons, racks, vials and shelves were emptied. He truly had left, and he had no way of getting in touch with him other than mail. The Potions labs in Genève Switzerland were inaccessible, they never had visitors, people could only dream about being in such a place. Only the best were allowed in, Potions, spell crafters,
charm, transfiguration, the building was huge and each subject had a level of its own with the brightest and best people inventing.

Albus stood there at a loss, unable to believe Severus had actually left. After all he'd done for the man he'd betrayed him. If he didn't know Voldemort would be back, he would have gone straight to the Ministry to get a warrant for his arrest. He had to get Severus back, he had to keep the man close - he had to know the first second Voldemort came back. It's why he had insisting on keeping the sarcastic dour man close. Perhaps he shouldn't have kept the Prince estate from him, if he had it - he might not have been tempted by the money they offered him.

One thing for sure, he wasn't going to get him back standing here, angry beyond words Albus Apparated back to Hogwarts. He unfortunately couldn't go back through the Floo, there was no Floo powder.

Twenty five minutes later he was back in his office, sucking on two lemon drops laced with calming draught as he wrote to Severus. Finding it extremely difficult to not use words that would drive Severus further into their arms. If he liked it there, there was no telling if he'd ever get Severus back. He also had to make back up plans if he couldn't get him, he would need a potions teacher come one month time. He prayed that didn't happen, unemployed Potions Masters were difficult to come by. In fact Severus had been the first Potions Master Hogwarts had, had since Salazar Slytherin. The rest had just been teachers with very good potion grades.

"Have you got everything you'll need?" asked Narcissa folding yet another top and putting it on the pile. She was giving Severus Draco's old clothes; they would probably fit him for a while. At least until he got better and would be okay to venture out. If that itself would even be possible, Harry's scar was too recognizable. Not many five year olds had scars shaped like a lightening bolt on their forehead.

She had even given Severus some plastic plates, cups and small cutlery for Harry to use, all with Quidditch items moving around on them. She had gotten used to them there; she was finding it weird knowing they were leaving again. She shook off her absurd thoughts and nodded in satisfaction, they surely had everything Harry would need until he was better.

"Indeed," said Severus exasperated by her mothering, a very small part was grateful for it. He didn't know what the hell he was doing, but what new father did? And it was official Harry was his adopted son. He had signed the papers as well; Harry's guardianship had passed to him. The only people that knew about it were Lucius, Narcissa and the adoption certifier, oh and the clerk he'd bribed very heavily to sign of on it and store it. They'd also sworn oaths never to speak about it, and so they were safe for now. Gringotts probably knew as well, since everything was magically recorded.

He was correct; Harry Potter's documents had changed.

Before :-

Mother - Lily Evans-Potter (Deceased)  
Father - James Harold Potter (Deceased)  
Godfather - Sirius Orion Black (Imprisoned)  
Godmother - N.A  
Magical Guardian - Albus Dumbledore (Headmaster of Hogwarts)  
Guardian - Petunia Evans- Dursley (Maternal aunt and Muggle)  

After :-

Mother - Lily Evans-Potter (Deceased)  
Father - James Harold Potter (Deceased)
Godfather- Sirius Orion Black (Imprisoned)
Adopted Godfather - Lucius Malfoy
Adopted Godmother - Narcissa Malfoy
Adopted Godmother - Minerva McGonagall
Magical Guardian - Severus Tobias Snape
Guardian - Severus Tobias Snape

Severus had decided to use Minerva as a godmother; she was strong enough to stand up to Dumbledore. If she had control of Harry, she would bring him up fair, he would be happy and as unspoiled as a child could be. He had met her children, and they were always polite and well spoken. With the Malfoy's it was more of a back up in case anything happened to him and Minerva. Nobody could get behind the Malfoy wards to try anything. Should Dumbledore (doubtful) try and kill them all to regain control of Harry.

"Make sure he's warm enough," she said wrapping a light blue cover over him, as Severus picked the unconscious child up. The healer had been and Harry had made real progress. There would be no more check ups; he had been given a clean bill of health - well other than the obvious malnutrition. Which unfortunately couldn't be corrected right away - even with all the miracles magic could produce. No it would take along time for Harry to be the correct height and weight as other children his age. "Are you using a Portkey? Floo'ing or Apparating?"

"I am having the house elf take us, just the first time." stated Severus, he didn't like Apparating blindly, and if it was just he himself he'd do it. Unfortunately he had a sick child with him, and didn't want to risk Splinching them both. That was one sure way to have them both found out.

"That's good," said Narcissa still fussing slightly, in only a way a mother could over children. "You'll Floo us regularly wont you? Let us know how he is!"

"Yes, of course," said Severus distractedly as he thought about everything, making sure he had all his stuff, trunk, letters, keys for his bank vaults…yes he had absolutely everything he needed. Severus then called upon his house elf; it was time for them to go to their new home. One thing for sure Severus mused; it was going to be a learning experience they wouldn't forget. He only prayed he didn't mess up, Lily would never forgive him if he did.

Anything was better than Petunia though right?
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Becoming acquainted with their new home - Prince Hall.

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 11

Prince Hall In Its Glory

"Flippy!" ordered Severus, since the home was protected he'd need to know its exact location before attempting it. He would also need to add Harry's blood to the wards, so no harm would befall him. The wards should know Harry was his adopted son, but he wasn't about to take any chances.

"Yes, Sir?" said Flippy appearing before him, dressed nicely, for a house elf anyway, in a Prince garment. Evidently the Prince's went about things differently, and actually treated their elves with kindness. Severus had no plans to change that. He unlike Lucius didn't think instilling fear into house elves, was the way to go about getting their loyalty.

"Take us home," said Severus in his normal sharp voice.

"Yes Sir!" said Flippy looking extremely pleased. Finally they were going to have another Master to serve. They had been looking forward to this day, for such a long time. The others were just as excited, he had told them as soon as he got back.

Flippy took a hold of Severus' robes, and the grandness of Malfoy Manor disappeared. They reappeared in a beautiful and no less grand manor of Severus' ancestors - The Prince's. Severus was finally home.

Prince Hall welcomed them its wards tingling down Severus' body, giving him full control of them.

"Welcome home, Master Severus." said Flippy stepping back from his wizard's personal space. Waiting patiently for more orders.

"Has two rooms been cleaned up?" Severus asked, the bundle in his arms was rather heavy. Goodness knows how, Harry weighted almost nothing, something he was hoping to rectify within a month at the least. Something told Severus it wasn't going to be that easy, it would take a very long time for Harry to eat like a normal child.

"Yes, sir. Follow me, I'll show you the way." said Flippy excited.

Severus rolled his eyes as the elf showed him the way, Flippy was far too cheerful and exciting for his taste. Then again name someone who wasn't too cheerful for Severus' taste. You'd probably find it was a very short list indeed.

Thankfully they weren't led up too many steps, in fact it was just the one set. The manor was wider rather than 'Bigger' in the sense of height. The 'Master' bedroom door was opened and Severus got
to see it, before they went to the door next to it. This one was known as the 'heir' bedroom by all previous owners. Traditions were dying, as was the old way of speaking and thinking. Severus walked into the bedroom, it was large but not as big as the one he'd just been shown. There were numerous cupboards, a large four poster bed, dark red furnishing. It wasn't for a small child, lets put it that way. That wasn't Severus' concern right now, when Harry was well enough he could decide for himself. He spelled the duvet down, and put the sleeping child into his new bed. Staring at Harry, he looked starved, even after all the potions he'd been given. He truly needed some meat on his bones. Breathing deeply, he threw the duvet over Harry and cuddled him in - admittedly he'd rather have the Cruciatus Curse thrown on him than admit it. He was a private closed off man for a reason, and not many people knew why, and even less people alive that knew.

Severus walked over to the window, gazing outside in awe, the place was truly beautiful. Green grass as far as the eye could see, trees with all sorts of fruits were placed in various places. He could see the edges of a large lake or pond from one side. On the other, much to his disgust - a Quidditch pitch. He was rather curious, around the rest of the place. With one last glance at Harry, he left the room. Harry would be fine, he had a spell on the child. He would be alerted the second Harry began to return to consciousness. He had applied it after the healer had been, he had yet to feel it stir.

He took three hours, looking over every inch of his new home, most of the time he spent outside. Venturing to the edges of the wards, and circling around. The stables, the empty huts for other animals. There was even chicken huts, but Severus was unsure if they were inhabited. There were Herbology green houses, larger than even the ones he'd seen at Hogwarts. He was pretty sure there were also potion plants inside, at least the ones that lived in sunlight. Most potions required dark places to thrive, he did get rather excited by the prospect of seeing the Potions lab. He didn't have to fear that the house didn't have one, the Princes were known for their potion abilities. Even Eileen, Severus' mother, had been good at potions. Admittedly Severus was the best the family had seen in generations. Perhaps thats why his grandmother had passed their fortune onto their grandson. It was a good job the grandmother had outlived the grandfather, otherwise the Ministry would have gotten everything.

When lines died out, the Ministry received it, their first excuse was 'to help rebuild their world'. Now they weren't using any excuses, so all pureblood's made sure to have wills. Most wizards and witches loathed the Ministry, and it wouldn't change any time soon.

"What can Misty get Master Severus for dinner?" asked Misty popping into the hallway that led to the potion labs. There were four, individual rooms with two large cupboards filled with potion ingredients and of course herbs.

"I am fine with whatever you cook." said Severus his concentration was really on the potions lab, he desperately wanted to see it. He opened the door, and unbelievably an almost genuine smile spread across his face. It was the first genuine one, since his first ride to Hogwarts, on the train. He'd loved Lily, but even at the age of eight, emotion was considered, to him, a weakness. Seldom could anyone get a genuine, positive emotion from Severus. The only time his masks were down was when he was brewing potions, the one pure thing he could control in his life.

"Yes, Master!" exclaimed Misty her jubilant cry sounded the hallway despite her already being gone.

Severus entered the lab properly, if it wasn't for Harry he would already planning his first potion. He desperately wanted to brew something, anything. Unfortunately, and regretfully he backed out, and closed the door. He would definately be back, perhaps once Harry was better.

He explored more of the lower house, using spells to stop five year old getting into area's he didn't
think were appropriate. Which meant most of the rooms in the manor, other than the used bedrooms, living room, kitchen and a few other general places. The library he even sealed off, it was ten times bigger than Hogwarts own library. He wasnt about to let priceless books be destroyed by bored fingers or accidental magic. Harry couldn't read right now anyway, but it was something he would have to think about at great length. Who could he trust with Harry's life and education?

"Misty?" called Severus now outside the library door.

"Yes, sir?" asked Misty appearing before him, a small apron on and a carrot in her hand.

"Where is the warding room?" demanded Severus, he had a drop of Harry's blood, so they could add him to the ancient wards of Prince Hall. He should be privileged, Harry was the only non member to be added. The Princes weren't good at trusting, perhaps it was a family trait Severus had picked up.

"Flippy?" called Misty, once he appeared, the she-elf spoke again, "Show Master Severus to the warding room."

Flippy nodded in respect and acceptance of the task at his fellow house elf, before he spoke once again to his new master."Follow me, sir." said Flippy looking curious? a little shocked? it was hard to read a house elves face.
Chapter 12

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 12

Dealing With Minerva...Harry Wakes Up

Severus had been unable to resist brewing, he'd lasted until after dinner. Although he only brewed a potion he could brew in his sleep. Then again Severus could brew most potions in his sleep. He hadn't received his Mastery in that particular subject for nothing. His mind though, despite brewing was caught up in numerous scenarios and other things he had to decide. Most of them of course, revolved around the sleeping child, the up coming weeks were going to be hell. It would be no fault of Harry's, and he hoped he could keep his temper in check. It had been the one thing he inherited from his father, if one could call him that. He'd never been the most patient of men, ironically unless it came to potions. He was trying to decide what was best for him, in the long run of things. Did he teach Harry himself? Or did he bring in a tutor? Did he allow him to experience life as a normal child and attend primary school as both he and his mother had?

Severus stirred the potion a final time, before flicking his wand at the flame making it go out. The potion would need to cool before placed in their vials, otherwise it would just cause the fragile glass to crack and break. Thus rendering any potion within it, completely useless. There wasn't a single potion in the manor, either the house elves had cleaned them out, or no potion had been brewed within these walls for a very long time. Either scenario was likely, potions didn't last forever, they only had so long life expectancy before they become feeble, old and useless. Not that Severus would use them, he didn't trust other peoples potions. Not even from the people who were in name only his grandparents.

Not for the first time, Severus wondered why they had given all this to him. They'd disowned his mother, and ignored him for his entire life. He'd received nary a gift, acknowledgement or even seen them. Of course Severus was always one to think of Troy when handed a gift. Wondering what awaited inside it, 'Trojan horse' always came to mind. Nobody gave him something for nothing, unless it was Dumbledore and his damnable sweets.

"Master Severus, this letter was at the edge of the wards," said Flippy looking extremely unsure. After all she wasn't yet used to this new Master, and didn't know how he'd react to certain things. Especially being interrupted during brewing, something they tried not to do. "The owl has stayed, they want a reply."

Arching an eyebrow in curiosity, it mustn't be from Dumbledore, otherwise he'd have used his Phoenix. As far as he knew Phoenix's could get past all wards, Fawkes could disappear and reappear in Hogwarts. He wasn't deluded in thinking it was the safest place in the world, like everyone else. He knew though that you couldn't Apparate, Fawkes and the house elves were able to. It was almost as if they were on a different frequency, that magic couldn't detect. Nevertheless he floated it on to his desktop, and cast nine different spells before he was satisfied it was in no way tampered with.

"Thank you," said Severus quietly nodding his head, indicating that Flippy's services was no longer needed. The house elf, smart enough to realize its dismissal promptly left the Dungeons.

Severus opened the letter wondering who could be contacting him, the writing was familiar. Yet it was as if the missive had been hastily written, therefore making him unable to tell exactly why it
was so familiar. He looked at the signature first, and groaned in exasperation. The last thing he wanted was to deal with Minerva McGonagall.

Severus,

What is going on? Albus just informed us you had been accepted into the WIOM in Geneve Switzerland. I am very proud of you, nobody else I know has accomplished such a feat. Unfortunately I'm beginning to suspect that it's not even true, you cannot be in two places at once after all. I want an explanation as to why I've just been alerted I'm godmother to Harry Potter! Not that I mind, I adored his parents after all, it has come as a shock of course. Why would you have him?

You have twenty four hours to reply before I come looking for you.

Minerva

Severus ran his hand tiredly over his face, flicking his wand, the time materialized before him. At this time she was usually in her office, sighing in frustration he immediately left the dungeons. He knew Minerva didn't threat idly, she would try and find him. In doing so rouse Dumbledore's curiosity and maybe even suspicion. Something he wanted to avoid for as long as possible, until he'd cemented his role as Harry's guardian. Entering the living room, he grabbed some Floo Powder from the container it sat in, on the side of the fireplace. Placing a cushioning charm on the marble, he threw in the powder, shouted in the words, and stuck his face into the magical green flames.

Minerva was pacing her office, looking a cross between, worried, terrified, thrilled and cross. She had in her hand no doubt, the letter from Gringotts alerting her to her new status as Harry Potter-Snape's new godmother.

"Minerva," said Severus, causing her to jump in fright, before glaring at the man for his impudence. "I assume you have locked and warded the room?" making sound like a suggestion instead of an order.

"It is now," said Minerva flicking her wand and saying the words that would accomplish what she wanted. Once it was done she turned her chair facing Severus' direction and sat down. "Did you get into WIOM?"

"No," said Severus, "I know a few of the Potions Master's there, they have agreed to place my name on the list, so whenever someone Floo's they will think I work there but am unavailable. Many choose not to allow Floo calls in their quarters." they completely immersed themselves with the objective of creating something new. Most of them didn't even have families, those that did had discovered their new calling and left.

"Why is Harry with you?" asked Minerva, her face full of apprehension, all the scenarios filling her head were none she liked. Harry being discovered by Death Eaters, nearly killed. Being abandoned by his Muggle family, she had never liked them. Even the thought of Severus getting revenge on James had regrettfully crossed her mind. She just couldn't understand why Severus would take him. Mention Potter and his entire face would scrunch up in disgust. He'd loved Lily, but that was as far as his love went. Yet she'd remembered Dumbledore telling her that Severus had sworn to protect Harry. Then the thought of the Death Eaters and the Dursley's began to cement in her mind.

"What do you know of his Muggle family? If I'm not mistaken I remember you saying that night they were the worst sort of Muggles, that someone should keep an eye on him. Was this not done?" asked Severus his face made of stone, his eyes though was filled with a fierce anger.
Minerva's heart sank, she knew that look all to well, the few abused students Severus had found out about. Or of course there was the instance when Severus' parents had been brought up. She was half glad he wasn't in the room with her, she may be older than him but he was indeed intimidating. "I did indeed, the child they had was absolutely spoiled, I believed the same might happen to Harry or worse he may be ignored."

"Was there someone watching him?" repeated Severus, wishing he'd listened to the conversations Minerva and Albus had about Harry over the years. Unfortunately he'd shut them out, not wanting to hear about the boy, when he'd survived and Lily had not. Also a big factor in there was the fact that he had been Potter's son.

"Of course there is, Arabella Figg looks after him," said Minerva confused, "Severus what is going on?"

"Figg? That insane cat woman who can't see past her bloody nose and cats?!!" Severus rasped out stunned beyond belief. "A squib to boot! She was the one who was looking after Harry?"

"Harry?" repeated Minerva, it must be bad for Severus to actually call him Harry and not Potter. "Severus there are wards stopping anything getting to him, now tell me what is going on now!" she was getting very impatient now.

"I observed two five year old boys beating what appeared to be a three year old up in Cokeworth, naturally I stepped in. Before I could try and help the child, he flinched away from me and ran as if the grim was on his tail. Not only that but I could feel desperate magic emanating from him. Magic a twelve year old should possess not a three year old. I cast a tracking charm on him, vowing to keep an eye on him. If my suspicions were correct I'd take him to St. Mungo's and that would have been that." said Severus pausing to catch his breath and rearrange his thoughts. He kept his face stony, Minerva on the other hand looked terrified of what may be revealed.

"Turns out they didn't live in Cokeworth, the family was just visiting. I did a scan on the child, and how he'd survived so long surprises the hell out of me. He had a list of injuries longer than the magical register holds of magical children. Only then did I realize who he was, and what age he truly was. He's been abused Minerva, severely abused. All in the name of protection wards and the greater good. Figg has failed in her duties you all have. I truly do not know if Harry will ever be normal, but I have the best chance of doing that." said Severus seriously. "I did indeed make you godmother, he needs strong women in his life. I just sincerely hope you will not fail Lily's son again."

Minerva had tears running down her face, her mouth covered by her hand. Her eyes were filled with anguish, defeat, regret and most importantly - shame. If only she had fought Dumbledore harder, insisted more. Even just visited once, she might have seen something was going on. She shoved those thoughts aside, straightened her spine and became the woman Severus knew best - one who would defended her little lions to death. "Where are they?" she asked her voice filled with fury. Her claws were out and she wanted blood.

"We cannot take action yet, you know this. Dumbledore would have Harry back at the Dursley's before we could blink. Being the head of the wizengamot he has a huge amount of power in the legal department." cautioned Severus. Its why many of the Death Eaters had been sent to Azkaban without trial, and also why he was able to get him out so quickly.

"Yet? So you plan to?" asked Minerva hopefully.

"They wont get away with it, I just need to cement my role as Harry's new father. As soon as he turns eleven I'll have him claim his headship of the Potter line, giving him the ability to bring them
up on charges. Not even Dumbledore would be able to stop the demands of the last of the heir to the Potter Estate." replied Severus. Which meant Harry would be 'emancipated' in many ways, and would never be forced anywhere he didn't want to go. So if by some miracle the charges were dropped Harry would be safe. Harry would be able to choose whether he wanted to remain a Potter-Snape or if he just wanted to go back to being a Potter. Once he died, Harry would have the Prince name under his belt as well.

"You have thought this through then." said Minerva unsurprised, Severus was always a man who could think and act at the same time. The notion of act first think later was probably foreign to Severus. "Can I see him? Is he okay?" she was biting her lip, a sure sign of high stress and worry. Minerva didn't have children, only nieces and nephews, all of which she adored and she constantly worried about them. Severus could always tell when her family was having a crisis with that action alone.

"I'll let you know when you can, he's not woken up yet, unfortunately I haven't revealed the worst of it." replied Severus, and even from the fire Minerva could see he was extremely tense. Minerva paled, she knew whatever he was going to tell her was very bad indeed. Abuse in Severus' book was the worst, lowest of the low. "Out with it." the Transfiguration teacher said, bracing herself for yet more unbelievably news.

"His magic was bound," said Severus, it didn't take a genius to figure out who could have done it. Voldemort was going to kill him, why bind his powers? Hagrid couldn't turn a matchstick into a needle never mind bind someone's magic. Plus the fact seventy five percent of his magic had been bound, was a grave indicator that only one person could have possibly done it.

"Black," scowled Minerva looking sick.

"No," said Severus bitterly, "He couldn't have bound seventy five percent of Harry's magic. The rest which I may add, worked solely to keep him alive the past years."

"He wouldn't," murmured Minerva her face openly displaying her shock and denial.

Severus just stared her in the eye, letting her remember who she was talking to. He never said anything that wasn't one hundred per cent true. "It's true unfortunately." said Severus, his voice had an underling fury added to it.

"Why would he do such a thing?" gaped Minerva, her world rocked to its core, the news was shattering her belief in all she thought she knew. She now would have to pick up the pieces and act as though nothing happened. If for no other reason but to keep Harry Potter safe. As his godmother now, she had to do her best by him, especially after failing him so badly. Although if she got her hands on Figg it would be fair game for all involved.

"You tell me," said Severus, he couldn't come to any conclusion for the bound magic, at least nothing good. "Where does Figg stay?" he then asked changing the subject.

"Wisteria Walk I believe, two blocks from where Harry stayed in Privet Drive." said Minerva. She fancied actually going there and inflicting some sort of damage on the woman. "What are you going to do about her? She will notice Harry is gone."

"As much as it would satisfy me to flay her alive, I will just redirect her mail - its illegal I know but to be honest I really don't care." said Severus.

"She has access to the Floo Severus," said Minerva quietly pointing out a flaw in his planning.
Severus swore nastily, and Minerva couldn't blame him really.

"Any ideas?" growled Severus.

"I have no idea Severus, you don't have to worry as of right now, she's currently in the hospital if I remember correctly." the feline Animagus said. "Perhaps I can arrange for a impromptu holiday, for her?" the more distance they put between Severus leaving and Harry being found missing the better. That way Dumbledore wouldn't be able to connect the dots.

"Perhaps that's for the best," said Severus agreeably, although she didn't deserve a holiday. "Let me know where you send her." he'd made sure she ended up hurt in some way, a small repayment for letting a five year old be abused.

"Severus, where are you? Albus mentioned going to Spinners End, are you currently residing in Potter Manor?" asked Minerva, it was the only free place she could think of, she knew Godric's Hollow was not fit for living in. Not that Severus would step foot in there, he hadn't done since that night.

"No, I had the Prince Estate Willed to me by my grandmother. We have taken up residence in one of the properties they...I own." said Severus honestly. His back was beginning to get sore from this kneeling, it was time to cut this conversation short.

"Oh, why did you not mention it before?" asked Minerva surprise flashing across her features.

"I did not know I had inherited it, I still do not know why I did not receive mail for the Prince Estate from Gringotts." said Severus, "Unfortunately I think I have a good idea as to who stopped it." with what he'd learned about what Dumbledore had done to Harry, there was little doubt he'd stoop so low to keep his inheritance from him. A mail redirecting spell did that nice enough, just as Lucius had stated. He had gone into a lot of trouble to control Harry, wouldn't surprise him the least if he'd been doing the same to him.

"I do hope you've complained to Gringotts!" said Minerva frankly astonished and furious. It was unheard of, for someone to be the last heir and have no idea of their holdings. Gringotts weren't stupid, surely they had noticed something wrong. She would have pitched a fit and stripped them bare with mere words alone.

"They know how unhappy I am." said Severus wryly, he froze in the fireplace, "I have to go Minerva, I shall contact you later."

"Of course," said Minerva wondering what was wrong, once he was gone, she turned her chair around and stared blankly at the Gringotts parchment in front of her. She was trying to process everything she'd just learned. To try and store it in some sort of acceptable order. She couldn't, she was deeply shaken by everything. She had known Albus since she was eleven, he had given her, her love for transfiguration. She'd gone on to get her mastery then became the Transfiguration teacher when Albus was made Headmaster. She had been through a lot with him, especially during the war. This new side she'd learned was extremely daunting to say the least.

Harry came to it, feeling strange...then he realized why, he wasn't in agony, and more importantly he was on the softest surface imaginable. It felt so good against his body, and he was warm. Harry couldn't remember a time where he felt this warm, this comfortable and this pain free in his life. Where was he? The Dursley's wouldn't allow him to be this comfortable. Harry opened his eyes and looked around, as best as he was able to anyway. The room was the kind Dudley had, except a lot bigger. Where was he? Where were the Dursley's? and most importantly why was he here?
"Welcome back Harry," said a voice from the door staring the living day lights out of Harry, despite its softly spoken tone. Harry turned back round, almost getting whiplash in the process as he tried to figure out who it was. He squinted at him, trying to figure out who it was. He couldn't, he'd never seen him before in his life and the voice was unfamiliar too. Was Harry his name? Did they have the wrong boy? It seemed likely. He didn't want to tell this man, but he knew he had to, it was the right thing to do.

"My name is not Harry," replied the trembling five year old, watching the figure warily, keeping a closer eyes on his hands and feet. They there the first indicators that someone was angry. His green eyes were filled with total fear, that would put the most abused house elf to shame.

"No?" questioned Severus, his heart sinking, the child didn't even know his own name. He didn't even have to ask, he just knew the child probably thought his name was Freak. It had been petunia's favourite name for Lily upon her going to Hogwarts. Then he remembered what Petunia had called him upon entering the room. Boy. "Well I happen to know you ARE Harry. The scar upon your forehead gives you away little one." the unfamiliar words rolled of his tongue, as he tried to lessen the fear in the child. He was terrified, his skinny body was still trembling dangerously. If he didn't watch he would end up having a panic attack. Something Severus rather hoped to avoid, he wasn't good at comforting people. Never mind abused five year olds.

Harry ceased his trembling as he became confused, what was so special about his scar? How could it be used to identify him? He'd gotten it in the car crash that had killed his freakish parents. The one he should have died in.

"Are you hungry Harry?" asked Severus, changing the subject, he was unsure of what to do now the boy…no Harry was awake. He couldn't call him boy, not unless he wanted to set the trembles off again.

Unfortunately the trembles did start up again, more noticeable than ever as Lily's green eyes widened with fear again and a heavy dose of suspicion. The question was, was it because he asked and Harry didn't want to decide for fear of answering with the wrong answer or because of something else? He could only imagine what they'd done to the child for the past four years. Even his own parents hadn't abused him the manner Harry had been abused. He'd gotten a wallop here and there, and neglected, and hated by his father at least for having magic, and worn second hand clothes. Nothing severe as broken bones, and complete starvation. Harry had unfortunately been completely starved, the state of his malnutrition gave that away. Not for the first time he wished he could go and kill the Dursley's and start on Figg the stupid Squib that she was.
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Harry begins the process of healing

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 13

A Start

Severus waited for Harry to reply, but the five year old seemed incapable of answering. He was just sitting on the bed quacking in fear, seeing those green eyes, Lily's eyes, so full of terror set him on edge. He was beginning to wonder if he should have taken on this role. It made him feel things he didn't like feeling, those eyes had always been his greatest weakness. No, he couldn't think like that, he'd failed the child once, he couldn't do it again. He knew he was the only one that would truly be able to raise Harry as a normal child. Harry's past would make people too sympathetic towards him, and he'd be spoiled. It wasn't that Harry didn't deserve some spoiling, but not to the extent others would. He needed grounded, level headedness, most importantly love. When it came to love, he knew he could love the child, it was showing him that would be difficult. As it stood, he didn't have to worry about that as of yet, since the child would hate to be touched in any manner.

"Flippy?" called Severus, waiting patiently for the house elf to appear before him.

"Yes Master Severus?" asked Flippy, refraining from bowing since it was obvious to her that he did not like it. His big eyes found the child on the bed, he looked terrified, his eyes were rather large, perhaps it was him? The child had evidently not encountered a house elf before.

"Bring up some lunch, with milk. Also bring me one of the vials from the Potions Lab." said Severus. It was a good job he'd brewed the potion, Harry evidently wasn't going to calm down on his own. He could see it from the child's point of view; he was in a strange place with a strange man after all. Once the elf was away, Severus took the chair from the side of the room and sat down beside the bed.

"That was Flippy, Harry." Severus told the child, using a tone of voice he rarely used. Hoping it would soothe the child, it had worked wonders with Draco as a child. Especially when he was very fussy, and crying. "He is a house elf." refraining from taking about magic for now. At least until he had the calming draught consumed. He wanted to flinch from the fear still present in those eyes. Yet he just steeled himself, reminding himself that one day that fear would no longer be there. That sometime in the future Harry would be happy. Hopefully.

appeared back in the room, a tray filled with food and drink was placed on the bedside table. He didn't stick around, knowing his Master would call again if he was needed. It was going to be great, having a young master in the house again. The last baby had been Eileen Prince, and she was long gone.

"Harry?" said Severus, getting the child's attention, "Drink this for me." handing over the now opened vial, he had little doubt the child would do exactly as he was told. Abuse that severe, Harry was probably terrified to step a toe out of line. He waited patiently, hand extended for the boy to
gather his courage and take it. He kept his face impassive, and was rewarded with the child reaching out with a shaking hand to take it.

All Harry knew were orders, his mind automatically wondered what would happen if he drank it. What was it? What would it taste like? More importantly what would happen to him if he didn't take it and drink it? He said none of those thoughts, like a normal child would. Instead he reached out to take it, surprised the man hadn't just grabbed him and forced him. His Uncle would have already hurt him, realizing he was pushing his luck with the stranger he drank it. It tasted awful, like those dirty socks Dudley had shoved in his mouth one day when he was beating him up. Then suddenly all his fear, worry, terror, uncertainty and confusion seemed to fade away. He felt calm, at peace perhaps? He did not know because these feelings were foreign to him. It was like being back in his cupboard, safe from everyone who wished him harm.

"Harry?" Severus said quietly, removing the vial from the rather lax fingers. It had been a junior potion; it shouldn't have affected him so much. Then again none of the children, who'd been tested (and drank the potion when it was needed), had been so severely underweight. He did not think he'd get much out of the child before sleep claimed him again. He got up and sat on the edge of the bed, propping Harry against his chest. He had to eat, even if it was only a little. He knew if he'd done this without the potion, Harry would have no doubt ended up having a panic attack. "Here, drink this." he said pressing the goblet to the child's lips. "Drink." he repeated when Harry didn't comply.

Harry opened his mouth, and allowed whatever it was, slide into his very dry and horribly tasting mouth. He was very surprised that it actually tasted nice that he almost choked it back out. It was so very cool and cold going down his dry parched throat. It tasted nothing like the only thing he'd ever drank, the water he always had from the bathroom tap. When he went to the toilet he'd always try and sneak a drink. To try and fill his tummy up with it, so it didn't grumble quite so loudly.

Severus sighed in relief when Harry actually began drinking the milk. He was by no means a stupid man. He knew to get the bones, which had just been mended, strong you need to consume a lot of calcium. He had a lot to do, it seemed endless really. Once Harry had drained the goblet he put it aside, and awkwardly, began trying to get him to eat the lentil soup. Unfortunately Harry just couldn't stomach any more than three spoonfuls. Severus was surprised he'd managed as much; very much aware that Harry's stomach was probably the size of golf ball at this stage. It would take a long while before he could eat a proper meal. Even longer before he could eat solid foods.

Looking down, he noticed Harry's eyes were half mast, he had been correct in his assumption. The potion had ended up easing Harry to sleep; he'd need to water it down if it continued to have this affect. He could hardly gain his trust by drugging him so much he was completely out of it. The potion was intended to calm them down only, plus he had so much he needed to tell Harry. Curiously enough, Harry hadn't seemed to catch on that the house elf had Apparated and Disappeared in his presence. Either that or he knew about magic and accepted it. Knowing Petunia as he did, he doubted it, but Harry could have figured it out on his own. Could a five year old have figured out about magic? No, it was impossible. No doubt Tuney had banned such words from her household.

Harry felt so very odd, it was so weird not feeling fear, hurt, all consuming hunger and panic. He felt so free, light and normal…and so very sleepy. His closed against his will, he never normally fell asleep with someone so close to him. If he'd been able, his eyes would have sprung open. He could feel himself being tucked in; nobody had ever tucked him in before. The last thing he heard was fading footsteps before sleep finally claimed him completely.

Harry had finally found a home at last.
It took Minerva hours, sitting in her office alone, to get a hold of herself. All she had learned had continued to circulate around her mind. Driving her insane, making her anger and disgust triple fold. In the end she had to get one of the house elves to bring her up a calming draught and tea. Poor Harry, thank Merlin Severus had seen him; otherwise she dreaded to think the outcome. She shuddered at the thought of opening the Daily Prophet one day, the body of a seven year old sprayed out for all to see and a horrific title. Drinking her Tea, hoping it would warm her up, but she just felt cold despite the warmth of the fire and tea. She desperately wanted someone to talk to, but there was absolutely nobody. She couldn't risk letting anyone in, it was hard to trust anyone, and life such as it is even after war was over.

She thought she could have trusted Albus Dumbledore with her every thought. Look how that one had turned out, Merlin, binding a one year old child's magic the night he'd just witnessed his parent's deaths. As if watching his parents murdered wasn't traumatic enough. She shuddered at the mere thought of locking even one percent of someone's magic. Never mind the seventy five percent Severus said was bound. It would need to be someone more powerful than Albus or a ritual that would need performed to free Harry's core. Not many were more powerful than Albus. She suspected Severus was more powerful than him. Severus was just too good at Occlumency and Legilimens to not be more…powerful than both Dumbledore and of course the Dark Lord. He had remained a spy in his ranks for three years perhaps? Keeping his true allegiance from being found out. Plus his potions were more potent than anyone else's. He put a lot of magic into them, stirring his very essence into the simmering potions.

She placed her empty cup back on its saucer; she had a staff meeting, an emergency one at that. She didn't see why it took all of them to discuss Severus leaving, and possible Potion candidates. Yet the meetings were all mandatory, only students' needing help was their 'out clause' so to speak, to avoid the meeting with reason. Swallowing thickly, she nodded to herself and put on a brave front. It would be hard, not to call Dumbledore up on his deplorable actions. She had to give Severus and Harry the time they needed. Severus had spoken the truth; Dumbledore had a lot of pull in the Ministry, as Head of the Wizengamot. Nothing would stop him apparently, why he was going into so much trouble to control a little boy she did not know.

"Ah, Minerva, I was beginning to think you'd forgotten!" said Albus beaming at her from across the room.

Minerva had visions of herself, throwing her hands around his neck and choking the life out of him. Casting spells on her, showing him just how powerful she really was, giving him a taste of it. Yet a strained smile appeared on her face, as she took her seat, which was as always, right next to the very man she'd recently learned damning things about.

"Minerva are you well?" asked Sprout staring at the deputy Headmistress in concern. Her warm brown eyes, showed genuine worry for Minerva's welfare. She looked pale and clammy, as though she was coming down with something. Her smile seemed very strained, she wasn't her usual self.

"You do look under the weather, perhaps you should go and see Poppy?" suggested Albus, his blue eyes filled with unease for his transfiguration teacher. He hadn't seen Minerva unwell for a long time.

"I'm fine," said Minerva her voice stern, making her sound more like her normal self. "Don't worry, I'm fine honestly." she said much more softly, aiming it towards Professor Sprout. The woman in turn nodded, still looking a little worried, but her concern had eased considerably.

"As you are no doubt aware, Severus Snape has resigned as our esteemed Potions Master, thankfully its summer and we have enough time to look for a replacement. Does anyone know any
suggestions who could replace him?" asked Albus, there were only a few people still at Hogwarts this summer. Minerva, Filius, Sprout, Poppy and of course himself.

"Why not bring the previous Potions teacher back?" suggested Filius; "I know he didn't want to retire so early." no Albus had practically told him to retire. Of course Slughorn hadn't fought it, his guilt eating him up inside. Not that anyone realized this of course, Slughorn was good at denying anything had ever happened.

"Slughorn? He isn't exactly teacher material." said Sprout, she remembered him. He'd constantly held clubs in his own name, with people who were well connected. He had not been a good teacher or head of house.

"I have to agree," said Minerva.

"We may not have a choice, there are not many qualified Potion Masters," said Albus quietly, subdued. He wasn't happy at having to replace Severus; he had been a great teacher. Even if he didn't have the social skills required to make the students like him.

"I spoke to Severus, he's settled in quite nicely," said Minerva, "Unfortunately he didn't get to talk as long as I would have liked. Someone asked for his help and he left, said he would get back in touch when he could."

"They put you through?" asked Albus surprised and rather angry, none of which showed upon his face. He had called twice, and only got the reception; he had asked to speak to Severus but had been denied. She'd said he wasn't accepting calls and asked him, him of all people if he wanted to leave a message.

"Yes," said Minerva, "I do not think I've seen him so content before." happy would be stretching it, Severus according to the world was never happy.

"Indeed," said Albus his face now the one that was strained. "I shall hold interviews next week for potential teachers. Has everyone finished their class schedules and after school club rosters?"

"Everyone has sent them to me," said Minerva, "Myself and the others staying just have to decide upon our times and dates for the after school clubs." the others all nodded in agreement. They'd completed their schedules last week, it was the first thing they did. They liked clear schedules before the students came back. That way they only had the summer homework mark upon the school resuming.

"Very well, now it just needs decided upon for this year Prefects and the head boy and girl." said Albus nodding in agreement.

"Can that not be discussed next week? I am undecided on whom to choose." said Minerva, "I need to look over their academic records, to make sure I am making the right decision."

"Of course," said Albus agreeably, it was a tough decision to make after all. "Then let's consider this meeting adjourned."

Minerva was the first person to get up, she had plans to make and quickly. Once she was in the safety of her office, she Floo'ed the travel agency and booked a holiday. It wasn't for her of course, but rather for Arabella Figg. She didn't deserve a holiday, but judging by Severus' demand she knew something would happen there. Hopefully Severus wouldn't kill Figg, she may deserve many things but Death wasn't it.

"Where do you want to go?" asked her travel agent, Colin.
"I am not going, I'm booking it for a friend of mine, and she's a squib. I think America might be a good place to let her visit, Florida perhaps?" suggested Minerva. "Book it for tomorrow, send a Portkey as well."

"Tomorrow? That will be costly." said Colin half amused half impressed.

"Cost is of no consequence." said Minerva, not if it kept her new godson safe anyway. "Pick an area, can you Floo over with the travel documents? The name on the documents are for Arabella Figg."
"Of course, I can have it done in ten minutes, I assume it's a Muggle area she will prefer to travel?" asked Colin.

"Yes, thank you Colin." said Minerva.

"Very well," said Colin knowing he was being dismissed before disconnected the Floo from his office. He immediately began the process of booking the holiday, it wasn't the first time a holiday had been booked for Arabella Figg. So he already had all her details, true to his words, ten minutes later he had a holiday booked for the squib. None had ever been done on such short notice before though.

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"Severus? How are things?" enquired Minerva, as she made an appearance in his fireplace. She had spent hours going through the files to get the Floo address. Her plans were going rather well, and now she just wanted to know how poor Harry was.

"How did you get the Floo address?" asked Severus, his eyes flashing in true anger.

"Don't be obtuse Severus, if you do not remember I taught your mother here as well. All information is kept, including how to get in touch with the parents in the event of an emergency." said Minerva. Only the wizarding population had Floo networks of course, the Muggle born population had to be sent letters unfortunately. Eileen hadn't been a Gryffindor so it made it exceedingly harder to find information without alerting anyone of what she was up to.

"Of course," said Severus feeling all kinds of foolish.

"How is he?" asked Minerva, she wouldn't leave until she had gotten then the information she desired.

"He's as well as can be expected," said Severus repeating his earlier words to her.


"Minerva, he's been terribly abused, he finds himself in a strange house with a strange man - how do you expect him to be?" said Severus just as exasperated as Minerva was. "He was terrified, I had to give him a calming draught, which worked a little too well, and no doubt he will sleep the rest of the night." he'd wanted to keep it from her, how bad Harry actually was, but she obviously wasn't having any of it.

"Poor boy," said Minerva, "Do you need anything for him? Toys? Clothes? I can supply some, it won't raise questions with me buying them." she had niece and nephews after all. She had raised him, they were technically her children, she'd adopted them in as her own after her sister and her husband died during the war. Not many knew that piece of information; she was a very private
"I have already gotten all I'll need for now. Narcissa was kind in giving me at least one of everything a five year old will need." said Severus. "I thank you for your offer; I might take up on it later."

"He has teddies? They might offer him at least some measure of comfort." asked Minerva, all children loved cuddly toys, even if boys at his age were self conscious about it and would deny it.

"Actually no, nothing like that," said Severus.

"Then I shall get him something." said Minerva, determinedly. "I also sent Arabella her tickets; she leaves tomorrow morning at five AM. Hopefully she won't notice anything out of the ordinary until then."

"Considering the child probably never got to leave the house I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't notice anything." said Severus wryly. Plus Petunia would try her best to make everything look 'Normal'. She knew he kept his words, and Petunia would be terrified he'd be back for her and her family.

"What makes you think he didn't get to?" asked Minerva.

"He was badly abused Minerva, someone would have noticed something surely?" said Severus tersely. He didn't like the thought of someone knowing and failing to take action against someone abusing a child. He himself weren't fond of children, yet he'd never consider leaving one in the hands of his abusers.

"What if someone has complained?" replied Minerva, not liking where her own suggestions were going.

"I don't suppose it matters if anyone has, he's safe now." said Severus.

"If someone has, it's better to get the whole picture, the more evidence Harry has in his favour the more likely he has of getting the Dursley's arrested." said Minerva quietly.

"Perhaps, then I suggest a visit to Privet Drive and the social Services are in order." said Severus, it was true, the more evidence he had the better it would be. Especially if Dumbledore somehow prevented Veritaserum from being used.

"Albus is attending the Ministry tomorrow afternoon, perhaps we can meet up then and begin?" suggested Minerva.

"Yes, the sooner the better," said Severus, he didn't know how far along in his revenge Lucius was. He would need to get in touch with him, find out more information.

"Very well, I shall Floo over at Two PM, have the network open." said Minerva.

"OF course," said Severus nodding in agreement. "Where is she?" he then asked.

"America, Florida, I shall give you the full details when we meet." replied Minerva.

"Good," said Severus nodding his head in understanding, with that Minerva left the Floo network. Severus made a mental note to change the Floo address, if Minerva was able to do it, then there was no doubt Dumbledore would if he even suspected Severus had his inheritance and was lying. Which he would soon, considering he would no longer get the statements (if it was him) but he had
a feeling he was correct in regards to Dumbledore's actions. He was just grateful he'd kept up a correspondence with two Potions Master's who were helping him. They hadn't demanded anything, it was the mutual respect they had for each other that had them doing the others bidding. Of course there was always the fact he would owe them a favour. Severus was an honourable man and he would repay it when the time came.

Staring at the grandfather clock, he realized he would need to get into a routine. Harry may get up early in the morning, and he knew he'd need all the sleep he could get. He was very grouchy in the morning without some decent sleep, who was he kidding he was grouchy no matter what. Smirking at his own thoughts, he made his way to his bedroom. Showering, brushing his teeth he went to bed, reading a bit of potions weekly waiting on his hair drying naturally. His mind drifted from the magazine every few minutes. Wondering if he should tell Harry straight away, or if he should let Harry get used to him before revealing magic. He was deeply conflicted, there was so many ways it could go wrong. He only got one chance and if he screwed it up that was it.

He finally understood how parents felt all the time; Lucius had often spoken of being conflicted when it came to Draco. You live and learn though, he had a feeling he'd be learning quite a lot in the coming years. Harry wasn't a normal child, like Draco was; he would need special attention and handling, especially when it came to being punished. Yes, the boy would end up punished, especially when he became more used to his new life. He'd test Severus, and he realized this, he would need to make sure not to screw up. It was just the matter of what kind of punishment would be suitable. The Muggles liked to put their child in the corner, for 'quiet time' when they were bad. At least that's what Lily's mother had done with Petunia and Lily. Not that it had been done often; Lily was always a good girl. It was most Petunia who'd had her nose in the wall. For calling Lily names, it had infuriated Rose and Liam Evans when their daughter came out with such horrible names. It would have broken their hearts to know what Petunia had done to her own son and Lily's, their grandchildren. For the first time, he was glad they had died so they weren't around to see it.

He consoled himself with the fact he wasn't alone, he had Narcissa, Lucius and Minerva to help.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

An Unlikely but united trio visit the Muggle Social Services

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 14

An Unlikely Trio

If anyone in the wizarding world had seen this particular trio they'd have stopped, did a double take, and then thought they surely were hallucinating. Either that or one in particular was under the imperious or being Poly Juiced as. As it was two of them had Glamour charms on, preventing anyone to see their true identities. One of those people was Severus, who was supposed to be in another country. Dumbledore spoke to too many people for Severus to be able to walk freely without a Glamour. The other had just joined them, and he would never be able to be seen with the witch that was currently going to go with them, to look as he normally would. It killed Lucius to change his appearance, he was a very vain proud man, but we all did things we didn't necessarily like in life. The Witch with them was actually one Minerva McGonagall, Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry. She'd seen all the letters Lucius had written; especially in regards to getting rid of all 'Muggle, and Muggle born' related books removed from Hogwarts. It was an on going battle between Lucius and Albus, one she took no part in.

Still Minerva didn't like him, and she also didn't trust him, but she also trusted Severus' judgement. So she merely pursed her lips and endured the aristocratic's presence. So all three of them were tense, with near scowls upon their features. A funny sight indeed, which made them an extremely unlikely Trio.

"Where to first?" asked Minerva, as they prepared to Apparate away.

"Surrey county Council," said Severus smoothly, before the three adults disappeared from the magical world, and regained their bearings in the Muggle world.

"Lucius you are a lawyer should they ask, I am a police officer, and Minerva, you are a social worker," said Severus, handing over the necessarily credentials for them to be able to pass off being what they were.

Lucius seemed unsurprised by Severus' quick thinking; Minerva on the other hand, was continuously surprised by his actions. How easy it was to forget just how quick Severus had to be, especially to survive the Dark Lord's inner circle for three years. He thought of everything down to the last detail. No doubt Salazar Slytherin would be proud of how cunning and smart his Slytherin was. Although he'd probably be more impressed with Severus' potion abilities.

"How is it going?" asked Severus as they walked towards their destination, their clothes had been re-glamoured, they now had clothes on that suit the part. Lucius had to look away seeing Severus in such a …Muggle attire. That's what their police officers wore? He wouldn't be seen dead in such an outfit, never mind attend work where people knew him with such an outfit on. Although he and
Narcissa would surely gotten the use out of the handcuffs.

"I'm in the process of buying the land around Privet Drive, it will be a rather advantageous income, more than I could have predicted. Grunning drills have already signed the paperwork, I now own it. First thing I'm going to do is change the name," said Lucius his lip curled in disgust at such a Muggle name. "Of course Vernon Dursley will quite quickly find himself without a job when I demand all employee's go through a background police check. They will find that Vernon Dursley is very unsuitable for the job, and an embarrassment to the firm."

Minerva's lips unwillingly twitched at the thought of what they were putting the Dursley's through. It was perhaps a better revenge than a quick torture; it was mind games, something Slytherins excelled at apparently. "Police check? Why would that help?"

Severus smirked in vicious, feral satisfaction, "Lucius knows a police officer, who is actually a squib, he bribed him quite handsomely, although he admitted later he'd have gladly gone it when he realized what was going on." he revealed to the cat Animagus. Far too often people got away with things, evil things; they should have been locked up in prison for. Now Vernon Dursley's had all manner of charges against his name. Charges that were always 'mysteriously' dropped. DWI (Driving while intoxicated), disturbing the peace, driving without a licence, stealing a car, resulting in resisting arrest while invading the police. Joy riding, domestic violence with a previous partner before Petunia back in London. Whom she'd taken out a restraining order against. Assault and also assault with a deadly weapon. The people who'd supposedly been 'hurt' by Vernon were all people who were dead now so there was no way to prove the fake reports false. The officer Lucius used, was very good indeed and did his background searches on people before starting.

"I see," said Minerva, hiding her grin behind her hand, glad to see that Harry was truly being avenged. Although she was surprised Lucius would do anything for Harry, he was the reason the Dark Lord was dead after all.

"He is first and foremost a Wizard, nobody deserves that treatment, especially not from disgusting Muggles." said Lucius spitting 'Muggles' with no small amount of disgust. He had nothing against Muggles in general, just the Muggles they were talking about. Otherwise he would have sacked everyone at Grunning's and sold the company in pieces. Then had the entire land he was buying declared private and making the families leave their houses. No he may be somewhat dark, but he wasn't necessarily evil. He did what he had to, to keep his family safe as well as his position. "As Severus' son he has more protection than you'd believe. Not many Death Eaters would want to anger or have Severus coming after them. I know I wouldn't, even Lestrange, wasn't stupid enough to go too far in her taunts knowing just how lethal Severus was at spell casting." finished the blonde seriously.

Minerva blinked, but remained emotionless, at least outwardly. She had known Severus reputation at Hogwarts, but she hadn't thought to think he'd have one amongst the Death Eaters. It didn't surprise her as much as it out to have, to know that the Death Eaters were just as terrified of him as the students (and some teachers) were. She saw Severus was going slightly pink around the face, and suppressed her amusement. Severus reacted to praise as someone reacted to neglect. He did not like it one bit. "We are here? Can we just go in and get this over with?" said Severus wryly; he just wanted to get back to Harry, who was currently sleeping. Hopefully he'd sleep until he got back, the last thing he needed Harry to think was he'd be passed from pillar to post.

"Indeed," said Minerva and Lucius in Unison before a horrified look appeared on Lucius' face.

"Good afternoon, welcome to Surry county council how may I help you?" asked a chirpy receptionist, despite the fact she was confronted with three curled lips. Minerva's was more like a
grimace but if you weren't looking hard enough you wouldn't notice.

"I need to speak to whomever is available from Social Services immediately," said Severus, it wasn't hard to imagine him as a police officer, he bled authority from every pore on his body.

"Do you have an appointment?" she asked.

"Would I have asked to speak to someone if I did have an appointment?" asked Severus unable to help himself, sarcasm was rolling off him in waves. He had no tolerance for idiots. Lucius coughed to hide his laughter; meanwhile Minerva had lost what was left of her lips.

"We don't normally see someone without an appointment," said the receptionist.

"Even if it's a matter of life or death?" asked Severus scorn crossing his voice and face.

The receptionist bit her lip, before picking up the phone and began speaking to someone on the other end of it. They could only hear her, but it was enough for them to get the gist of the conversation. "There's someone available to see you now, if you go through those doors, to levels up, corridor C straight along you'll find the waiting area. Mrs. Wilson will be with you as soon as possible."

"Thank you," said Minerva as she passed the others weren't as kind.

"She was an idiot," said Lucius as both men took the stairs two at a time, Minerva slightly behind them.

"That girl was just doing her job," said Minerva, shaking her head. Honestly, Slytherins didn't have a sympathetic bone in their bodies. Eventually they'd walked up the flights of stairs; Minerva wasn't even out of breath. She went up more than two sets of stairs at Hogwarts; she would have much preferred using her Animagus form though like she did at the magical school.

Five minutes they sat in the empty waiting room, as the smell off coffee, tea and other aromas filled the air. You could tell it was lunch time, and it made their stomach rumble loudly. Then a short black hair, blue eyes short woman stepped towards them, her Surrey accent very noticeable. "Hi, I'm Mrs. Wilson," said the married woman, staring at them enquiringly.

"Marion McDonald," said Minerva, shaking her hand, allowing her social services badge to be seen, carrying her fake name.

"Luke Matthew." said Lucius shaking her hand for only a second before withdrawing.

"Samuel Smith," said Severus, shaking her hand.

"It's nice to meet you, now can I ask what this is about?" asked Mrs. Wilson, eying them all wondering why three people in their respective career choices would want to see her.

"I need to find out if any of your social workers were ever called out to investigate Petunia and Vernon Dursley for abuse against Harry Potter." said Minerva doing the talking before the men could become sarcastic.

"Oh," said Mrs. Wilson, coming to the wrong conclusion that Harry Potter had died, and the others were there to investigate. A lawyer, a police officer and another social worker, it made perfect sense to her. "Follow me." she said speeding off in the direction of the office, her heels clicking loudly as she stalked in a way that should have impressed Severus.
"Please take a seat," she said dragging an extra chair over so all three could sit. Once that was done she immediately sat on her seat, and began clicking away on her computer. "We have had thirteen complaints, all of which were immediately dealt with. We immediately gave the Dursley's a surprise visit, but both boys are extremely well looked after."

Severus choked in shocked, twisted, bitter, dark amusement. "Which one of your completely incompetent nitwits visited Privet Drive?"

Mrs. Wilson's jaw dropped at his callous, harsh words, she puffed up, but the look he gave her, that they were all gave her made her pause. Truth be told, she was actually very intimidated by them. She could feel a surge of menace emanating from them. She wanted them to leave, she wanted to go home and stay away for the next week or so. Swallowing deeply feeling crazy for thinking it, she typed away on her computer again.

"There have been two social workers visiting, Tara Digby and Olive Halliwell. Can I ask the reason behind this visit? Will it involve the legal department?" she asked.

"That depends," said Lucius smoothly, "We will need to speak to them individually and immediately, and we don't want to accuse anyone of collaborating answers now do we?"

"Of course not," she replied knowing she didn't have a choice. "You can use this room, and I'll go retrieve them right now."

"I'll come with you dear," said Minerva, standing up. Not giving her room to argue both left to collect the two other Social Workers.

"If he's done anything I'll kill him," hissed Severus to Lucius his body radiating fury. Lucius didn't need to ask, who the 'He' was that Severus was referring to. Dumbledore. The thought of Harry being 'extremely well looked after' was stretching it beyond expansion. Underweight, but otherwise doing fine, would have been easier to accept. No there was something going on, someone had done something. Severus knew it, no social worker, who was trained to spot abuse, would have left Harry in that house. He'd saw the child for a matter of seconds and saw the abuse right away. He was no way more experienced than the Social workers.

"This is Tara Digby," said Mrs. Wilson coming back in with Minerva McGonagall. A woman she thought was named Marion McDonald. The tall black woman walked in confidently, sitting down, laying her bag beside the chair. Her red high heels tapping impatiently as she waited for them to speak. She seemed completely un-intimidated by the three surrounding her. Whether she'd remain that way…we would just have to wait and see.
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Undeniable proof of Dumbledore's wrongdoings.

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 15

An Unlikely Trio Part Two

Severus observed the woman across from him, who was the epitome of calmness. She didn't seem the least bit bothered having been called up from her job, and confronted with three people, two of which were in the law enforcement. Normally even innocent people felt as thought they did something wrong when they saw a Police officer. It set them on the defensive, wondering what they could be accused off, even if they'd done nothing. Fortunately for Tara, Severus could see through her 'masks' to see she was actually rather concerned. Not for herself, but for a child, a child she may have missed caused her to feel like a failure. She was trying not to overreact of course, until she knew exactly what was going on.

"During the process of this interview, everything you say will be recorded is that understood?" asked Severus placing the Muggle digital recorder on the table. Lucius didn't understand what it was, but Minerva and Severus did. They had both been raised in the Muggle world; both had a parent that was non-magical. They'd had very different childhoods though, whereas Minerva's father had accepted his daughter as a witch, Severus' father had not. Minerva's sister had not been magical, but they'd got on rather well.

"Yes," said Tara, nodding her head, her foot stopping its tapping, it was a nervous habit she'd had since she was a child. She'd gotten into trouble at school a lot because of it; the constant tapping had driven her teachers to distraction.

"Please state your name for the benefit of the conversation," said Severus, while he said their 'fake' names and 'fake' profession.

"Tara Digby, Social worker for Surry Council," said Tara breathing deeply feeling very troubled. She couldn't keep her mouth closed any longer, she just had to ask. "What's going on? Who is this about?"

"I believe that you have visited Mr. Mrs. Dursley a total of eight times is this true?" asked Severus, barely able to contain his fury.

"The Dursley's?" asked Tara, frowning, yes she could remember visiting them. The first time was very hazy at best, she couldn't remember much about it at all. She did remember returning here and filing a report, stating that both boys were fine. "Yes I've been there." she said, straining to remember why she had such hazy recollections of that family. She could remember the first family she'd visited how is it that she couldn't remember much after visiting them eight times? And why the hell had this not bothered her before? Had she hit her head today or something? It was beginning to feel like it.
"Can you tell us about the first meeting?" enquired Minerva, seeing as Severus was not going to talk, if anything he seemed rather disturbed by something.

Taking a deep breath knowing it was important, she began to describe what she could remember. "I drove to Privet Drive, and sat in the car watching the house for fifteen minutes. We like to observe our surroundings and if possible watch for the children before we declare ourselves there. Unfortunately we cannot see the children alone, the chances of a child admitting the abuse is next to none, especially with their abusers there. We can only observe and learn what we can from that. I saw two boys, playing but when I asked him who he was, he told me his name was Piers, so he wasn't Mr. Potter the boy as to which I'd been sent to see."

"Continue," said Minerva, sending the poor woman a sympathetic look, she seemed to be really struggling to remember. The fact Severus was so quiet, made her think that perhaps she wasn't to blame.

"I told them who I was, and they let me in immediately and seemed very welcoming but slightly angry that anyone would accuse them of anything. Something I have of course seen to often, I do not take anything in the face of value. I thought perhaps that the callers we had were concerned about his weight perhaps. His cousin isn't it? Yes, he was extremely obese. I was guided around the house, they showed me everywhere…." said Tara, unwittingly a memory she'd forgotten about came forth. She had no idea that the man sitting opposite her was removing the memory charms she had placed upon her person. Tara gasped, how could she have forgotten? It was inconceivable to her. "I noticed at once that there was only one bed in the room Petunia claimed her son and nephew shared…how could I have forgotten?" she was inconsolable.

"If you can just tell me what you can remember now, I'd greatly appreciate it." said Severus grimly, he knew the magic wrapped around her mind. He didn't need to undo any of the blocks; she'd never had a chance to do her job. That fact alone made him warm up to her slightly, after the interview was over; he'd break one completely for confirmation that it was the old fool. Pensive memories were probably more damning than speaking the truth under Veritaserum.

We sat down and had coffee, they were very nice, and introduced us to both boys. They had new clothes, had with them new toys, both were very happy to answer my questions…." said Tara, her headache was getting to the point she couldn't stand it anymore. Tears were stinging in her eyes, Merlin it was painful, and she'd never suffered from migraines before. It was the last thing she remembered before she passed out.

Minerva quickly dived for the Muggle, stopping her from hitting her head on the way down. Lucius automatically set a charm on the door, stopping people from entering as Severus walked over to the unconscious female. He cast the spell that would let him enter her mind, and tore through the very first Obliviate attached to her mind. You could tell someone had been, there were spaces in their memories, it was like a film reel with pictures missing, blurry images were also a good indicator.

"Severus what is going on?" asked Minerva, looking extremely worried, she also hated being in the dark.

"She saw Harry; she immediately called the police and ambulance to have him removed. No amount of money convinced her to keep quiet, considering they don't get much it's a surprise really. Unfortunately something or someone must have alerted Dumbledore and he Obliviated everyone. She immediately came back here and filed a report that all was well. The other times she came, she was drugged, the Dursley's must have some sort of forgetfulness potion." growled Severus. His magic reacting to his anger, causing the room to heat uncomfortably.
"So he has been interfering," said Minerva her eyes closed in horror, he knew, they had definitive proof that Dumbledore had been aware of the abuse. "Can't we just go to the Ministry with what we have now? I cannot in good conscience allow him near children...how many others has he ignored?" she told them defeated and hollow.

"You will just have to keep an eye on everything, and everyone come to that. Simply just bring up the first years getting a full history scan their first year at Hogwarts." said Severus.

"If you prefer I can petition the school board for that to happen?" suggested Lucius.

"Perhaps that would be for the best," said Minerva, Severus of course nodded.

"What do we do with her?" asked Lucius getting to the more pressing matters at hand. The woman would probably end up being Obliviated again, she'd been violated enough magically, but there was nothing they could do. In fact they were probably being merciful, she seemed to feel really guilty that she'd missed something - and she didn't even know the child. It was weird, it's the first time he'd ever felt bad for a Muggle he hadn't touched, who couldn't defend themselves against their magic. He rarely tortured Muggles', only if the Dark Lord told him to. Otherwise he would only put them out of their misery. Nothing stopped him having to watch Lestrange having...fun as she'd called it. He had much to feel guilty about, but his life hadn't been an easy one. People thought that money solved everything, and they were always happy...the idiots couldn't be further from the truth. "Perhaps it would be best she forget everything again?"

"Indeed," said Severus, pointing his wand at her, and he promptly caused her to forget everything she had remembered while Severus had been in her mind, and the Obliviate Severus had completely uncovered (with Dumbledore features in it most prominently).

"...Ma'am? Are you okay?" said the three of them, crouched before in staring at her in concern.

Tara stared around in confusion, trying to remember what had happened. The last thing she remembered was getting a really bad migraine. She clutched at her head, grateful that it seemed to have gone now. "I am sorry, I just had such a bad headache or migraine...my mother used to get them this violently too." she said apologetically. As the three concerned newcomers helped her up.

"Thank you for your cooperation," replied Severus sitting himself back down.

"Did I miss something?" she asked quietly. "About the child? Is he okay?"

"He is fine," said Severus reassuringly, he couldn't tell her anything; especially not that Harry had been removed from their care.

"That's good," she said simply, relaxing, wondering what the whole thing had been about. If he was fine, why had she been asked all those questions about a child that was well cared for?

"Could you please let...Olivia in on your way out please?" asked Minerva, officially ending the first meeting.

"Of course," said Tara, rubbing at her forehead absently, thinking to herself to remember and buy something her headaches and migraines, she certainly didn't want to be caught out like she had today.

"Thank you," said Minerva shaking the woman's hand as she stood.

Tara nodded at the men before she left the room, remembering to take her handbag with her. She was much more subdued leaving as she had been upon entering the room. Once she was outside,
she told Olivia to go on in; Olivia was older than her by seven years. "They are ready for you now." she said as she made her way back to her office.

Olivia took a deep breath as she entered the room, wondering what was going on. She couldn't deny she was extremely nervous and worried. Had they found out about her? Was she going to be arrested? She shook of her thoughts as she stood in front of them. "You wished to see me?" she enquired.

"Olivia Halliwell?" asked Minerva, "I am Marion McDonald, the officer is Samuel Smith and the lawyer is Luke Matthews." the older woman said, introducing them. The men nodded as their names were called, before Minerva asked her to take a seat.

"You were called to the Dursley's five times in the past few years...that is correct is it not?" asked Severus watching the woman closely. She was nervous, too nervous for his comfort. He didn't draw any conclusions though, because she might be just feeling guilty about something innocuous.

"Yes," said Olivia, her eyes wider than normal, forcing herself to remain relaxed. They were only asking her questions, there was no way they could possibly know.

"Tell us about the first meeting," said Lucius, his mercury eyes regarding her suspiciously; she had Christian Louboutin shoes on, with a matching bag. They were not copies. He should know his wife absolutely loved his design; his wife spent a lot of time in France buying his designer stuff. Louboutin was actually a wizard, who had branched out into the Muggle world. There were just more Muggles than Wizards or Witches come to that, it will have been a rather profitable choice to make. He was one of the richest French wizards out there. Very well known in both worlds, at least to the upper wealth social circles. He leant forward, imparting the knowledge he had to the others.

"Well I was invited in; the place was extremely clean and well maintained. Mrs. Dudley was busy folding up the laundry, but immediately put on the kettle and made me feel extremely welcome. I could hear both boys up the stairs, playing loudly, having fun." said Olivia, her heart beating like a drum out of control. Her palms were drenched in sweat, but she dared not move or fidget. "I had a conversation about the calls we had received, they were understandably upset with the accusations levelled their way. I had a conversation with both boys, and came to the conclusion the concerns were invalid."

"What did Mr. Potter look like?" asked Severus, his black eyes flashing viciously, he knew she was lying; she had no defence against him snooping around in her mind. She would rue the day she decided to take the bribe and forget about a child inches from death.

"Average height, skinny, like his Aunt, dark hair and brown eyes," said Olivia, basically describing a child version of Petunia, hoping and praying she wasn't going wrong.

"Brown eyes you say?" asked Severus, nodding his head, playing her expertly. Minerva looked ready to throttle the girl as she began to understand what Severus was doing. Even Lucius vividly remembered that Harry had green eyes, not because he'd seen the child awake, no it was reported
the night Voldemort was defeated. His eyes, the new mark upon his forehead…everything about
him. He remembered Lily’s eyes though, even if he'd only seen her for one year before he
graduated Hogwarts.

"Yes," said Olivia relaxing, if she'd seen the so called social workers face, she'd have ran for the
hills.

"You saw him every time you visited?" questioned Severus.

"I did," said Olivia adamantly, more confident now. "Is he okay?" she asked putting a concerned
face on.

"If you call being in critical condition for days okay, then yes he's fine." said Severus a sneer
curling at his lips.

"Critical condition?" stuttered Olivia wide eyed, "What happened? Has there been an accident?"

"An accident? If one can call being beaten within an inch of his life an accident then yes." said
Severus his sarcasm getting worse the more he spoke to her. "For your information, Harry Potter
doesn't have brown eyes, he has green eyes, you haven't met him even once have you?" his black
eyes were boring into hers, daring her to lie to him again.

Olivia began to feel very panicky now, "Yes, I mean…he said he was Harry Potter." she said
defensively, her voice now two octaves higher.

"And the money you received from the Dursley's?" asked Severus his voice filled with danger, and
promise of a violent death.

"How dare you?" said Olivia puffing up in outrage, her face going red, making her blonde hair look
sickly. You have no right to make accusations like that! About anyone's character."

"We have written confessions from Mr. And Mrs. Dursley, each day you were due to visit they
took out eight hundred pound from their bank." said Lucius, another piece of the puzzle falling into
place.

"It didn't come to me, I am a social worker, it's my job to help children and I would never let them
down." said Olivia looking sick now.

"Lies," said Severus, "By the end of the day I am going to make sure you never get near children
again. It's because of people like you our children are placed in further danger." it wasn't a threat it
was a promise.

"To think others do it out of the goodness of their heart, but are hated because of the few nasty
ones." said Minerva shaking her head in utter contempt for the woman standing on front of him.
"Do you even care about the child who's suffering you were paid to forget nearly died?"

"I didn't, I've never ignored a child." spluttered Olivia wide eyed in protest.

"Yet another lie, I have enough suspicion to have you arrested," said Severus, "Trust me I'm going
to do everything in my power to ensure you are put behind bars for a very long time."

"I am not lying!" wailed Olivia terrified, her skinny frame shaking with the terror that the police
officer was invoking in her.

"You better not leave the country, otherwise I will make sure there's a manhunt for you, each step
you take you'll wonder if it's your last." swore Severus, casting a tracking charm on her back unnoticed, and one to stop her from leaving England should she think about it. He'd take it off her as soon as Lucius and himself had handed the evidence the real police officer. She utterly turned his stomach; at least one of them had common sense and compassion.

"Do you think perhaps Mrs. Figg has been Obliviated also?" asked Minerva as they exited the building.

"Figg?" enquired Lucius, "As in the Figg family? Why would they be in the Muggle world?"

"Arabella, the squib." explained Severus, "She has been charged with keeping an eye out on Harry since he was put on the Dursley's doorstep."

"I had no idea the Figg's had produced a squib," said Lucius in surprise. Then again it wasn't something spoken about. Nobody went around admitting they'd had squib children, it just wasn't done. When they found out they were shipped off to the Muggle world to live. Of course Argus Filch is a different matter, the Filch's hadn't minded their son was a squib.

"It was three generations ago," said Severus wryly, "She's around eighty years old I would say."

"Maybe I should pay her a visit," suggested Minerva.

"I doubt very much he Obliviate's her, he'd have to do it every time she saw the him. If you regularly Obliviate someone, you begin to realize something is going on. She may be a squib but was raised a Witch for the first eleven years of her life. She would probably get suspicious very quickly." replied Lucius gravely.

"So she had to know," sighed Minerva inhaling deeply, betrayal was everywhere it seemed. Harry had saved both worlds, even if one would was unaware of that small detail. This was the thanks he got? People who were supposed to protect him, taking money and leaving him to abuse. The Headmaster of a school Obliviating social workers to get his own way. "What is his end game?"

"Excuse me?" asked both men stopping and turning to face her curiously.

"What is Dumbledore's end game, what does he want? Why did he allow Harry to be abused? Why didn't he stop it? What does he want in the end of it?" asked Minerva as she began walking again, they were trying to find a small dark spot so they could Apparate away again.

Lucius and Severus shared a look, before the blonde reluctantly nodded. They had already understood Dumbledore's game.

"The Dark Lord isn't truly gone Minerva, the Dark Mark is still visible, barely but nevertheless it is there. He's clinging to the mortal plane, bodiless." replied Severus his voice as grim and hollow as the conversation he was having. "Hence Dumbledore's use of the word Defeat, not destroy. If you remember Dumbledore defeated Grindelwald but he's in prison not dead."

Minerva gazed at them completely horrified by Severus' words, then and then she realized how little Dumbledore confided in her. She had been stupid enough to think she had been his companion. Little by little what she was learning was slowly destroying everything she believed in. Thank Merlin for her Gryffindor courage, otherwise Minerva wouldn't have had the heart to continue on.
Chapter 16

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 16

That Harry...Is Your Mum

Severus Apparated back to Prince Hall, and immediately removed his glamour ignoring the twitch of Narcissa's lips. Who was amused by his new temporary look, Narcissa didn't see Police officers often. Sometimes she ventured into the Muggle section of the world, to shop, but that was only ever in France. Severus in turn gave her a deadpanned look, before his gaze fell on the sleeping child. He was glad to see the child still dead to the world. He was however, very surprised not to see Draco with her, Narcissa and Lucius didn't trust many people.

"Where is Draco?" asked Severus quietly, as he took a seat on the edge of Harry's rather large bed.

"He's being tutored, Gavin has begun teaching him this week, Draco seems to be doing very well so far." said Narcissa in explanation. Right now it was only his 'ABC's and '123's' at the moment. It would be another year, maybe two before he starts Latin, Spanish and Italian lessons as well as Maths and English which would include writing which most children enjoyed, they loved making up short stories. In probability he would learn some magic as well, before he entered Hogwarts. With a magical mother and Father, the authorities would never know Draco was learning magic outside of Hogwarts. No it was just up to the parents to abide by the unspoken rules, which in fact most did not adhere to.

"How long?" asked Severus nonchalantly, he had a child to look after himself now, so he was rather curious to know everything. Severus wasn't a man who considered anything without having all the facts. He planned on researching it thoroughly anyway, no matter what Narcissa said.

"To start off with just two hours each day, Monday until Friday, in a few months the hours will be increased to four, then six hours in half a year." said Narcissa it's the way it had been for both her and Lucius. It allows children to get used to the new schedule, as well as their tutor.

"I see," said Severus nodding his understanding, it was much like the Muggle world then. Although they started attending Nursery at the age of four, getting more used to being without their parents, before beginning Primary school. He was still for most part undecided on what to do about Harry's education. If he had a tutor there was no doubt he'd flourish better, and learn more than he could at a Muggle school. Muggle primary schools had around thirty students to a single teacher. Children easily fell through the cracks. Then there was the fact Harry's magic would be rather wonky, at least for a few years. The magic had kept Harry alive, and the rest of it bound, once it was free...a great deal of patience was going to be needed. No doubt damage repair as well, he knew how explosive accidental magic could be.

"Has he woken at all yet, Severus?" enquired Narcissa as she marked the page where she'd last read and closed her book. Placing it in her handbag before gazing up at Severus fondly, he was a good man, definitely the best choice of Godfather. Not that she'd have allowed anyone else. Severus may like to think he wasn't good with kids, but he was, it was just teaching he was unpleasant at. Or rather found the entire thing distasteful. She wondered what changes would occur in her friend; now that he wasn't teaching and had a child to bring up. His attitude would have to change; Lucius had changed, the very first time he had held their child she had seen that love shining strongly. He had been nervous though, she had too, they'd been rather young, still were in fact. Since his own
father, Abraxas hadn't been the fatherly kind, it had been no wonder Lucius had been terrified of mucking up. In the end Lucius was being the father he'd always wanted his own to be.

"Yes, very briefly, the calming draught I gave him was too effective," said Severus wryly, hopefully that wouldn't happen again.

"Would you like me to explain some things to him?" asked Narcissa, "A woman might help put him at ease." she might wear a mask in public, but never in private, who could keep up a mask around her jubilant, adorable little son? Who looked so much like his father. He would grow up to be a very handsome young man. Unfortunately she knew Draco would have to adorn a mask too, with the Dark Lord not truly gone, Draco was going to have to lord it over everyone. Unless of course they could ensure a way to destroy what's left of the Dark Lord. This would be the preferred option, what kind of mother would want their son to act king of the world? Right now though, if she wanted her family to survive, that was what they had to do.

"No, he has to get used to me, I owe it to him," said Severus his head swivelling in Harry's direction. Harry moaned slightly in his sleep, but settled down right afterwards, his little face peaceful. He had sworn to protect Harry, and never thought more on it, assuming he'd have to start up the vow when the child was eleven. He had never for one minute, with other than scorn thought of Lily's son. He felt guilty every single minute, especially knowing the pain the little one must have been suffering. He couldn't even imagine it really, sure he'd been walloped a few times, but he'd been a little older, and his father had been pissed and aimed badly. Other than that he'd been deprived of enough food for a growing boy, and decent clothes. That's as far as the abuse went, and look what he'd turned into, he couldn't imagine what would have become of Harry should he have been forced to remain there. They might have had a threat worse than the Dark Lord out there, or just as bad. Oh he doubted Harry would have joined him, just ended up as dark and twisted as him. If he hadn't been allowed to be happy why should he let others be? Would probably have been Harry's rationalization for what he was doing. He should know, he had at one point thought the same thing. He'd blamed the world for his life, never once thinking that it was his own actions until the prophecy…no, thought Severus bleakly he was NOT going to think on it.

"Of course, you will know better than I," said Narcissa, she and her sisters had been brought up as all young pureblood women did. Learning how to be the prefect wife, smart, always dressing to impress, no getting dirty, and never speaking to those of lesser blood. The fact that they'd all been extremely beautiful had made their lives a little easier. They'd have no trouble ensnaring what was left of any pureblood heir. Bellatrix had chosen Lestrange to be her husband. Or rather their parents had asked her who she'd prefer after presenting her with two marriage contracts. Lestrange just happened to be as much a pureblood, obsessed, fanatic as she was. She had no scope of experience when it came to abuse; she'd only ever heard little titbits of her husband's childhood. It had just been another normal day for her and her sisters, then when her parents had presented Andromeda with hers it had all gone to pot. The worst of it, she had felt as betrayed as the others, unfortunately its how she'd been brought up. Andy had left the family, married a Muggle born wizard, Ted Tonks, and had been disowned. To this day she hadn't seen her sister, in such a small world it was a miracle really. She also knew her sister had given birth to a little girl, Nymphadora. Who was at Hogwarts or just about to go, she didn't know her exact age. Lucius hadn't been how she thought he'd be, lording it over her, like he'd done with everyone at school. Despite their arranged marriage, they'd fallen in love against all odds. Then they'd had a beautiful little boy.

"Thank you for coming over, Narcissa," said Severus honestly, he wasn't comfortable leaving Harry alone with the house elves. They wouldn't have let anything happen, but he preferred an actual human with him.

"It's my pleasure Severus," said Narcissa immediately, if it wasn't for Harry Severus would never
be asking for any favours. He just wasn't the sort of man who asked, unless he felt as if he had no other choice. Incidentally he'd never ask for anything for himself, Harry had already wormed his way into Severus' heart whether the wizard realized it or not. Narcissa knew, but she didn't say anything, she didn't want Severus to stop it from happening. Harry would be protected here; it was just getting the child to realize this that would be difficult. "I best be off, you know where we are, even if it's just to talk." she reminded him putting a delicate hand on his shoulder, as if to reinforce her words.

"Of course," said Severus nodding his head, with that both Severus and Narcissa left Harry's room. Severus escorting her to his Floo Network, temporarily taking the wards down, so she could get home. There was no point in Apparating; it would just mean walking to the end of the wards here, then all the way through the wards at Malfoy Manor. Narcissa stepped into the Floo, still managing to look regal with her shoes in the ash and soot that made its home in Severus' fireplace. Two words later she was gone, leaving Severus pensively standing there.

As promised Severus and Lucius had immediately went to see Lucius' informant. Handing the police officer the information they had on her, so he could do the honours. One piece of paper was charmed to tell him exactly where she was so he could pick her up. Since he couldn't do magic himself, it had to be the charmed paper.

Minerva had been surprised by their dealings; especially with the fact the officer didn't seem the least bit intimidated with Lucius. Whether it was because he knew the blonde wouldn't hurt him while he was useful, or they got along...were friendly. It wasn't just her preconceived notions about Dumbledore falling apart but everything, she had never seen this side to Lucius Malfoy before. Needless to say, as soon as she got back to Hogwarts, she was definitely going to need to have a few drinks and sort out her head.

Severus calmly placed his book down, marking his page before going up the stairs to Harry's bedroom. The charm was alerting him that the child was awake once more, he had thought long and hard on how to do things. It was just after dinner time, rather late for the child to have just woken again, but what could he do? Sleep and food was the best thing for the child right now.

"Hello Harry, how are you feeling Little One?" asked Severus, the words were still rather foreign to him. It was in his nature to be biting and sarcastic, not soothing and comforting. He had a lot of work ahead of him; hopefully he would be able to do this. If not Harry would probably end up one confused little boy.

"Can I go to the toilet please sir?" begged Harry, never once looking up at the man fearful of his expression. Every time he asked Vernon that question, he always looked ready to implode. He had never understood why, after all humbleness had been beaten into him by the obese man. He didn't have to ask with Aunt Petunia; as long as he was invisible he was safe. Vernon through, had relished any excuse to raise his hand to him, whether the excuse was valid or not.

"Of course," said Severus cursing himself silently, "Your toilet is this way." gesturing for Harry to come, he did, slowly and with confusion written across his face. There was no wonder at his new room, no positive emotions whatsoever. Was Harry even capable of them at this point? Or had the abuse truly broken him already. It was a very bleak prospect, but tonight hopefully he would know.

"Go on then, I will wait out here." he said encouraging the child.

"Yes sir," said Harry his voice sounding hollow. Harry entered the large bathroom; it was bigger than Dudley's bedroom. There were toys on top of the bath, just like at the Dursley's. Harry sat down on the toilet doing it that way. He was so lost and confused, how had he gotten here? Where were the Dursley's? Was the man looking after him while they went away now instead of Mrs.
Harry felt a pleasant feeling in the pit of his tummy, a feeling he'd never experienced before. He was a good boy? This had never been said to him before, was it because he didn't know Harry was a freak? A forlorn look appeared on his face afterwards. He would have liked to stay a good boy, maybe nothing freakish would happen.
"Harry?" said Severus, trying to get the child's attention away from the floor, and focused on him.

"Yes sir?" asked Harry his eyes automatically meeting his before skittering away, as if he was remembering he wasn't allowed to look people in the eye.

"My name is Severus Snape," said the Potions Master, eyeing Harry, but the child wouldn't meet his eyes, he kept them firmly on his hands as if Harry thought he'd reach out and slap him for nothing. "We have already met, do you remember?"

"No sir," said Harry trembling slightly.

"No? I was there the day your cousin and his friend were hurting you," said Severus, biting his lip to prevent himself from saying 'beating you to a pulp' in his scathing tones. He loathed any form of abuse; he didn't even let his Slytherins away with it. The only problem was most wizards didn't actually physically touch people, especially the purebloods. They just resorted to name calling and of course duelling. He could only name two or three times in his entire Hogwarts career when he'd seen any of his students hit another, and two had been in jest, the third had been an outright fight between two Muggle born's in the charms corridor. He'd given them detention for five weeks, removed one hundred points from Gryffindor, for each of them and took them by the ear all the way to the Hospital wing. McGonagall had barged into his rooms later, almost breathing fire, but left with her tail behind her legs. He shook off his thoughts; he could think later, right now he had Harry to concentrate on. "If I remember correctly I told the dunderheads to leave," his lips twitched it was by far his favourite words for the miscreants he had to look after.

Harry hunched down further, a single nod was all he got that the child remembered the incident.

"I was concerned for your safety, so I followed you, only to discover you were being abused as I had suspected earlier. I was about to take you with me when your aunt returned, I discovered who you were." said Severus quietly, "Do you know what happened to your parents Harry?" had the Dursley's even told him anything? Did he even know what his mother looked like?

Harry bit his lip, flinching at the mere word 'parents' he could remember what happened the last time he'd asked. He hadn't understood why he had an aunt and uncle, instead of a mummy and daddy. Not that he'd called them aunt and uncle often. He knew what happened to them, they'd told him once, gloatingly.

"Harry?" asked Severus wondering how many times he'd have to get his attention during the conversation. He hoped his head injuries hadn't left permanent damage, like the inability to concentrate for any length of time. Perhaps he should have Lucius' healer take another look at Harry to be one hundred percent sure.

"They died in a car crash," said Harry his voice barely audible, if there had been a single other noise in the room, Severus would not have heard him. Fortunately, Severus had a good sense of hearing, bat like the students had often said, along with eyes at the back of his head.

Severus' lips disappeared, and for the first time he was rather glad the child couldn't look at him. For the first time, in a very long time, he was unable to contain his reaction. The fury was showing clearly across his features. Of course they'd lied to him; thankfully Severus didn't know the entire story or all hell would have broken loose. Now the question remained, did he tell Harry the truth? Perhaps an accident was better than knowing his parents had been murdered. No, he couldn't start the foundation of their relationship on lies. Harry would come to trust him, if he found out Severus had lied at any time, it would destroy any trust the child had in him. So with wary judgement, he made a decision praying it was the right one.
"I am afraid they lied to you Harry," said Severus watching how Harry was reacting so far. He had the calming draught on the table, so he wouldn't have to reach far. Harry was stiff, very much so, he'd learn he wouldn't hurt him in time.

"They died trying to protect you from a very bad person," said Severus, it was harder than he imagined speaking in a way for a five year old to understand. "They loved you dearly, little one, and I promise you are safe here."

Harry's face scrunched up, he didn't understand, why would the Dursley's tell him one thing and Severus told him another? Who was telling the truth? He liked the thought that they had cared for him, loved him even.

"Accio photo album," whispered Severus, so low Harry probably didn't even hear him. A few seconds later an album sailed through the air, landing in his hands. He had to suppress a smirk, seeing the shocked, awed and completely dumbfounded yet fearful look on his new wards face. He knew the right thing to get his mind off what he'd just seen. Maybe tomorrow he would sit down with him and explain magic. Right now he needed time to process the fact his parents hadn't died in a car accident. Severus flipped through the photo album he hadn't touched in years. Until he found one, a picture of a beautiful, vivacious, red headed girl, looking up from her charms text into the camera before hiding back again.

"This, Harry," said Severus holding the picture out, photo front so he could see it for himself. "Is your mother, when she was fifteen years old." Harry gasped, his green eyes filling with tears he refused to shed. With shaky hands he accepted the picture and held onto it delicately. He didn't seem to comprehend the picture was moving. Or if he did, he was just too in awe, at seeing his mum for the first time to care. Part of Harry already suspected something 'freakish' was afoot anyway, books floating in mid air, and pictures that moved…oh yeah he suspected something alright. Fortunately Harry was good at ignoring things he didn't want to think about.

"Flippy?" said Severus, waiting patiently for the Elf again, still watching out for Harry's reactions to everything.

"Dinner sir?" asked Flippy his hands filled with a huge tray. Severus smirked, they were beginning to realize his habits, and he immediately took it, placing it on the bottom of the bed. Flippy eyed the child, he looked a little better today, more colour in his cheeks. Flippy couldn't help but wonder how long it would take for him to be running up and down Prince Hall happy. Harry unfortunately wasn't paying any attention; it was solely focused on the picture of his mother. Flippy left afterwards, seeing he wasn't needed any longer.

"Harry, drink this little one," said Severus, handing over a goblet filled with milk.

Harry looked up; he took the weird looking cup, and took a tentative sip of what was in it. The stuff was the same as he'd had the last time. He couldn't help himself; he gulped every drip of it, feeling his stomach becoming pleasantly full. Harry flinched back when Severus' hands came out to take the cup away. His green eyes automatically looking up to see if he was in trouble, but calm black eyes was staring right back. No hint of anger, but there was something else lying deep within that gaze, something he had never seen before. "I have some vegetable soup here, do you think you can handle it?" he didn't want to get Harry addicted to potions, so he wasn't going to give him a stomach soother. He'd give him what he needed nothing more, the stomach could get used to the soothers and become 'upset' if it didn't have the potion. All potions were addictive, none more so than the Dreamless sleeping potion.

"What are my chores sir?" asked Harry standing up, eye to eye with the man sitting across from him. Not that Harry was currently meeting them; he was once more staring at the floor.
"Have no doubt you will have a few chores when you are better, like keeping your room tidy and bringing your laundry...clothes down." said Severus, it was probably better to get outright with it, he'd learn what the Dursley's did sooner or later. Right now he just had to get Harry better and into a stable routine. "Other than that, you will not be forced to do chores to be able to eat. Sit back down and eat your soup," it didn't surprise him that Harry had been forced to do all the chores, or that he'd been made do just to get something to eat. Unfortunately all it did was make him want to just go and kill the Dursley's, screw the bloody mind games they were playing. Harry sitting down and beginning to eat drew Severus out of his dark thoughts. He was enjoying it, even if his eyes were jerking from him to the soup every five seconds. There was a sparkle there he hadn't seen before, dare he believe that Harry was beginning to hope? Hope for a better future? Hope that he wasn't going to be completely broken by his family? Hope that he could get three meals a day like he'd seen his pig of a cousin get. It was a start, thought Severus. Relaxing into the seat, keeping himself loose, his expression sort of serene, in fact he looked rather impassive. Nobody could expect miracles; Severus Snape wasn't used to being this way after all.

"Are you still hungry Harry?" asked Severus, surprised by the fact Harry had managed to eat it all. Perhaps his stomach was bigger than he expected it to be, or able to handle more food. Then again it wouldn't surprise him that Harry was eating what he could, when he could, not sure if he'd get fed again.

"No sir," said Harry his denial quick, too quick.

"One of my rules, living here Harry, is that you never lie to me." said Severus "Shall we try that again? Are you hungry?"

Harry cringed, clearly unsure of what to do, in the end there was only one thing - tell the truth like he'd been told to. "Yes sir," murmured Harry, waiting for the inevitable explosion, the mocking laughter that a freak like him wouldn't get anything else.

"Flippy bring up a dessert," said Severus.

Harry blinked, moving his hand he viciously stabbed his finger into his leg, Harry almost yelped. He hadn't really expected to feel it; this all seemed too good to be true. Surely he must be sleeping! Or unconscious in his cupboard. Harry had never once in his life, been given something like dessert before.

"Ice cream sir," said Flippy handing over a bowl with two scoops. Severus was rather glad to see it was just plain ice cream, vanilla, and not an entire bowlful of junk. He didn't eat dessert himself, and was surprised anything like that was in his manor. He knew he'd have to allow a little leeway since the five year old had to have at least something nice now and again. The sugary food they served at Hogwarts was just atrocious, and he was surprised they didn't rot their teeth before they left Hogwarts. Some students were smarter than others, his students; because he made sure they ate fruit and a decent amount of vegetables. Considering the child's previous situation, he knew there would be no complaining from the child.

It took Harry no time at all to devour the ice cream practically inhaling it. Severus grimaced, table manners, needed fast.

"I have something for you, from Professor McGonagall, a very nice lady who knew you when you were a baby." said Severus, nice and McGonagall should not be in the same sentence. In fact the woman would probably find it hilarious or insulting. Severus pulled out a stuffed teddy out of his cloak. It was a wizard bear, a black pointy hat, cloak, and a wand in its hand all squishy so it wouldn't dig in and hurt him while he slept. He handed it over, barely able to keep his lip curling.
"For me?" asked Harry, they really did have the wrong Harry didn't they? But the man seemed so sure he was Harry. He basically waited until Severus had put it right into his hands, not daring to reach out in case it was a trick. It didn't hurt so much when he didn't get his hopes up, something he'd learned with Dudley.

"Yes Harry, it's yours," said Severus once the child finally gripped it. Also inside his cloak was the paperwork Minerva gave him. Letting him know exactly where Arabella Figg was, he'd find out how she was with Harry first before he planned anything. He had a fortnight to worm all information he could out of her…and there was always the truth potion if needed. Not Veritaserum, that was far too harsh on the system, rather one that doesn't force you to answer just made you feel safe and happy and want to answer. It was not strong so 'force' definitely wasn't on the menu. Who was he kidding? No he probably wouldn't use the potion, but hopefully he wouldn't feel the need/want to. He didn't want to deal with Figg then realize she was ten times worse and then go back.
Chapter 17

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 17

Setting A Routine

Harry groggily opened his eyes, a large yawn breaking out on his face, looking around in apparent confusion until he realized where he was. Some part of him suspected it was still a dream, a lovely dream, but still at the end of the day a dream. Yet each time he poked at himself, it hurt, it wasn't supposed to hurt in dreams right? It was the only reprieve the child had from the constant pain at the Dursley's. Harry didn't think he'd ever get used to being on such a comfortable bed, and in clothes that actually fit him. Severus was a freak like him, he just knew it, he'd made that book come out of nowhere. Harry noticed the picture of his mum was on the nightstand, now in a photo frame. Sitting up in the bed, keeping his covers around him, cherishing the warmth. He picked it up and gazed at it, she was so beautiful, nothing like his aunt, he wasn't sure what to feel towards her, he'd dreamed she loved him, but did he love her in turn? Yes, he did. She'd died for him, at least that's what Severus had said anyway. He wasn't sure who to believe, but he'd more likely to believe Severus than the Dursley's. The Dursley's had never been kind to him, so why should he believe them? They lied to everyone, especially about him. Telling them how bad he was, how much trouble he caused, how he destroyed everything even the clothes he got. Which wasn't true, he knew that, they never gave him anything.

"Awake already?" asked Severus causing Harry to whip around, how he didn't get whiplash was anyone's guess. He made a note to himself not to sneak upon the child, he was jumpier than a grasshopper. Which would be extremely difficult to do, he was a quite man by nature.

"Yes sir," said Harry his eyes wide and weary. Still expecting punishments to come his way, it would take a long time before he felt truly comfortable.

"Come, Harry," said Severus walking through to the bathroom, he immediately began filling the tub with water adding apple bubble bath, something he'd owl ordered along with a lot of other stuff. The water went a little greenish not something he'd like but children apparently did. The smell of apples surrounded the room. "Undress and get into the bath. I'll wash your hair and leave you, the toys are yours to play with as you wish."

Harry stared for a few seconds, as if he couldn't comprehend what the man was saying. The thought of the nice warm bath kicked him into action. He kept his eyes on Severus' hands the entire way forward after taking off the pyjamas. Severus helped Harry into the bath, ignoring the flinch, he really was very small, too tiny for a five year old. It was trying to help him into the bath that made him realize this, Draco could do this himself now.

"Lie down," said Severus kneeling on the floor, wetting the hair until it was soaked before adding the shampoo, lathering it in he waited a few seconds before he began washing it out with a jug at the side of the bath. Once he was done he helped Harry sit up, nonverbally casting a spell so Harry couldn't slip under the water. "Shout on me when you want out, do you understand Harry? don't try and get out by yourself."

"Yes sir," said Harry.

"Good boy," said Severus, placing some of the toys into the bath, aware that Harry probably
woulnd't do it himself. Once that was done Severus gratefully got up, glad to be off his knees. Leaving the bathroom, he kept the door open so he could hear Harry when he was finished. Opening the cupboard door he grabbed a pair of trousers, and a jumper, opening the drawer at the bottom of his cupboard he took out underwear and socks and the second one a t-shirt. Placing them on the bed, he sat down feeling at a loose end. He wasn't used to having nothing to do, from the moment he got up his day was packed with one thing or another.

"Sir?" called a voice, "I'm finished."

Severus looked at the watch, the child had only been in for five minutes, if that at all. Shaking off his thoughts, Harry would learn sooner or later that he'd never hurt him. It wouldn't matter what he did, because Harry had to realize it on his own. He could tell him a million times but it would just be met with disbelief. Sometimes he worried Harry wouldn't, Severus himself, could remember things that happened to him when he was five. There was no doubt Harry always would as well, was Harry beyond hope?

"Come on then little one," said Severus hoisting Harry out by gripping his underarms. Once his feet were safely on the mat he wrapped him in a small towel. Then guided them both to the bedroom again. It took longer to get him dressed than it had for Harry to have a bath. The irony wasn't lost on Severus.

"How would you like some brunch outside?" asked Severus kneeling in front of Harry. No doubt the child was hardly used to being outside, and when he was probably constantly hiding from his damn dunderhead cousin.

"Yes sir," said Harry saying what he thought was the right answer.

Severus just shook his head wryly, "Then lets go." said Severus, taking the child outside into the gardens. They were large, green and beautiful, a child could loose themselves in it for weeks. If not for their rumbling stomachs of course. He had with him a few toy's Harry could play with. Including the broomstick, but he didn't think Harry was ready for anything like that yet.

After lunch he planned on telling Harry about magic and asking him about Figg. Only then would be decide how to deal with the squib. If she knew, whether she was coerced or not she'd pay. He wasn't a forgiving soul, and had no desire to be one either.
Chapter 18

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 18

Not To Lie

Harry looked around the grounds; there were animals outside, ones he couldn't even begin to name. Harry unfortunately couldn't name many animals, he'd never been allowed out of Privet Drive. He knew cats and a few of the different types of cats you could get, thanks to Arabella Figg. Other than that he was clueless, and uneducated. Fortunately he was only five years old, and he would get the chance to make up for the maliciousness of those Harry had grown up around. The place was really big, too big if he had to tend to it. His Aunt always made him do all the garden work, well not just that but the house work too. Harry felt very lost, he had gone from trying to be invisible, and avoid being beaten by doing all his chores on time…to having none, and getting food and also being looked after. Severus never left him on his own, other than bedtime, and he waited until Harry fell asleep. He was waiting in trepidation for the other shoe to drop.

"Sit down Harry," said Severus, making sure to use Harry's name as often as possible. He was still rather shocked by the fact the five year old hadn't known who he was. Lily would be rolling in her grave at the situation Dumbledore had landed her son into, after she'd died to save him. Well it was his turn now, and he'd be damned if he let anything happen to the child. Severus sat on the wooden seat he had in the middle of his garden. He had a lot to discuss with Harry, and it had been extremely difficult to refrain from drugging him with a truth potion. It would make the conversation go smoother, but it wouldn't help Harry trust him. Although he doubted Harry would understand just how it happened for a good couple of years.

Harry immediately sat down where he'd been standing, as though orders had been so drummed into him he didn't need to think about it. Severus didn't even want to think on what else Harry had just done because he'd been ordered to. There was a blanket spread out along with food for Harry to enjoy. Food was probably the best way to get to Harry, to make him trust Severus.

Severus got down on the blanket as well, as much as he hated it, it would be best to make himself none threatening as possible. He made sure he was relaxed and his hands loose, he was an observant man. He'd seen Harry constantly checking his hands, probably no doubt wondering when the first blow would come. Plating up some finger food, he passed it to Harry, knowing he would only be able to eat so much of it. He'd need to give him the potions every day, and decided to give him it at dinner. Which would be at the dining table tonight. The quicker he got both of them into a routine the better it would be for Harry.

"Eat up Harry," said Severus picking at the food himself and eating it, making Harry feel a little more comfortable. He wasn't a man who idled around, but with a child, he realized he was going to have to get used to it. He couldn't keep a child locked up in a manor all the time, especially one that hadn't been anywhere.

Harry sat there eating the fruit that had been placed on the paper plate on his lap. It wasn't just fruit, but small sandwiches, sausages and small party pizzas. It was really nice just sitting outside in the sun. No Petunia scowling at him from the window, waiting on him screwing up. No Vernon breathing down his neck, or Dudley beating him up and undoing his hard work whenever possible. The small wind made him close his eyes; he should just enjoy it while he could.
"Harry, do you remember our rule?" asked Severus after ten minutes of silence, nearly everything on Harry's plate had been eaten. He was really proud of the child, and would have to remember and say something later.

"No lies sir," said Harry immediately.

"That's right, well done," said Severus nodding his head his lips curling at the sides. "It's one of the most important rules in this house. Not just for you, but me as well, you have my word that I will always tell you the truth to any question you ask. Even if you do not believe it yet, and I understand why not. No doubt this is all too much to take in isn't it? You feel as though it's not true and you expect something to happen. I've felt this way as well once upon a time." of course it hadn't been true for him, not completely, his Hogwarts years hadn't been easy but at least there he could give as good as he got. With his father though...he hadn't been able to defend himself, at least until he was seventeen years old and legally an adult. He met Harry's eyes and never looked away, letting the child 'judge' him so to speak.

Then Harry nodded, it was barely there but Severus had seen it. He wasn't sure what they were going to talk about, but it couldn't be good if he was being warned against lying. His mind circled around what Severus could possibly want, but he wasn't prepared for the question that did come from the man's mouth.

"Do you know Mrs. Arabella Figg?" asked Severus keeping a close eye on Harry, he saw the child stiffen and a dark look cross his face. Well obviously Harry knew her, he'd known that, but it wasn't good obviously he hadn't found a safe heaven with the insufferable cat loving squib.

"Yes," Harry replied sombrely.

"Did she know the Dursley's hurt you?" asked Severus.

Harry stared down at his fingers not sure how to answer that question.

"Harry?" said Severus extending his hand, lifting the small face up to meet his. The green eyes were filled with indecision and wariness. He was obviously not ready to talk about what the Dursley's had done to him. Figg was obviously an extension of that, but Severus was determined to get his answers. So he continued on, telling the truth as he'd sworn to Harry he would. Not that he'd lie, he wasn't a man who did, unless the persons name was Voldemort. One had to lie when they were spying otherwise he wouldn't get much spying done now would he? "You will not be punished for answering my questions. I need to know so I know how to deal with her, if she knew she was bad, wrong, and she has to be the one punished." the look of shock on the child's face angered him, did he seriously think they could get away with hurting him as they had?

"Okay, how did you know her? Was she a friend of your aunts?" asked Severus deciding to ask questions, perhaps then he might get answers.

"Yes, she babysat me when they went on holiday or just went out for the day," said Harry quietly.

"They left you when they went on holiday?" asked Severus biting the inside of his lip, as more truth came to light. How many times had the Dursley's gone on holiday? No doubt using the money they'd received to take care of Harry and leaving him behind?

Harry nodded, "Apart from this time, Mrs. Figg got taken into hospital so they had to take me." whispered Harry. There would be one day when Harry thanked his lucky stars it had happened, when he began to love it here at Prince Manor. For if Figg hadn't ended up in hospital with a mild case of Pneumonia - Harry would have remained at Privet Drive.
"How often did Mrs. Figg baby-sit you?" Severus then asked.

"Dudley's birthday, when they went on holiday, or family outings...outing." Harry told him trying to remember what they called it.

"Did she ever help you?" asked Severus getting to the crux of the matter.

"She didn't like me much, I don't know why," said Harry sadly; nobody had liked him so it wasn't something new. "She always looked at me like the Dursley's did, angry and upset. She didn't know I saw it though, she used to make me sit and look at all the pictures of her cats every time I came."

"She saw the way the Dursley's treated you."

"Yes sir," said Harry his voice barely audible.

Then it was official, he was going to kill her, she wasn't going to get away with it. She didn't have to be kept alive like the Dursley’s were to avoid Dumbledore's attention. He doubted Dumbledore cared two shits about Figg, or what happened to her. Sooner or later he would realize she wasn't keeping an eye on Harry, which would be the same time he'd find out Harry was no longer at the Dursley's. So there truly wasn't any valid reason to keep her alive. She was in America, plenty of ways to make her death look accidental, especially to the Muggle authorities, and she was in the Muggle world. The magical world had no reason to investigate a squib, even if they were interested. He wondered if Lucius was up for a spot of Muggle hunting, err, justice. She'd understood just why his reputation was so fierce first hand.

"Thank you Harry, I'm very pleased you were honest with me, and at how much you have eaten."

"Thank you sir," said Harry shyly, his face turning red at the praise, he wasn't used to it. He was really beginning to like it, being told he was good, it made him feel happy, and made his tummy feel funny. Was this how Dudley felt all the time when his mum said how he was such a good boy. Harry gasped, gazing off into the distance, his green eyes squinting to see it properly.

Severus looked at Harry immediately upon hearing the gasp and saw once again he was squinting. He would have to get the potion made soon, it would only take three hours and his eyesight will be corrected. Looking over he put his arm up, allowing the owl to land on it, smiling at Harry's awe. Removing the letter he turned to the boy, and asked him "Would you like to pet him?"

"Can I?" breathed Harry, it was so beautiful, but he did see the large beak and didn't fancy being bitten.

"Of course," said Severus steadily moving his arm, and the owl near to Harry, his other hand reaching over and petting the owl, letting Harry know it was safe without saying anything. His word didn't mean much right now, and it didn't surprise him. No Harry would have to learn to trust him through his actions.

Harry's small thin fingers, reached out, cautiously at first as he petted the owl. Gasping once again in awe, it was so soft; he'd never left anything like it before in his life. It truly was beautiful, he giggled slightly when the owl nipped at his finger tickling him with its tongue.

Severus continued to watch Harry; he seemed so surprised at the sound that came out of his own mouth. He felt sorrow flash though him, realizing it maybe had been the first time. Harry certainly hadn't had any other reason for him to laugh was there? He swore to himself he'd do anything to
hear it again; he'd make Harry's home a happy one.

"His name is Herman, he belongs to my good friend Lucius, would you like to go back to the Manor and get him a treat before he goes home?" asked Severus. He was obviously waiting for a reply anyway, so he would stick around.

"Yes sir!" said Harry quickly, but this time it wasn't out of expectation but excitement.

Flicking his wand he had everything packed away, shrunk and in his pocket. He then spelled some padding on Harry's shoulder, and placed the owl there. He didn't want the owl's claws to dig into Harry, as it would have done. Harry then proceeded to walk very carefully, not moving his shoulder the slightest. His green eyes were twinkling so brightly, showing his exuberance and happiness in a way that was acceptable to him.

"Owls send mail to people in our world Harry," said Severus.

Harry's forehead scrunched up as if he couldn't understand what Severus had just said or implied.

Severus opened the main door and once both of them were in, he closed it behind him securing them within the manors main wards. He summoned an owl treat from his study, passing it to Harry, as Herman flew onto the chair wanting something sturdier to sit on. He hooted his mostly black eyes staring at the treat Severus just given Harry.

"Go on then, he's not going to hurt you," urged Severus as he sat down on the chair, pulling out all the documents Lucius had just sent him. Sitting there giving them a cursory look over, while Harry went over his own lips pulling at the corner. The owl took the treat gently, before gobbling it down hastily. Herman was used to having to take gently, Draco loved feeding and petting him, so they'd had to get a friendly owl. The one they'd had before hadn't been, it was a trained owl and vicious, if anyone tried to get the letters it would find himself without his or her fingers.

"Sit here Harry," said Severus patting at the chair next to him. He'd put it of long enough, Harry had to know about magic, the sooner the better. As well as everything else come to that. He placed a piece of parchment in front of the child, knowing he couldn't read it but doing it nevertheless. "This is a document that means I have guardianship of you, that you cannot be taken away from me by anyone. Do you understand what guardianship means Harry?"

Harry got the gist of what he meant, but didn't actually understand what guardianship meant so shook his head.

"Verbal answer Harry, please." said Severus he didn't like children who nodded or shook their head or mumbled. The students had done all three which was probably another factor in why he disliked the creatures.

"No sir," said Harry wide eyed.

"Being your guardian is looking after you, feeding you, keeping you safe, warm and happy. I have adopted you as my son; I would like it to become more permanent, but its something you need to decide on your own. I know this is still too new for you right now, so I will wait for your decision." said Severus. He was Harry's father in every way, bar biological, which would require a potion, it would only add his blood to James and Lily's but he'd still get the Prince Blood, and become his heir as well as the Potter's one. If he was doing this, he was going to do it right, and the sole heir couldn't be removed from its parent under any circumstances. Harry was going to be the last heir of the Potter and Prince estate, if he had his way anyway.
"Yes sir," said Harry unsure of what else to say he didn't know how the man was able to understand how he felt. What he'd said earlier was spot on, a small part of him wanted to trust him, but the large part just continued to wait for it to all go wrong.

"Alright," said Severus, "The next piece of information I want to share with you. You are magical Harry, just like your parents were, your mother was a witch, and you are a wizard. I am a wizard, your fam…the Dursley's and Figg were jealous of your magic and didn't want you having it. It's nothing to do with you, they are the ones who did wrong and they will pay for it." said Severus, maybe he shouldn't be talking about revenge with the child, but truth be told he wanted Harry to feel he got closure. He hadn't gotten anything close to that, and it probably shaped him into who he was.

Harry so badly wanted to believe him, that there was nothing wrong with him. Unfortunately the beaten part of his brain just stared in disbelief. His eyes were drawn back to the paper, he had a dad now? Was that what Severus was saying? He was promising things Dudley got and took for granted. Did it mean he'd end up like Dudley, staring up at Severus, he realized he wouldn't. This man wasn't anything like Vernon, he was very kind to him, but also had a sense of strictness coming off him. Did he accept it and be happy? Or was it all a trick? He'd try and keep his heart safe and accept each day as it came.

Harry nodded his head once again, but the knowing look of Severus' face made him feel very silly.

"Come Harry," said Severus holding his hand out for the child to take, "I'm going to show you my favourite place in the world. Would you like to see?"

"Yes sir!" said Harry, taking the hand that was another thing; he wasn't used to anyone touching him at least not kindly. He loved and hated how secure it made him feel loved it because of the feelings and hated it because he feared it would end.
Chapter 19

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 19

Being Able To See And Plans

Severus guided Harry down to his potions lab, keeping a keen eye on him. Harry would never be able to get down here on his own, there were wards preventing him from doing so. They would remain until Severus was sure he could trust Harry never to come down here unaccompanied. It was like giving a child access to a kitchen, and allowing them to play over boiling water. It was just asking for trouble, and Harry wouldn't just get burnt in a potions lab, the potions could end up having a number of affects on him. He was a Slytherin, better safe than sorry was one of their mottos. Severus felt his mouth twitch, Harry was trying to look at absolutely everything, squinting as well. In a few moments it wouldn't be necessary, the potion he was giving Harry will perfect his eyesight.

"This is my potions lab, Harry. I brew potions in here, they make people better, heal them. I have a potion I want you to take, it will heal your eyes and allow you to see better. Much easier than glasses, which can be lost or broken all the time." said Severus plucking the vial from the shelf where he'd put it to cool down. "These potions taste…a little horrible but you have to drink it all, I will give you something afterwards to wash away the taste… do you understand?" he asked kneeling down beside the child, his green eyes wide in apprehension and wonder at what potions could do. He could loose himself for hours in those eyes, so similar to Lily's yet jaded in a way Lily's never got, even after the war had started.

Harry nodded silently, staring at the vial, so badly wanting to ask if it hurt. Yet he just couldn't bring himself to ask, his questions had always been followed with beatings or words of scorn. Nobody usually wanted to hear him speaking, yet this man said he wanted… purely, no verbal answers it must mean he wants to hear Harry's words. His life had changed so much in the past however many days, and he was still getting used to it. "Yes sir." he said quietly after a few seconds.

"Good," said Severus his black eyes glinting with pride, he uncorked the vial and passed it over. Harry's tiny hands wrapped around it, before he, with courage Severus didn't think he would have had, if he'd been through what Harry had. He drank it without pause, his nose scrunching up a little, at the taste. Severus took the empty vial back, a small barely noticeable smile on his face. "Good boy, I'm proud of you." the words sounded so foreign on his lips, but he had to use them. He had to build up the trust between them, and Harry build, a better image of himself. He needed some self esteem, especially before going to Hogwarts. Otherwise the students would rip him apart, and he wasn't going to allow that to happen.

An unsure smile flittered across Harry's face; it would take a long while to get used to that. He could feel prickling at the back of his eyes, he couldn't help himself; he was just about to rub his eyes to get the itch away. When Severus calmly and carefully placed his large hands in Harry's own. Stopping him from doing anything, then out of nowhere he could see. The haze lifted from his eyesight, he could see the black buttons on Severus' cloak. The dust floating in the air and for the first time he saw Severus' face properly. It was stern looking, yet his eyes to him were soft and filled with an emotion he didn't understand. His fingers were really long, and soft on his hands, never once hurting him.

"Better?" asked Severus sounding amused. As Harry took everything in for the first time, able to
"Yes sir!" said Harry in astounded wonder.

"Come on then, let's go," said Severus guiding Harry from the room, keeping one of his hands linked with Harry's. For once not walking in long strides, it was odd how used to change he got. Talking in a manner Harry would understand, speaking without snarling, walking slow it really was a wonder. Especially coming from a man who didn't do change well.

Once Severus got back up to the study, he found an additional owl waiting on him. Not many people knew he was here, so it was most probably a school owl, which meant Minerva. Letting Harry's hand go he opened the package and found within it, a box full of fun things for a child Harry's age to play with, all brand new. There was also a bundle of clothes, snitch onesie, a Quidditch onesie, even a bear onesie. Harry was much too old to wear something like this, at least to him, yet they were for his size. He'd missed out on so much. Perhaps he would enjoy wearing it; he had a lot of catching up to do after all.

"Harry look what your new godmother got for you," said Severus wryly, showing him it. The look on Harry's face nearly, nearly sent him into peals of laughter. His eyebrow was raised, his nose twitching and he had a look that said 'what the hell'. Of course it was gone as quickly as it had appeared. "Touch it."

Harry attentively stepped forward touching the material and gasping, it was the softest thing he'd ever felt before in his life. He would wear them, just to feel how soft they were, no matter how… they looked.

Severus put a few blankets on the floor; the floors were cold, marble and wood. This way he could play without getting sore or cold for that matter. He placed the colouring in book and unbreakable crayons on the floor as well. "Go on then, you go play I have some things I need to do," said Severus guiding Harry to the little play spot he'd made for him. "Don't worry I'm not going anywhere, I'll be right over there." he said upon seeing the fear on Harry's face. He pointed towards his desk, and he calmed down and nodded quietly.

"Good boy," said Severus, before sitting down on his seat, reading the letter Minerva had written him. Without even trying it seemed he had a spy within Hogwarts. Dumbledore was oblivious of anything happening, still unhappy that he couldn't get in touch with Severus. Or rather still angry that Severus had left without as much as a word. He had updates on where exactly Figg was; evidently Minerva had cast a tracking charm on her. Not that it would be there long if he had his way.

Once all his correspondence was read and he'd replied, he brought out an official piece of paper. One that had the Prince insignia on it, dipping it into the black ink he hovered his pen over it as he thought about what to say.

Grick,

I would like to enquire about making an appointment at Gringotts at your earliest convenience. I need a complete scan done upon my young charge, Harry James Potter- Prince- Snape. A previous scan uncovered a binding charm upon his magic, and I wish it to be removed as soon as possible; and to find anything else that might have not been unearthed by a normal scan.

Once the scan results have been revealed, I wish for the binding charms to be removed. I may need to remain longer, or make another appointment depending on the results of the scan.

While I am there, I would like to have a look at Harry Potter's inheritance, which he will receive
upon reaching his majority. To enquire if the Potter's wills have been read and the results shared.

Severus Snape

Heir of the Prince Estate

Once he was done, he burnt the red block and allowed it to drip upon the closed and sealed envelope. Plucking the ring from the desk he pushed it into the melted wax and held it there a few seconds. Removing it, he nodded in satisfaction he placed the letter upon the owl that came with Minerva's letter.

"Take this to Gringotts at once, await a reply." said Severus, opening the window allowing the owl to fly, knowing it understood what he said. He would reply to Minerva's letter once the owl returned.

Severus looked over at Harry and his lips twitched; he was a great deal like his mother. More than Severus would have ever noticed when Harry was eleven years old. His tongue was peeked out between his lips, his brow scrunched up as he coloured in. Trying not to go over the lines, using appropriate colours as well. It's the same look Lily had supported often enough, while she was drawing or colouring in, even writing or completing her homework.

Turning back around, he had one more letter to write; tonight he and Lucius would have some... revenge on Harry's behalf. Sooner or later the Dursley's would pay as well; it irked him that he couldn't immediately have his revenge. One would say what Lucius was putting them through was worse than death. Especially to people like Petunia Dursley who cared about what others thought of her. It would be a huge embarrassment to her, and Severus revelled in it.

Dipping his quill into the ink he wrote a short letter to Lucius.

Lucius,

Tonight. 8 PM. Be ready.

S.

P.S - Can Narcissa watch him?

He couldn't write his or Harry's name in it, just in case it was intercepted. It didn't reveal anything incriminating, nor give away what they were doing or who he was. Nodding in satisfaction, he folded it up and placed it in the owl's pouch. Giving it one more treat, before saying "Go on Herman, of you go - go home."

Screeching the owl took off, Severus watched him go until he was nothing but a spot on the landscape. Harry seemed to really like him; maybe it was time to get an owl of his own. Until now he'd had no need for one, since there were so many in Hogwarts ready and eager to be used. He rarely got any correspondence at Hogwarts; in fact since he left he seemed to get more than he had in all his years working. Although he had admittedly been distant with the Malfoy family. With good reason, he was a spy and it was a dangerous business. They knew, and if Lucius thought it would save his family he'd give him away in a heartbeat. He was a Slytherin, it was expected he supposed. Although there relationship was changing, they were closer than before.

"Dinner is ready sir," said a house elf popping in once again scaring Harry out of his wits. Sudden moves made him scared; it was no wonder after all he'd been through. Someone popping in just made it ten times worse, it could have been worse all things considered. Since coming here he was
seeing magic performed, he hadn't said anything about it yet. Part of Severus suspected Harry still saw himself as a freak. That they would call him that as well, after all it's all Harry knew.

Severus was also surprised Harry's magic hadn't reacted yet. Without magic needing to heal him, his magic was at...how shall we say, a loose end. It had nothing to do, sooner or later it will react to Harry's emotions. That's when the real tests would be put to it for Harry; he would have to ensure he properly praised him. Let him know without about he did good. "Hungry Harry?" enquired Severus softly; unable to believe how quickly the day had gone. Soon Harry would be going to bed and he...would get his much needed revenge on Arabella Figg.

"Yes sir," said Harry shyly, before he began to tidy away the crayons and closing the book.

Severus didn't stop him, knowing it was a good thing to continue. He hated messes, and true to his word he would enforce Harry's chores. He would keep his room clean and tidy. "Would you like to take one set up the stairs to your bedroom with you Harry?" he needed to remember to get the rest of the boxes unpacked so he could play with them.

Harry remained silent, biting his little lip his green eyes wary.

"Leave that set here, this set will go up the stairs with us." said Severus when it became apparent Harry just couldn't decide for fear of making the wrong one. He'd get there sooner or later. Box in one hand, he gestured for Harry with his other. Getting up he held onto Severus as they made for the dining area.

"Drink this, it will make you big and strong in a few months." said Severus handing over the uncorked vial. Harry did as he was told without arguing. Was it wrong of Severus to want him to argue? Surely it had to be, since he hated children who disobeyed. Yet here he was, changing his opinion, he'd rather disobedient to stifling obedient beaten down children. Harry just swallowed it, and drank some orange juice to wash the taste away.

"Do you know what this is Harry?" asked Severus removing something from his pocket and handing it to the boy.

"No sir," said Harry they were heavy in his hand.

"This is our money, the bronze ones are Knuts, Silver ones are Sickles and the gold ones are called Galleons. For being a good boy I'm giving you one Sickle and a Knut. Every week if you are good, I will give you a gold one, a Galleon. You can save it up for whatever you want. Sweets, toys, anything." said Severus softly. He was only giving Harry a Sickle and a Knut for now since that was all the change he had. He would as promised give him a Galleon every week, perhaps on a Friday; he would work out a schedule if it killed him. Harry might be a bit young, but the younger he learned the more he'd retain. They did say that in all the books, they absorbed anything when they were young, like a sponge. It was the same as what Draco got, so there would be no jealousy if they became friends once Harry settled down.

Harry's breathing hitched, his green eyes clouded with tears as he nodded, swallowing the lump in his throat. His small hand clutched the coins close; things were happening too rapidly he barely had time to understand it. Money, toys, clothes, the softest feeling pyjamas, the Dursley's and Mrs Figg being wrong, the magic, and the wonderful potion to make him see. The warm baths, not being sore, never being hit, being told he was good, more important the most wonderful filling food he'd ever had. If this was how it really was going to be like all the time, then he really did want adopted. For once in Harry Potter's life hope begun to spring like a rising inferno.

"Eat up little one," said Severus soothingly, hiding his awkwardness, Harry looked as if he was
going to cry…all he'd done was give him some pocket change. No that's not all he'd done had it? 
He cared, that's what was probably getting through to the child. The food was cut up for him, the 
house elves were truly overcompensating. It somehow didn't surprise him they somehow already 
knew about his ward/son's childhood. Oh he could barely wait, he half wanted to give Harry a 
dreamless sleep so he could leave, have some err...some fun with Figg. Unfortunately Lucius 
wouldn't be here until eight anyway, so it would be a fruitless endeavour. He would indeed still 
have to wait.
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Lucius and Severus prove they still have it! They aren't light wizards and don't pretend to be - like Dumbledore does - the hypocrite

The Vow And The Consequences

Chapter 20

Revenge Death Eater Style

Severus entered his office, having heard an owl, he could tell by looking at it that it was a Gringotts owl. Taking the letter he barely paid attention to the owl, and opened it up hoping he wouldn't have to wait weeks. The sooner the bonds were removed from Harry's magic the better. Merlin bonding a child's magic it was the worst thing anyone could do to someone. At least in his opinion; Lily would have been furious beyond words. She might have been 'Muggle born' but she'd known about magic and everything he knew at the age of eight.

Mr. Prince-Snape

Given the dire nature of the contents written in your letter, we have made an appointment for nine o'clock tomorrow morning, reserving the room for the entire day. We are pleased to hear someone from the magical community is taking care of Harry Potter-Snape and his finances, which are in dire need of direction.

Healer Griek will attend to the scan; if you wish a witch or wizard to be present let us know immediately.

Quinti
Head of Potter estate
Gringotts, Diagon Alley

Severus nodded in satisfaction, tomorrow would be a busy day, and it was a good thing he'd decided to deal with Arabella Figg tonight. Speaking of which, Lucius should be here any minute, it was going on eight o'clock. Harry was asleep, he'd put on his onesie (the bear one) that Minerva had given him, and seemed content to wear it despite his earlier reservations. Severus would never admit it but he did look adorable in them.

"Can I see Harry?" asked a childish voice from the lobby, Severus smirked; it shouldn't surprise him that Draco was still awake. Narcissa spoiled him too much, he understood the desire, he wanted to do that to Harry yet he wouldn't, couldn't do it. Harry would have whatever he wanted, yet he'd be grounded, he'd know who was in charge, know to listen to him.

"I am afraid not, he's sleeping, as should you be Draco Malfoy," said Severus making his appearance.

"Uncle Sev!" grinned Draco toothily at his godfather, already reaching out of his mother's reach wanting the man.
"You are one heavy boy," said Severus taking Draco into his arms, so much heavier than Harry was that's for sure.

Draco just giggled at his godfather, hugging him and giving Severus a sloppy kiss, unaware of his reputation. It was holding Draco close like this that made him realize how affected Harry was. The child he'd rescued was polar opposite, he hoped one day that Harry may be like Draco - happy, carefree, but he knew the lasting effect abuse had on children. He was still affected by what happened to him, and it was nowhere near as bad as what happened to Harry. He'd been hit a few times, dressed in clothes that were too big for him, but nothing like what had happened to Harry with the Dursley's.

"Is he still in the same room Severus?" asked Narcissa.

"He is, but he shouldn't wake up, at least he hasn't done so previous nights." explained Severus.

"Why can't I see him?" asked Draco pouting childishly.

"He sleeps a great deal, he's been sick Draco." said Severus, explaining it the only way he could to a five year old child.

"Will he be okay now?" said Draco solemnly.

"He will Severus is helping him." said Lucius reassuring his son before Severus could.

"With Potions?" said Draco, knowing his godfather loved brewing.

"Mostly," said Severus in agreement.

"Ready to go?" asked Lucius a twinkle in his eye.

"Indeed," said Severus his voice changing slightly. "There's things in the office he can play with." as long as he didn't break them, he didn't want Harry to think he had to share his things. At least not without his consent anyway, having nothing of his own Harry would probably be possessive of his things. He knew because he had been touchy about anyone using anything of his, still was actually.

"Thank you, Severus." said Narcissa, there was no need she'd brought a bag full of toys for Draco to play with.

"So where is she?" asked Lucius.

"Hotel," said Severus wryly, "I have the exact location I'll side along Apparate you."

Lucius nodded curtly, kissing his son goodbye before Narcissa wandered through to the living room.

"Let's go get her," said Lucius, nobody hurt a wizarding child and got away with it, whether he was half blood or not...although with two pureblood names under his belt, he was purer than himself if one wanted to argue. Prince and the Potter names were known way back before the founder time; Lucius couldn't say the same about his own family.

Severus took hold of Lucius, wrapping his magic around both of them and Apparated straight into Arabella Figg's room in America. The first thing they both registered was the daylight; it was still morning here, six hours or there about behind the UK. Severus blinked, feeling dizzy at the length of the Apparation; it had expended a lot of his magic to get here. It was a good job he was so powerful, otherwise he wouldn't have made.
Severus and Lucius stiffened, their wands flicked from their holsters they observed humming coming from the bathroom. Staring at each other, silently coming up with a plan. Severus flicked his wand, wordlessly creating a silencing spell so nobody would hear anything and come running. They didn't want their fun ruined after all, Veritaserum was dropped into the orange juice, and Figg had ordered room service by the looks of things. With that done both men shimmered from view having just cast disillusion spells on themselves. A squib like Figg would never be able to sense them.

They observed her humming still as she came out of the bathroom, thank Merlin she was fully dressed - they didn't want that image in mind. She wore a pair of jeans with a long sleeved cotton jumper, nothing like the women he'd imagined. Severus leaned against the wall, he had best take a potion to replenish his magic otherwise he wouldn't be able to join in the fun. He didn't dare yet, not wanting to rouse Figg's suspicion as she began eating the fancy food in front of her.

Sitting back smugly, Arabella looked around very content with her life. Keeping an eye out on Potter for all this was to her, well worth it. Five star hotels, all the money she could spend, this was the life. She did admittedly miss her cats when she went on holiday, but they were only part of her cover. Playing the part of a batty old woman grew tiresome at times. Everyone underestimated her because of it, continued to speak as they passed her as well. It had been fun to begin with, she was hoping to leave it all behind when Potter turned eleven and joined Hogwarts. With a bit of luck Albus would let her go back home, she hated Privet Drive despite how clean and tidy it was. The only draw back was that bloody Dudley boy, she hated him and how he picked on everyone. If they didn't stop it he would only get worse over the years. Sighing in ease, she picked up her freshly squeezed orange juice and drank it in three large gulps, already pouring herself another cup from the pitcher when she received the fright of her life, causing the juice to go flying as she shrieked in terror at the sight of them. Unable to form a coherent sentence, her blue eyes wider than they had ever been before.

"Well this isn't a nice welcome," sneered Lucius his silvery blue eyes flashing dangerously. Watching Severus drink a potion, he did look a little dizzy but afterwards he was his normal self.

Arabella's eyes automatically went to her handbag, she had an emergency Portkey, which she'd been instructed only to use in a life of death situation. Special made to activate upon a word despite her not having magic. This was exactly that, breathing ragged, she delved onto the sofa, opening the bag up only for it to be summoned from her hands. "NO!" she shrieked as it was reduced to dust, not only had the Portkey been in there but every penny she had. She didn't trust banks, wizarding or Muggle; she always got checks from him and kept it close by always. "What do you want?" she added darkly, showing the first hint of the horrible women hidden from view, one who had been tossed aside by her family when they found out she didn't have magic.

"Tut, tut, tut, now didn't your parents teach you any manners whatsoever before they kicked you out?" sneered Lucius digging the knife into the wound. What he found ironic was the fact she'd kept their name even after getting married going by the name of Mrs Figg. Perhaps the fact names were important in the magical world had ingrained in her mind; either that or she'd done it to piss her parents off.

Arabella snarled at him acting very much like a cat.

"She's spent too much time with animals hasn't she Lucius?" sneered Severus his back eyes glinting dangerously, promising Figg a world of pain.

"I agree," replied Lucius a sadistic grin on his face, oh how he'd missed this, scaring people to death, having them trembling in fear of him. No he'd never been a good man, and he never
"What do you want?" whispered Arabella trying to make herself smaller; she had no means of contacting anyone in the magical community here.

"What's your purpose living at Wisteria Walk?" asked Severus, with the potion diluted it needed time to get into the blood stream.

"I won't tell you anything," said Arabella, her face paling at their words, how did they know? Only Dumbledore knew about her placement there. It had been kept top secret, especially with it being so close to Harry Potter's residence. Were they after the boy? She wasn't about to give her life to save him. Backing away at their twin looks of fury, swallowing thickly. "He's in Privet Drive, number four Privet Drive." she squeaked, utterly terrified. If anything it didn't improve their mood, it darkened it considerably.

"I think you'll find he's not," sneered Severus unable to believe it, this was why he'd been so furious to begin with. A squib watching over Harry! A squib that had no means to defend herself, and the first sign of trouble what did she do? Reveal where he was, which sealed his hatred of the woman. Thankfully Harry was out of there and they weren't there to hunt him down.

"What is your purpose at Wisteria Walk?" demanded Lucius.

"To keep an eye on Harry Potter," she said, clasping her hand over her mouth, looking around in panic she had not meant to say that.

"What were your exact orders?" said Severus sitting himself down on one of the chairs, they might be here a while.

Figg started to rise of the couch, eyeing the door as if to make her great escape. Unfortunately both men saw, and acted accordingly, binding her to the couch stopping her from moving. When she did move, she noticed the bindings would tighten further. "To make sure he didn't find out about the magical world, inform him if anyone magical came by." she confessed unwillingly. Closing her eyes in terror, they must have cast a truth spell on her, or something.

"You babysat him did you not?" asked Lucius his voice soothingly deceptive.

"I did," agreed Figg, struggling some more, where were they going with this? Why were they here? And what had Snape meant when he said Harry wasn't at Privet Drive? Had they already killed the boy? If so that meant Dumbledore might know and she could have a chance of surviving...he knew where she was after all, she'd sent her the paperwork for the holiday.

"Did you know about the abuse?" growled Severus; this next question would seal her fate.

"Yes," replied Figg beginning to sweat, if they didn't want to harm the boy...well there was only one other reason they could be here. Revenge, but no Snape hated James Potter; she knew that much from Dumbledore, the same probably went for the boy.

"Why didn't you help him?" hissed Lucius his teeth clenched, fingering his wand, wanting so badly to just curse her. So much for Severus being the impatient one, but there wasn't very many ways one could destroy a Squib's life, not with Dumbledore in her life. Even if she regretted it, they would have to kill her, she was a witness and Lucius didn't leave witnesses lying around. It was just asking for trouble and to be caught as well. He may not have been overly fond of the Potter boy before this week, but damn he was the same age as his son! The thought of anyone being harmed in such a way, especially by Muggles made him so utterly livid.

"You allowed the abuse of an innocent boy who saved your fucking life to get back at your parents?" snarled Severus standing up an enraged look crossing his face. Not just her life but he'd saved the entire magical world! Oh Lily was rolling in her grave, he knew without a doubt Lily would have killed this woman before him. Whether it landed her in prison or not, Lily had loved her son with a zealot's passion.

Lucius stood there still as a statue unable to believe his own ears. He'd done many things in his life, for his own belief's but never once to get back at anyone. Also never harming an innocent child, no matter what the public might think, he'd only ever fought people who had fought back.

"Yes," admitted Figg before screaming in agony, writhing in agony, falling from the sofa as she jerked around. The spell had come from Severus, who had a look of pure loathing on his face, one that not even Black had been able to entice from him. He showed no signs of letting up either, his wand and hand remaining a steady despite using a spell he hadn't used in six perhaps seven years.

Lucius watched the proceedings; he'd never seen Snape like this in all the time he'd known him. Raising his own hand, the one without his wand, and jerked Severus' arm down stopping the curse.

Severus turned his wrath onto him, but Lucius was understandably quick to explain himself. "She doesn't deserve to go quickly." his own face not much better than Severus'. She would have ended up insane, and while that was punishment - he wanted her to feel everything they did to her. He again made a vow never to make a move on Harry; there was no way he wanted to face a furious Severus Snape. Being on his side he was even intimidated by him, not that he'd admit it while he was alive.

Severus just nodded grimly coming back to himself, the rage receding slightly allowing him to think straight.

"Stop," choked Figg, as the tears flooded down her face, jerking occasionally the after affects of the curse.

"You chose your own fate," said Lucius "Crucio!" using the curse himself, it caused the worst sort of pain imaginable, its nothing more than she deserved, he did make sure not to keep it on too long. No, this was going to be slow and painful. She deserved worse, but they would feel better by the end of it.

"Please," she begged once it was removed, unable to even lift her head to beg, her hand outstretched, begging for mercy from the two wizards.

"How many times do you think Harry has said that during his short life?" scowled Lucius letting up, not deterred by her weak begs of mercy. She'd never given Harry any, so they weren't giving her it.

"Dumbledore knew, please, I was only following orders." rasped Figg, relived beyond believe that the truth potion was gone from her system.

"Where you?" said Severus.

"No," said Figg, closing her eyes so much for that theory.

"Sectumsempra!" snarled Severus loosing control of his temper. The spell hit Arabella with precision that Severus had perfected over the years. Not that it had been hard, she wasn't moving, and Severus was very good at hitting moving targets. Blood immediately began spilling from her
wounds as thousands of cuts appeared all over her. Unable to scream as one slash had cut through her throat she moaned in agony, trying to curl up in defensive position.

Standing over Figg, he knelt down, grabbing her face not caring if he hurt her, "That's for Harry," he told her in a calm voice. He watched as every ounce of life drained from the miserable disgusting woman in front of him. He just hoped she'd regretted her actions before the end.

"Well that was fun," said Lucius but if you looked close enough you'd see he was paler than normal and wary at the speed and efficiency that Severus had ended her life.

"We must burn the remains," said Severus, he wasn't about to let himself be caught.

"I'll clean up," said Lucius, flicking his wand and the blood disappeared, before he began to make sure nothing was out of the ordinary. They would just assume she wasn't here, when her time was up at the hotel…well they wouldn't find her. Things happened to tourists all the time, nothing suspicious about that.

"Let's go," said Severus.

"Hold on, I'll take us to a forest." said Lucius and he knew the perfect one. Wrapping his magic around both of them he Apparated away the remains of Figg close beside them. They reappeared in the forest of dean, Lucius watched his friend drop the remains as if it disgusted him to even touch her.

"Fiendfyre!" cast Severus, stepping back watching the fire spread rapidly, it was a dangerous spell, certainly not one taught at Hogwarts. Both of them quickly cast a drenching spell, stopping the forest of dean from being reduced to naught but ash. Banishing the ashes they let out a breath it was done.

"Prince Hall?" suggested Lucius.

Severus nodded curtly before they individually Apparated to Severus' new home.

"How did it go?" asked Narcissa looking up, Draco was asleep in her arms.

Severus just shook his head; he didn't want to talk about it.

"Let's go home," said Lucius.

Narcissa gave Severus a curious look but knew not to push him, when he didn't want to talk he wouldn't. No about of pressure or begging would get him to do so. Passing Draco over to his father, she Apparated them home.

Severus walked up the steps and made his way not to his own room but to Harry's. Opening the door he stared in at the sleeping child, a half smile twisting on his face. The covers had fallen off him; his little bear was curled up in the middle of the bed sleeping peacefully if the look on his face was anything to go by. Walking towards the bed, he replaced the covers, plans for tomorrow already making its way into his mind.

Severus crouched down at the graveyard, right next to Lily's tombstone, his face a mask of pain. Right next to him was her son, who was as always, quieter than a mouse. He had wondered if he'd made the right decision to bring Harry here, but shoved them from his mind. Children younger than Harry were brought here to see loved ones every day. Harry should have been brought here before this it just wasn't fair on anyone.
"Your mother was a brilliant witch Harry, very powerful; she loved you a great deal. I know that she would have wanted to stay with you, watch you grow up. Unfortunately that isn't possible, go on put the flowers down," said Severus watching him closely. He just looked lost, forlorn really, still getting used to this new life.

"You can talk to her if you like, she may not respond but she will hear you," said Severus, someway; somehow he knew Lily was still watching her son.

If anything this just made Harry shut down even more if possible.

Sitting down on the grass, he sat Harry down on his knee, feeling extremely ridiculous. "I first met your mum when she was eight years old..." confided Severus, watching Harry's eyes widen, deciding against telling the young child he'd been watching her before that. "She was at the park; Lily was swinging up and down on the swing set. Then out of the blue she jumped off and began to float down to the ground as if she didn't weight more than a feather. She was only eight but she had very good control of her magic, making it do what she wanted to." so much more than accidental magic.

Harry blinked continuing to listen to him talk about his mum, how they'd become friends and how magical she was.

He didn't make her sound like a freak, like his Aunt had the few times she'd been mentioned. Nor did they sound like drunks; he wasn't sure what to believe anymore. The story seemed so true, he didn't know why but he could feel how much it hurt the man to talk about his mum. She looked so beautiful in the picture, and happy with him in her arms...not at all like a drunk...as if he knew what they looked like. He found it hard to understand she was under him, but he did understand that she was dead, gone and never to return. He watched Severus through his too long fringe feeling overwhelmed.

"I'm afraid we have to go now," said Severus helping Harry up before getting to his own feet as well. "Do you want to say goodbye?"

"Goodbye," said Harry shyly, as if his mother was there and he'd been introduced for the first time.

"Good boy," said Severus taking Harry's hand in his, stepping away, he'd let Harry visit Potter at another date. He had an appointment in Gringotts in fifteen minutes. With that he walked away from the grave of his best friend, and the child's mother, they would be back one day.

I'll sing it one last time for you
Then we really have to go
You've been the only thing that's right
In all I've done
And I can barely look at you
But every single time I do
I know we'll make it anywhere
Away from here
Light up, light up
As if you have a choice
Even if you cannot hear my voice
I'll be right beside you dear
Louder louder
And we'll run for our lives
I can hardly speak I understand
Why you can't raise your voice to say
To think I might not see those eyes
Makes it so hard not to cry
And as we say our long goodbye
I nearly do
Light up, light up
As if you have a choice
Even if you cannot hear my voice
I'll be right beside you dear
Louder louder
And we'll run for our lives
I can hardly speak I understand
Why you can't raise your voice to say
Slower slower
We don't have time for that
All I want's to find an easy way
To get out of our little heads
Have heart, my dear
We're bound to be afraid
Even if it's just for a few days
Making up for all this mess
Light up, light up
As if you have a choice
Even if you cannot hear my voice
I'll be right beside you dear
Snow Patrol - Run
Chapter 21

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 21

Gringotts

Severus guided Harry into Gringotts; it was plain as day that Harry was terrified. His body was shaking; he'd taken one look at the goblins and nearly peed himself. Once they were out public view he crouched down beside the terrified child, wondering once again if Harry would ever be a happy normal child. His green eyes were larger than Severus had yet to see them, and it made his heart clench in agony, those green eyes were going to be the death of him he was sure of it. He could see what Harry really looked like, but to the public, he had red hair, green eyes, and looked to be three years old not five. He on the other hand looked twenty, blonde hair, his normal eye and as always tall but not so intimidating with that disguise. The goblins of course could see through the disguise so once he was in private he removed them.

"Calm down little one, they won't hurt you," said Severus, "In fact they are here to help you."

Harry stared at Severus as if he'd lost his mind; they looked as though they wanted to eat him. He couldn't believe he felt so afraid, he hated the fact he was showing his fear. At the Dursley's he was able to control it, but his life had turned upside down. He'd gone from a cupboard to a beautiful big bedroom with someone who seems to care. It had torn down all his defences, and as much as he tried he was unable to put them back up.

"Harry I promise you, aren't going to be hurt, nobody will ever hit you again." said Severus honestly. He could see Harry still doubted him; unfortunately Harry would just have to come to trust him on his own. No about of force or words would help the situation, but one day, maybe one day he'd have Harry's full trust.

Harry just nodded, doing what was expected of him, knowing I was better than being hurt for disagreeing. His uncle had drummed that into him since he could remember.

"Let's go," said Severus retaking a hold of Harry's hand and leading him into the office, exactly at the right time they were expected. Placing Harry in the seat, knowing by now he always attempted to sit on the floor. He then took his own seat, staring at the two goblins in the room impassively.

One of them was a healer, he had decided against any healer knowing Harry was here, even the one who'd originally healed Harry but he did have his results with him.

"Right on time, Mr. Prince Snape, I assume you'd like to get right to it?" asked Quinti giving the child a curious look; he seemed frankly freaked out by them. Given Snape's information he understood this was probably the first time he'd seen them. It wasn't his first encounter with the Potter heir, his mother had brought him just days after he'd been born, changing her will.

"Here is the results of the first scan, it's when we first detected the…abnormality." said Severus, saying abnormality with the merest whisper. He did not want Harry thinking he was the abnormality, especially with the words Petunia had spewed at him. No doubt Harry wasn't unfamiliar with that word and many others. The Goblins had no problem hearing him.

"I'll take that," said Healer Greik taking the results. He immediately opened it and began reading the contents. Greik stared up at Harry in shock before reading once again; barely able to believe the
boy had survived everything that had happened to him. His long brown gangly hand tightened on the paper before he added. "I may need to do a ritual to find out what this is."

"I suspected as much," said Severus admittedly. "I assume any potion would interfere?"

"It would." said Griek. "Fortunately it's painless and Mr. Potter-Snape wouldn't feel a thing."

"That's not the problem, as you can see he's not used to the magical world." said Severus. "He's quite frankly terrified enough without a ritual being performed."

"I can understand that," agreed the goblin healer, "It is down to him."

"Give us a moment," said Severus pinching the bride of his nose, watching the two goblins leave, noticing Harry was watching their every move warily. He'd never met a small child with so much suspicion before, not even he was at his age. Severus turned his chair around, so he was face to face with Harry.

"What's a ritual?" asked Harry quietly.

Severus' lip twitched; unsurprised that Harry had been listening to the conversation. No doubt his hearing was good, being unable to see very well, and needing to know where danger was coming from had enhanced Harry's hearing. "A ritual is where someone uses magic to check something, and maybe even to make it go away."

"Why do you need to check me?" whispered Harry, what was wrong with him? Were they checking his magic? What if he didn't like what he found? Would they send him back to the Dursley's? The thought left him very worried.

Severus paused briefly, unsure of what to say, "Harry, a man named Albus Dumbledore put a… lock on your magic, and the ritual will unlock it." deciding against telling him about the piece of foreign magic in his body. Not until they found out what it was at any rate, his magic unlocked would help the process along.

Harry was completely bewildered; he couldn't understand what he meant. Why would this Dumbledore put a lock on his magic? How did anyone know he was magical if that was the case? Did it have something to do with what happened to his mum and dad? It didn't really matter he supposed, either way this wasn't really his choice. He would have to go along with it or the man would get angry at him and hurt him. Or worse possibility of being sent back to the Dursley's. To keep the warm fitting comfortable pyjamas, the bed, and the delicious food he'd do anything - even this ritual whatever it was. He still didn't believe he had magic, even if it would explain his family's behaviour towards him. The times had turned, he'd been a freak in the eyes of the Dursley's, did that mean here if he didn't have magic he was a freak? The new thought caused his mind to whirl.

"Harry? If you do not want to do this just yet, I understand we can come back another time." said Severus solely to comfort Harry, he didn't want to come back and forth to Gringotts for the next few months for nothing. Unfortunately he couldn't force Harry into this either; he had to remain still until the ritual was over.

"I'll do it." said Harry hastily; the thought of going back to the Dursley's prompted him to respond as quickly as possible.

"Are you sure?" asked Severus staring intently at the child, he had an overwhelming desire to peek
in and get the gist of what Harry was thinking. Unfortunately to do such a thing would render a child insane. The art of Legilimency was clear on that, and Severus would never do anything to endanger Lily's son, who he'd gone to great lengths to keep safe and out of Dumbledore's hands.

"Yes," whispered Harry his mouth extremely dry.

"Alright," said Severus firmly, turning his chair back around and waiting on the Goblins coming back in. As if they had been listening in, they made their reappearance a few seconds afterwards.

"Everything sorted?" asked Healer Griek standing in front of them.

"We are," said Severus immediately.

"To get this done, we are best unlocking his magic first then the ritual to find out what the foreign entity is." said Griek.

"I figured as much," said Severus nodding in agreement.

"Thankfully this part is simple, but I do need your permission to help Mr. Potter-Snape if it comes to it." said Griek.

"You do," said Severus, although he hoped it didn't come to that, it would mean Harry would have trouble controlling his magic, at least until he got the hang of it.

"Come over here Mr. Potter-Snape," said Griek watching as the child once again flinch. He seemed to do so every time they called him by his last name. How very curious, but even as a goblin it didn't take a genius to figure out why. He also couldn't break protocol, they didn't use first name basis without permission.

"Go on Harry," said Severus reassuringly, following them over to the small camp bed the healer goblin had just created for him. He took two steps back so he wouldn't interfere with the spells the goblin was going to cast. Although it was more important for the ritual not the spell he was going to use right now.

Harry swallowed thickly, his heart was pounding like a drum, he felt like that day he’d ran around the hotel and outside it when the man had scared Dudley away. For a fat boy Dudley sure could run when he felt like it. He closed his eyes, imagined himself back at the Dursley's and successfully closed of his erratic emotions. It made coping with this unknown situation so much easier. Regardless he watched the goblins every move with wariness.

Griek spoke in gobblygook as he touched Harry's forehead, closing his eyes and feeling the block he meticulously began undoing it strand by strand. It was easy enough, wizard's magic was weak compared to theirs. He did it slowly hoping not to overwhelm the small wizard and his magic.

Griek twitched forcefully stopping himself from backing away. The magic was much more advanced than he'd anticipated. Putting more of his magic into it keeping it at a steady and level. The boy was going to be one powerful little wizard, he was anything but mediocre lets just put it that way. Piece by piece Dumbledore's bond on Harry's magic unravelled until it was completely tamper free. Griek remained behind to steady the core, allowing it to expand to fit his sudden influx of magic. Opening his eyes he saw both Severus and Quinti had raised shields and the room was rather...charred in places. He hadn't felt any magic leaking, he did feel pity for Snape, and he was going to have to deal with it himself. Thankfully in a place like Prince hall he wouldn't be detected by the Ministry. There was a focus stone, that would work but nobody used them anymore. It
wouldn't hurt to mention it to the wizard at any rate.

"How are you feeling little one?" asked Severus staring intently at Harry, making sure the
dizziness didn't overwhelm him.

Harry woozily sat up, that experience had been decidedly odd, not painful but weird. It was like
someone had been messing around inside his body, one minute he'd felt hot the next cold, it
continued on for what felt like forever then it started, like fireworks exploding. For some reason it
felt familiar, like he'd experienced it before. "I'm fine," murmured Harry, surprised when Severus
checked his forehead and made sure. It's the sort of thing Petunia had done for Dudley when he
was sick.

"No, stay down." said Severus when Harry tried to get up, "We still have one more thing to do
before we go home."

Harry nodded his understanding; he didn't think he'd be able to stand yet.

"I think perhaps you should retrieve a focus stone for Mr. Potter-Snape, it may help his magic
settle." said Griek.

"Good idea, with your permission I can go and retrieve one from the Potter vaults?" enquired
Quinti.

"Worth a shot," said Severus, anything to help Harry control his magic, he didn't want Prince hall
going up in flames every other week. It had admittedly been an awesome sight to see. The magic
leeching from Harry had been magnificent and powerful. Then again it didn't surprise him, he'd
sensed Harry's magic the first day he saw him, before he even knew whom he was.

"I will be back momentarily." said Quinti moving out of the room as quickly as his little legs could
carry him.

"Lie back down Mr. Potter-Snape, try not to move too much," said Griek.

"Can you call me Harry?" whispered Harry looking at Griek's hands, just waiting for the backlash
at speaking or wanting something. Yet neither of those things happened, no something more
frightening did...the thing smiled at him showing its razor sharp teeth.

"It would be my honour Harry," said Griek smiling at the nervous boy.

"Thank you," said Harry surprised at the lack of reprisals.

Twenty minutes later the ritual was done, and an exhausted Griek took a seat. Severus was alarmed
by how sick and pale he looked, whatever the entity had been...it was bad. Harry himself looked
exhausted, he decided to tend to Harry and let Griek catch his breath. Feeling Harry's forehead, he
was slightly hot; grabbing his potions kit he opened it and fed Harry a fever reducer.

"Here," said Quinti handing over a glass of water, the ice cubes were all but melted already.

"Thank you," said Severus accepting the glass and helped Harry drink it. He then uncorked a
sleeping potion and fed it to him. This was one conversation he didn't want Harry overhearing.

"Alright what was it?" asked Severus facing the goblin from where he was crouched beside his
adopted son.

"That was a piece of Lord Voldemort's soul fragment." said Griek.
"Excuse me?" choked Severus falling to the floor, gaping at the goblin unable to comprehend what he said.

"I have to assume it was a backlash of the killing curse that caused it," said Griek not repeating himself.

"How the hell does a killing curse cause fragments of a soul to come away?" snarled Severus, it didn't, it wasn't logically possible, he'd cast his fair share of the killing curses not that it was something to proudly boast at least not now.

Quinti began speaking, adding his own thoughts to the conversation, "There is only one possibility."

"Which is?" demanded Severus standing up trying to pick up the pieces of his reputation.

"That his soul was already fragmented, the term for such things occurrences is a Horcrux. For his soul to split accidentally I'd say he's split his soul at least three times." said Griek.

"Horcrux?" enquired Severus, "How does one go about creating one?"

"A Horcrux is a powerful object in which a Dark Wizard or Witch has hidden a fragment of his soul for the purpose of attaining immortality." said Quinti.

"You see, creating a Horcrux gives one the ability to anchor ones own soul to earth if their body is somehow destroyed. The more times one person splits their soul the closer they get to achieving immortality. You wizards do not know the value of true knowledge."

"Blame the stupid Ministers we have to endure," said Severus in defence. "The information obviously isn't lost just nearly forgotten."

"Not the Minister in this case, its Dumbledore he has banned more books from the Hogwarts library than we care to admit." said Griek.

"Unfortunately, the more one splits his soul," said Quinti, getting back to the original topic at hand. "It is costly to the creator; it causes an imbalance, drives one insane, and basically diminishes their humanity. It also causes permanent disfigurement."

"As for how they are created, a spell is cast then a Dark wizard or witch would commit a heinous act - murder to be specific. The soul is then placed in a chosen container whether significant or insignificant item and kept safe," said Griek.

"How would it be destroyed?" asked Severus looking shaken.

"The same means one would kill a person, Basilisk venom, Fiendfyre, unfortunately with it being a container spells such as the killing curse wouldn't work," said Quinti.

"How do you know so much about it?" asked Severus bewildered.

"Unlike wizards, our forefathers wrote everything down, and it's passed from generation to generation." said Griek. "We kept our information safe, we are only as powerful as our knowledge, a truth that's yet to dawn on the magical world."

"Such as the Horcrux information, the book would tell you that only one such wizard had attempted it, it would be wrong. They just want to give the impression that it's too evil to attempt, and that death would be preferable. Not everything you read is true unfortunately, most of its manipulated
or written from a biased point of view." said Quinti.

"Is there away to find out how many?" asked Severus pinching the bridge of his nose feeling a migraine coming on.

"No, I am sorry there isn't." said Griek.

"How do I go about getting it out of Harry?" asked Severus his stomach churning at the consequences of Harry surviving that night.

"It's out," said Griek.

"I thought…" started Severus.

"We know, but goblin magic is different from wizarding magic, the cleaning ritual got rid of the Horcrux. It's why Harry was so magically and physically exhausted." said Quinti.

"I see," said Severus, sighing in relief at least that was one less thing to worry about.

"The focus stone is weightless so it should be fine for Harry to carry around." said Griek.

"Thank you, both of you for your help, I have one last thing to enquire about." said Severus changing the subject.

"Of course," said Quinti.

"If I am not needed I will take my break," said Griek standing up.

"Of course," said Quinti, nodding to the goblin for his help.

"What can I help you with?" asked Quinti once the healer had left.

"Lily and James' wills, were they executed?" asked Severus.

"No, the executor of the will hasn't stepped forward," said Quinti.

"Which is?" asked Severus having a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach - yet again.

"Albus Dumbledore," said Quinti looking over the paperwork.

"Can I execute it?" asked Severus irritated beyond belief.

"You can as Mr. Harry Potter's adopted father," said Quinti.

"Then I want it to be done," said Severus, "Can I look it over?" he wanted to see why Dumbledore was so desperate to prevent it being read.

"Of course," said Quinti handing over the paperwork.

Severus gripped it tightly, it was Lily's handwriting, Merlin even after all these years she still affected him. Breathing deeply, he centred himself, getting rid of his emotions and erecting his Occlumency barriers. Then he began reading it, he swallowed thickly, she'd written this just before they'd gone under the Fidelus Charm.

The he read it, his breathing hitched; Black wasn't the secret keeper, closing his eyes swearing inwardly, it couldn't be true. According to this information they had gone with Peter Pettigrew
"Does Dumbledore have a copy of this?" asked Severus his voice raspy.

"According to these documents yes, he signed them." said Quinti.

Then he had his motive, if Black had been free he would have taken Harry in as his own. As much as he hated Black...even he wouldn't want his worst enemy in prison...who was he kidding? He revelled in it; comeuppance Black had nearly killed him. Yet his conscience wouldn't allow him to let it continue, with a bit of luck Black would already be insane anyway, and he'd have nothing to regret by letting him out. Oh boy, he was almost tempted to tell him to forget about it and bury it for the next decade or two.

He had to think about the fact Harry would be revealed a lot sooner if this was the case. Maybe there was enough time between him leaving and noticing Harry 'missing', this was what he had feared; he'd wanted Harry at least eleven before it got out that he wasn't at the Dursley's. He'd had enough for one day, he just wanted to get back to Prince Hall and think things through.

"Will I set a date for the will reading?" asked Quinti.

"Yes," said Severus standing up, "May the gods grant you more gold Quinti, thank you for your help."

"You also Lord Prince-Snape." said Quinti using his formal title.

Severus scooped up the sleeping bundle, once again feeling how light he was compared to his godson. Staring down at his sleeping face, he felt fondness seeping through him much to his surprise. Merlin he was getting so attached to Harry and quickly too.

"You can use the Floo network if you wish," said Quinti.

"Thank you," said Severus, stepping into the fireplace, and accepted the Floo powder the goblin gave him and disappeared in a flourish of green flames. He stepped out in what was becoming a familiar home - Prince Hall.

He noticed a Hogwarts owl, arching an eyebrow wondering what Minerva wanted from him now. Placing Harry on the sofa, throwing a cover over him to keep him warm, he sat down and unfurled the note curiously. His heart sank; well he guessed he will didn't matter now.

Severus,

Albus has become aware of Harry's disappearance. It seems as through he had Doge shadow Harry and the Dursley's. I'm afraid your plans for Harry will have to change. The Order has been called, he still cannot get in touch with you, but I've told him once again I've spoken to you. You may have to come back before Dumbledore realizes you've lied.

Minerva.

P.S - I hope Harry is feeling better.

"Can this day get any worse?" growled Severus, gritting his teeth painfully.
Chapter 22

The Vow And The Consequences

Chapter 22

Reconvening the Order

Minerva hissed the password to gain entrance to the Headmasters office, stepping up the stone step, staying at the bottom as it moved. She was still reeling with all the information she had learned this past few days, Severus helping Harry, and everything she'd been told thereafter. Merlin everything she knew had altered so drastically, in such a short time too it was no wonder she had a migraine trying to put it all in some orderly fashion. She also wanted to meet Harry, but the guilt was stopping her in her tracks. She should have enquired further, pushed more to make Dumbledore see sense. Or better yet actually gone to see them, if she had done so Harry wouldn't have been abused for years. The thought of Harry being hurt by that woman or her obese husband caused her to tear up. There was no excuse for her negligence and she felt so bad for her inactions. No amount of gifts, or saying sorry could ever remove the responsibility she felt in her godson's tragic life. Shaking away her thoughts now wasn't the time or place for them. Albus couldn't know her part in this, or where Harry was.

Opening the door unsurprised to see all the Order members already present. They didn't know why they were meeting, especially if their confused looks were anything to go by, unfortunately she knew all too well. Moving to her seat she took it, staring around impassively, as she always was. Minerva rarely smiled everyone in that room could attest to that, so her actions weren't suspicious.

"Why are we meeting after all this time?" asked Moody frowning, his voice loud and barking. The Order had disbanded years ago; he'd been extremely surprised to receive the missive in the middle of his rounds. So here he was, more out of curiosity than anything else.

"I'd like to know too," said Dedalus Diggle just as confused as Moody.

"Harry Potter has gone missing," said Albus clearly perplexed, he had everything planned out, and this wasn't part of it. Albus Dumbledore did not like it when things didn't go his way, as a master chess player, he liked to think himself omnipotent.

Everyone blanched; the thought of anything happening to Harry Potter was intolerable to them. After all he had ended the war, he was a hero, and everyone revered him. They also felt extremely protective of him. It hadn't stopped them celebrating the night Lord Voldemort was destroyed. A lot of celebrating had happened; even the oblivious Muggles had noticed the commotion. As always though, they hadn't figured out why, and if they had - they wouldn't know for long. Magic had to be protected at all costs.

"What happened? I thought the boy was protected." demanded Moody clearly angry about this turn of events. He didn't even think for a second that the information he had was wrong. He'd been kept away from the magical world for his own protection this wasn't supposed to happen.

"How do you know he's missing? He may be with friends." asked Emmeline Vance.

Minerva turned to stare at Dumbledore, wondering what he would say, she noticed Dumbledore's temple twitching in obvious irritation at being questioned. Why had she never noticed this about him before? Not only was she devastated by Harry being abused, but at the fact she'd adored the
ground Dumbledore trod on only to be betrayed.

"I've been doing some extra work for Albus," admitted Elphias Doge in defence of Dumbledore, they had been friends in Hogwarts, when the other students hadn't come near him because of his Dragon Pox, he hadn't been contagious but they didn't care. Albus on the other hand had been the one to make him feel welcome, even since then they'd always been best friends. "I kept an eye on the Dursley's and Harry, shadowing them when they went past the wards. For the past few days I noticed that I've not seen Harry."

"Doesn't mean anything's happened to him, he might just be sick." said Emmeline exasperated. They had been called to this meeting for this? She really was surprised she had to say.

"Not according to Arabella Figg, she was told Harry was with family, as we know he has no other family." said Doge.

"No but the Dursley's probably do," interjected Mundungus Fletcher.

"There is only one relative, and I've already checked it out, there is no magical presence in either homes." said Doge irritated beyond belief.

"What do you expect us to do? Interrogate the Dursley's?" asked Moody incredulity. "You should tell the Ministry what is happening."

"They cannot know, to keep Harry safe we must keep him oblivious to the magical world." said Dumbledore demandingly.

"Whether he knows about it or not he's still in danger." rebuffed Emmeline confounded by Dumbledore's logic, it made absolutely no sense and usually he did make sense.

"Don't you think finding Harry is more important than arguing amongst ourselves?" sniped Doge still as always firmly lodged up Dumbledore's backside.

"Yes why don't we all go and disturb the family, which might all be for nothing," said Minerva her tone clipped and controlled. Her anger was slowly bubbling under the surface, it took everything in her to just keep quite and not let loose the diatribe she had all planned out.

"No, only a few of us will go, once it's been confirmed Harry isn't there," said Dumbledore, he never doubted Doge, and he'd always been loyal to him. "Then we shall proceed."

"Why didn't you do that to begin with?" demanded Minerva, "If there is something wrong you have wasted valuable time!" This would be expected of her, Minerva had let it be known how attached she was to Harry as well as had been to Lily and James.

"You are correct of course, Minerva." said Dumbledore, noticing the Order members were agreeing with her and putting on a front. He couldn't alienate them, he may need them to find Harry and when Voldemort came back. She did have a point, but he wanted to establish a base and cover everything now. So if his worst fears were confirmed he would be able to get the Order and start an immediate search.

"Then can I get back to the Ministry?" asked Moody beyond irritated, his lunch hour was completely wasted.

"Of course, but be ready if I call again, if we cannot find Harry then we must." said Albus looking worried.
"Fine," said Moody aptly named at the moment, standing up he used Dumbledore's Floo and disappeared from the room.

"So who's going with you?" asked Emmeline, inwardly praying it wasn't her, she'd been at a party the night before, with only one hours sleep she wasn't exactly functioning properly.

"Doge and Minerva I think," said Albus solemnly, Severus would have been his original choice; he always had potions handy on him. Unfortunately he wasn't available, and he hadn't been able to contact him which was driving him to distraction. Plus Doge and Minerva knew where Harry was living, nobody else did.

"Very well," said Minerva as the rest of the order got up, and began making its way out of the Headmasters office with the exception of Doge.

"Let's depart," said Albus.

Minerva, Doge and Albus all Apparated to Arabella Figg's home, only to find nobody coming to greet them. Albus frowned in concern, looking around the room.

"She is on holiday, Albus. She isn't due back for a week." said Minerva before Dumbledore could panic.

"Oh yes, I quite forgot!" said Albus cheering up. "Now let us depart." he added as he flicked his wand and all of them were dressed in a Muggle design for outward appearances.

Minerva rolled her eyes, he had a habit of repeating himself, she'd found it amusing before, but this new side she saw - she now felt infuriated with him no matter what he did. He didn't even need to open his mouth for Minerva to be angry at him these days. She felt the need to get to Severus, see Harry for herself, before he got better, so she could remember the error of her judgement and never to ignore her instincts again. She didn't care how much it hurt to see Harry injured or small, if anything she deserved it. The guilt and the horror it would come with it too.

"Is that a for sale sign?" asked Albus clearly flappergasted.

"Yes, there is your answer, they've moved house," said Minerva as if it fixed everything.

"No, she knows how important it is to remain in that house." said Dumbledore quickening his pace.

"We aren't going to get answers, look the house is empty." said Doge, looking at the curtain-less windows.

"We must find them," said Dumbledore panicking.

"Perhaps the rest of the Order may help?" asked Doge, stepping behind Dumbledore so the elderly Muggle women could pass.

"Excuse me?" called Dumbledore once the women had passed.

Turning around they stared at him in curiosity, they hadn't seen him before, were they interested in the house? "Yes?" she asked her nosiness showing.

"Can you tell me about the people who used to live here?" asked Albus kindly.

"The Dursley's? Of course!" said the one with the pink coat.
The one with the grey coat nodded beside her companion.

"We thought they were a kind respectable family! To think we had a child molester amongst us is horrific!" shuddered the lady looking deeply disgusted and disturbed.

"Ch-chi-child molester?" stuttered Dumbledore his eyes going wide, oh no, please no, begged Dumbledore inwardly, don't let it be true, he hadn't left the boy with a child molester! Sure he'd expected him to be mildly abused but not that kind of abuse! It drove children to the darker side of life, not what he wanted for his hero. If this got out he'd lose his reputation and be kicked out of Hogwarts.

"No," gaped Doge looking terrified, he had been the one looking out for the boy after all.

"What happened?" asked Minerva, inwardly impressed, what had Lucius done to make everyone in this street believe that?

"One day the police showed up at the door, arrested them all, took the child to social services." said the grey coated lady.

"What about the other child? Harry?" asked Dumbledore urgently looking devastated.

"Harry? The nephew? I do not know." said the lady in the pink coat. "He was badly abused, the police said it was bad…they spoke to everyone in the street, asking us what we had seen."

"It was a detective we spoke to, he talked as though the poor child had been murdered by his own uncle!" said the grey coat lady shaking her head in sadness. There had been a time when family meant sticking together, unfortunately the older she got the more she realized life wasn't what it used to be.

"Thank you," choked Dumbledore, the women nodded smiling kindly before walking away.

"I think we may have to leave this to the Auror's," said Doge devastated, he'd failed not only Dumbledore but Harry by not noticing.

"The Ministry cannot find out," snapped Dumbledore terrified.

"If Harry is hurt or heaven forbid dead, we need to know." hissed Minerva.

Dumbledore swallowed thickly, "We can investigate this ourselves," said Dumbledore trying to calm himself more than the others.

"Oh I see, you know where to start? How to get questions from Police officers without raising suspicion?" asked Minerva pointing out where he would fail.

"Between us we can think of something," said Dumbledore frantically his blue eyes shadowed, his permanent twinkle was no longer present.

"I'm sorry Albus, but I have a duty, I must inform the Ministry," said Minerva standing her ground.

"I'm sorry too, I agree with Minerva, we need their help to find him if he's even alive, if not…" choked Doge, "We must give him the magical burial he deserves. If we failed him then I shall take any punishment they see fit to dole out." tears evident, swimming in his brown eyes.

"We can do this," said Dumbledore weakly, not able to summon up the need to manipulate the situation to his benefit. Truth be told he was still out of sorts, the rug was pulled from under his feet
and he didn't know what to do. For the first time in one hundred and thirty years of independence actions, words and thoughts failed him.

"No, Albus we can't, now go to the Ministry or I will, and believe me I won't leave anything out!" snapped Minerva Apparating away, but she didn't go back to Hogwarts. No instead she Apparated to the Leaky Cauldron to make use of their Floo Network. Once she placed the Knut in the pot she took the Floo powder and whirled away from view. The silencing spells on the area prevented anyone from hearing what she said, wizards and witches were zealots when it came to their privacy."

"Minerva, what are you doing here?" asked Severus his irritation evident by his privacy being violated.

"It's either that or I go to Hogwarts and poison his lemon drops!" snapped Minerva her composure completely lost as she turned to face her co-worker or ex co-worker as it happened since he was no longer employed at Hogwarts.

"Hush!" admonished Severus seriously, gesturing towards the lump in the couch. Harry was covered completely by the duvet. The only visible part of him was a patch of messy hair; he'd at some point curled further into the warmth until he disappeared.

"Is he okay?" she whispered worried.

"He's had a tough morning," said Severus, "He is recovering."

"What happened?" Minerva asked as she removed her tartan cloak and placing it on the hook and seemingly making herself comfortable.

"I took him to Gringotts to have his magic unlocked," explained Severus, not mentioning the Horcruxes to her. When it was obvious she wasn't going to leave any time soon he added "Would you like some tea?" Lucius would arrive soon anyway, he had to tell him, he needed help in figuring out where they could be. Nobody knew the Dark Lord better than Minerva, Lucius and himself. Minerva knew him when he was at Hogwarts, Lucius had been his follower for a lot longer than him, nearing seven years, and he well his knowledge on the Dark Lord was extensive together they should come up with an idea or two.

"I wouldn't mind a cuppa," agreed Minerva.
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

Talk of Horcruxes

The Vow And it's consequences

Chapter 23

The News

A house elf brought the refreshments, as Severus and Minerva got comfortable, sitting on chairs since Harry occupied the couch. Thankfully the sitting room was large enough to occupy a dozen people. Severus poured their coffees aware of how Minerva took hers. He had been working beside her for years; it was no surprise that he knew since he always observed his surroundings.

"Expecting company?" asked Minerva accepting her cup; evidently Severus wasn't the only one who paid attention. There was another cup on the tray,

"Yes," replied Severus amused.

"The Dursley's have been arrested," said Minerva quietly, just in case the little ears were trying to listen in. Regardless her face was filled with anger, how she wanted to wring Dumbledore's neck, and the Dursley's as well come to that.

"Already?" asked Severus his lips twitching in amusement. Lucius certainly didn't waste any time, at least he was living to his word. He was going to make their lives a living hell; death was much too good for the likes of those abusive buffoons. They'd regret the day they chose to lift a hand against a wizard, especially one he'd vowed to protect.

"The entire street was abuzz with the news," replied Minerva.

"How's Dumbledore taking it?" enquired Severus, "Help yourself." he added, taking a few biscuits himself, he hadn't eaten lunch and he doubted he would get the chance. He didn't like the fact Harry wouldn't be either, but he was exhausted. Severus wasn't about to wake him up to eat.

"Simply put, he's lost," said Minerva, "I don't think Albus knows how to function when things don't go his way."

"I don't suppose he does," mused Severus wryly. Dumbledore hated not being in control, it's something he'd noticed just weeks into working for him. For some reason the old fool had to control everything, the Minister, his staff and the order. He even probably tried to control the Dark Lord but to no avail.

The fireplace flared to life once again, and a blonde long haired wizard stepped through, his cane making the only noise as he sat down.

"What's going on?" demanded Lucius, had something went wrong with their plans? Was that why this meeting had been convened? He hoped not, he'd put a lot of money into ensuring the Dursley's
paid for their crimes.

"I took Harry for his scan earlier," said Severus conflicted, the old argument about involving Lucius Malfoy coming to the forefront. Did he dare tell him? He did what he had to for family, what if he was betrayed? Unfortunately he knew he couldn't do this alone. Well not alone and look after a five year old child, it was impossible. Flicking his wand he cast a silencing spell around Harry, not wanting the child to overhear this conversation under any circumstances.

"I assume you found out what it was?" asked Lucius pensively, leaning forward his fingers lined together under his chin. It had been on his mind ever since the healer found out about it, it was less troubling than finding out about the lock on Harry's magic. Of course, it was more troubling because of WHO put it on him than the fact it WAS on him.

"It was a shard of the Dark Lord's soul," said Severus grimly, turning to face Minerva when her saucer rattled.

"That's impossible," said Lucius a little freaked out, little wonder at the amount of times he'd used the killing curse over the years.

"That's exactly what I said," said Severus darkly, "Then the goblins let me in on some frankly shocking information."

"There can only be one reason," said Minerva ashen. "If his soul is unstable, he has been creating Horcruxes."

Severus arched an eyebrow impressed despite himself, "How is it you know what they are?" when we don't was left unsaid. They had been Death Eaters after all; they knew a hell of a lot about the Dark Art's and its artefacts.

"When I was at Hogwarts the book was available in the library, Albus removed it shortly after he became Headmaster. If I am not mistaken it is in his personal library at the moment." said Minerva. She should have been put in Ravenclaw, the amount of reading she'd done. She'd out-read a few Ravenclaws during her time at Hogwarts, that's for sure. Minerva had wanted to know everything about her world, even the not so…light material. She'd never tried any of it, she just wanted to understand, and she really could understand the lure to the darker magic's.

"What is a Horcrux?" asked Lucius irritated that they knew something he didn't. It obviously had something to do with the soul fragment but that's as much as he understood.

"A container hosting a piece of someone's soul," explained Severus pinching the bridge of his nose.

Lucius for the first time since he could talk was speechless; he just stared straight ahead unable to believe it. Even he wouldn't consider such an act. To split ones soul, it sounded so henious without actually doing it. Wizards believed in the afterlife, and the next life, splitting ones soul prevents it.

"The goblins said for the shard to enter Harry he must have made his soul extremely unstable. Meaning he's created more than one, three they suspect at the very least." said Severus.

"That is why he wasn't destroyed," said Minerva closing her eyes in despair. "It means to kill him, we will have to wait for him to return to destroy his…shall we say main soul fragment."

"Yes," agreed Severus.

"Can't we find them and destroy them?" rasped Lucius desperation swirling in his mercury eyes. It was obvious to both of them he truly feared the return of Lord Voldemort.
"Find them? They could be anywhere, in anything, not to forget we do not know how many there are." said Minerva, "Or how to destroy them, it wasn't explained in the book. The only way to accomplish this is if Tom had a sudden change of heart and felt remorse for what he did in killing someone to create the artefact."

"That's where you are wrong," said Severus smugly, "The goblins told me that certain things can kill them. Such as Fiendfyre and basilisk venom. The killing curse doesn't work, since it's a container and doesn't have a heart to stop it makes sense. Admittedly it doesn't help us find them.

"There must be a way," said Lucius desperation leaking from every pore on his body. 

"Do you still have the information on Tom Riddle?" enquired Severus, sitting forward it was a good a place to begin as any.

"I do not get rid of anything," said Lucius smugly.

"Then perhaps we can get an answer in the files," said Severus, "He has to keep them somewhere."

"Tom had an unnatural interest in anything related to the founders of Hogwarts." Minerva added.

"That's because he was related to Salazar Slytherin," said Lucius brushing it off as unimportant.

"Hold on a minute, she has a valid point, how many items? Four?" replied Severus thoughtfully. "A sword for Gryffindor and a pendant for Slytherin…what were the others?" if he had three or four, it might be the Horcruxes.

"Ravenclaw's diadem," said Minerva.

"The Huffelpuff cup," croaked Lucius realization sparking in his eyes. Oh he was such an idiot, how many times had he listened to Bellatrix bragging about it over the years?! To think he'd dismissed it, it looked like Minerva really knew what she was talking about. "It seems I owe you an apology Minerva."

"Excuse me?" asked Minerva taken aback; she certainly never expected those words to ever leave Lucius Malfoy's lips.

"Before the Dark Lord's downfall, before the fate that befell the Longbottom's…Bellatrix often commented on being the Dark Lords most faithful, that he had entrusted to her a valuable item. Huffelpuff's gold chalice." explained Lucius.

Then it dawned on him…he too had received something from the Dark Lord "Excuse me." he said his voice impassive but his eyes filled with worry, he Floo'ed out of Prince manor as if the grim was on his heels.

"What the hell?" murmured Minerva baffled.

Severus stared at the fireplace with a look of contemplation on his face.
Chapter 24

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 24

The Diary of Tom Marvolo Riddle

"He looks so peaceful lying there doesn't he? Did he like the pyjama onesie's I got him?" asked Minerva, she'd gone into the Muggle world to find a few things for him. With it being all Harry knew, a little familiarity may go along way to feeling comfortable. As good as a strong firm guardian Severus made, he wasn't Molly Weasley. Although she was trying not to judge him on how he treated students at Hogwarts, but she'd never seen Severus around young children so couldn't judge him with one hundred percent accuracy. Having been abused, Severus was probably the only one she knew equip to deal with it.

"He wasn't sure at first," said Severus a smirk gracing his thin lips, just remembering the look on Harry's face when he showed him them. "But he tried one on, and has continued to wear them. Judging by the clothes he had on when I found him...he's grateful to have something that fits and is new."

"I got him a few other things," said Minerva removing a tiny item from her pocket and flicking her wand. It began to expand and return to its original size. It was in a plastic bag, indicating she'd been in the Muggle world. The magical world still wrapped everything up in brown paper. They were so backwards sometimes, it was laughable really. Yet there were some traditions that the magical world didn't seem to want to see reduced to none-existence.

"You didn't have to," said Severus but he nonetheless accepted the bag and looked inside it. It was larger; she had obviously put a charm on it.

"I went to build a bear workshop, it was fascinating watching them create bears from scratch just the way you like them." said Minerva, despite the fact she'd been born in the Muggle world, she didn't frequently shop there. So she had been largely unaware of the advancements in the Muggle world.

Severus removed the bear his lip twitching; slightly surprised it wasn't in Gryffindor colours. There was no doubt Minerva was hoping for Harry to be in her house. Yet Severus suspected it might be hard for Hogwarts to sort Harry, he didn't know why but Harry was observant, very observant for his age. The bear was light brown, a lightening bolt scar upon his fury head. A black cape around its neck, it was a nice gift; the purple t-shirt had HS sewn into it. "HS?" said Severus surprised.

"Yes, it is his name isn't it?" enquired Minerva.

"Technically yes, Harry James Severus Potter Prince Snape is the name written on the Goblin charts." said Severus, when one was adopted they took on the adopted fathers name, it was a practise as old as the hills. Despite the fact Severus hadn't written the name down, thankfully though he would be preferred to as Harry Potter-Snape by the majority of people.

"Shouldn't it be Snape-Potter?" asked Minerva, surprised, unless magic felt that the name Snape would give him more protection than Potter would.

"I had suspected it would go that way, but you read the documents yourself," said Severus.
"I did," said Minerva and what a shock that had been. "You know the Prince name is better than either of them, have you considered changing your name?"

"I'd rather not," said Severus dryly, "And as far as I am aware, the Potter name has been around longer than the Prince's." it was mostly out of spite, he hated the Prince's, not for disowning his mother, she had brought that on herself. Who in their right mind would give up money to marry Tobias? Never mind the fact she'd stayed with him, her life had been a long streaming pile of misery and in staying she'd allowed his life to be the same. No neither of his parents had been what he'd come close to calling natural parents. He didn't think he had it in him to be one either, but he sure as hell would be better than the Dursley's and his mother and father combined.

Searching the bag he noticed a pack of exploding snap, evidently it hadn't been a trip solely focused in the Muggle world. There were also picture books, colouring in magical books, which would move after it had been coloured in. Placing it on the other end of the couch, he'd let Harry look through it later on tonight. "Thank you Minerva, I'm sure Harry will love them." said Severus.

"How is he physically?" asked Minerva, not asking about his mental condition, knowing very well it would take years to recover from the abuse, if he recovered at all.

"Still severely underweight, it will take at least half a year for him to be completely healthy, longer still to get up to a height acceptable for his age." said Severus sounding professional. If it wasn't for the narrowing of his eyes, Minerva would have suspected he didn't care.

"Have you arranged for him to begin school?" enquired Minerva placing her empty cup onto the table. As the Floo erupted spitting Lucius Malfoy out, who looked out of breath and terrified still.

"He is still too afraid of his own shadow to attend any school, I shall be arranging for a tutor or teaching him myself." said Severus, he did not think himself a good teacher, and so if he were to teach Harry, he would be doing it only as a last resort.

"Since it is summer, perhaps I can start him off?" suggested Minerva. "I can get a few books and some pens and pencils so it's easier to begin with."

"I think that would be acceptable," said Severus, it would help him greatly, start Harry of in being educated while he tried to find someone he could trust with Harry. Not just to teach him fairly, but one who wouldn't be overwhelmed with his fame and undo anything he tried to do. He did not want Harry to think he was special, better than everyone else or under the impression he could skate by on his fame. Minerva would be perfect for the role; he just needed to find someone similar to her.

"Someone from abroad might be the best option, my family healer's fiancée has a brother whom is a tutor." said Lucius adding into the conversation, placing a small black diary on the table.

"Harry is wearier of men than he is of women," said Severus.

"How do you know?" asked Minerva slightly surprised.

"When I took him to Gringotts he jumped when men spoke, when women did he wasn't so worried, which admittedly doesn't make sense. If you ask me Petunia probably did the most damage to the child." said Severus baffled.

"I agree it doesn't make sense." said Minerva, "Will he be okay with me?"

"We will just have to wait and see," said Severus, not presuming to know everything. "It might help to smile; you do have a similar build and look to his aunt."
"Don't break yourself," teased Lucius.

Minerva pursed her lips, staring at Lucius drawly trying to stop herself from laughing. The world truly was falling on its axis, here she was sitting with Lucius Malfoy and getting on with him, almost laughing at something he said. Considering the burden they all shared now, it was better for them to put all grudges aside and concentrate on the greater good. The common greater good, not Dumbledore's version of one, where he puts a child in an abusive environment.

"What is this?" asked Severus, knowing without a doubt there was a reason for it being here.

"That is an item I received from the Dark Lord ten years ago," said Lucius grimly. His icy blue eyes filled with apprehension.

"Do you know what it is?" asked Severus opening it up to find the pages blank.

"I suspect it may be a Horcrux." said Lucius.

"Hmm," replied Severus, summoning ink and a quill from his desk, before dipping it in balancing it on his left knee. On his right the book lay on it, scribbling on it his eyes widened when the ink disappeared into the diary. It was obviously a magical one, despite the Muggle look it had. This definitely indicated dark magic; books didn't do that, his breathing hitched when he noticed ink beginning to write back. Never interact with anyone that had a mind of its own, rang through his head. One of the things his mother had actually told him, when he was a child. This was a good example of never judge a book by its cover.

Hello, my name is Tom Riddle. Who are you?

"Great Merlin's ghost!" exclaimed Minerva paling pasty white.

"Well, we can all agree this is most certainly a Horcrux." said Severus slamming it closed as placing it back on the table. He would destroy it immediately; he wasn't going to have this around a five year old child. Determined he stood up, grabbed the book and flung it into the fireplace.

"Fiendfyre!" chanted Severus, the spell shot from his wand and blazed fiercely through the book. Severus arched around shielding his face and front from the fire that began screeching loudly. His wand automatically coming out and shielding them all from anything that came their way. The shield strongest around Harry, so nothing whatsoever happened to him.

Then the screeching slowed before dwindling to nothing, allowing Severus, Minerva and Lucius to remove their hands from their ears. Just like that one of the Horcruxes was gone, but with no prior knowledge of how many Tom Riddle had, they were in the unknown.

"He took that book around with him everywhere, not surprisingly if it was a Horcrux." said Minerva.

"It probably wasn't the entire time," said Severus sitting back down.

"No, but it is curious, why you and not your father?" asked Minerva speaking to Lucius at this point.

"My father was gone when he finally gave me the Horcrux," replied Lucius.

"Malfoy manor is safe, or as safe as any building could be. I'm not surprised he chose to ensure at least one of them was there." said Severus.

"True, then maybe he even has one in Hogwarts." said Minerva swallowing thickly at the thought
of such a horrific item being amongst her students. If anything happened to them she'd never forgive herself.

"I wouldn't be surprised," mused Severus.

"Harry's awake," said Minerva noticing the child rubbing at his ears a look of confused fear in his green eyes. No doubt terribly confused as to why he couldn't hear them talking, his eyes...they looked so much like Lily's. They were breathtaking, right there and then she knew Severus would never be able to deny Harry a single thing he asked.

Severus unobtrusively flicked his wand, cancelling the silencing spell around Harry. Watching him intently, wondering how he'd feel with so many people in the room. So far he'd been sleeping when anyone was in Prince Manor. Harry slunk further into the covers, his green eyes flashing to each person in turn wary of newcomers.

"Harry, come over here please," said Severus, patting at an unused cushion in the couch he was using.

Harry bit his lip, looking at the others again before he reluctantly removed himself from his cocoon. Walking around the room the long way, instead of going near Lucius or Minerva. Climbing onto the couch, he sat down staring at the floor. Was he being sent away? Why? He had tried to be good! Chewing on his bottom lip he blinked to try and stop the tears from flowing. No matter what he obviously couldn't be good, he was nothing but a freak, just like his aunt always said.

"I'd like to introduce you to my friends," said Severus, "They are your godfather and godmother as well, this is Minerva...and Lucius." finished Severus.

"Hello Harry," said Lucius smoothly, his lips twitching in an attempt to calm the child who looked ready to start hyperventilating. He obviously wasn't ready to deal with anyone never mind adults. "How are you feeling?"

"Fine, thank you sir," said Harry quietly without even glancing up just cringing as he spoke.

"Hello sweetie, Severus has a few things to give you, I hope you like them," said Minerva, smiling at him softly, a sight neither men had seen before in their stern professor. "I'm told you like your pyjamas?"

"Yes ma'am," said Harry staring at her for a few seconds, a tiny smile turning on his face before he found the floor fascinating once more. He wasn't sure what was happening, but he thought perhaps he wasn't being sent away. Relief flowed through him at an alarming rate, but tried not to get his hopes up. He certainly wouldn't be the first time he'd felt let down, even if by his own thoughts.

Severus slowly stretched over to pluck the bag from the couch, making sure not to startle Harry. To his pride Harry didn't flinch or seem uncomfortable. Harry was getting used to it, beginning to trust him and it made him feel empowered. He could do this; he might just be able to get Harry over the abuse he'd suffered and turn him into a confident young boy in time for Hogwarts.

"These are for you and you alone," said Severus handing him each item from the bag, letting Harry know they were for him and they didn't belong to anyone else, and he didn't have to worry about anyone touching them. He left Harry to investigate them at his own leisure. Nobody failed to notice his hands tightening on them, staring at Minerva and Lucius as if they were threatening to take them away. He seemed to like the teddy bear most of all, if the way he was clutching it under his arm was any indication.
"Harry?" said Lucius quietly, his voice soothing. "I have a gift for you, will I give it to Severus for you?" giving the child the choice on whether he came over or not.

Harry stared up at the icy blue eyes of the man, who had a wrapped parcel in his hand. It was fully extended so he was as none threatening as possible. Harry swallowed thickly, his eyes jerking towards the package, then back up. Breathing deeply, he slid from the couch and walked over, slowly edging until he was within reaching distance. His small thin fingers reached out and took the gift, green eyes flashing in surprise when it wasn't pulled back. It was soft, and Harry wondered what it was as he retreated keeping Minerva and Lucius within view at all times. It was obvious to them that Harry really didn't trust them yet.

"Do you need help opening it Harry?" asked Severus quietly, as Harry reclaimed his seat.

Biting his lip, tightening his fingers around it he nodded his head jerkily.

Severus ripped a piece of the paper, making it easier for the nervous child, who shouldn't have problems opening things at his age. "Good boy," said Severus, watching the green eyes blaze with need, a need to be cherished, loved and looked after.

"Indeed," said Lucius his lip quirking at the gasp Harry let out. He had gotten Harry the same gift he'd gotten for his son. A beautiful green Welsh dragon/soft toy, completely unanimated so he wasn't startled.

"While we were there, we found out that the will hadn't been read." said Severus, speaking without giving too much away to the young ears in the room.

"I am not surprised;" admitted Minerva sadly, "Most of the people close to them are gone…or imprisoned."

"That I am afraid is unjustly," admitted Severus grimacing, shuddering lightly. He never thought he'd see the day where he defended Sirius Black of all people. Unfortunately he wasn't a complete bastard as to allow him to remain in Azkaban for something he didn't do. The years he'd already spent there was more than enough for anything Black had done to him as a young boy. He'd never get on with the wizard that much was certain, and thankfully he had no say in Harry's life.

"Excuse me?" choked Minerva, coughing at the biscuit lodged in her trachea, shakily drinking cold tea to wash the biscuit down in a vain attempt to get breathing again. Taking big gulps of air, coughing weakly as she regained control of herself. Surely she had misheard; she just couldn't comprehend what Severus had said. She stared at Severus blankly, as if hoping his statement would have been wrong or made in a dark attempt of humour. Yet his face didn't change, not even the slightest. She did notice Harry had backed away on the couch, watching her wide eyed though the corner of his eyes.

"He was never at any of the meetings," said Lucius thoughtfully, but that wasn't surprising. The Dark Lord liked to try and keep his Death Eater's identities a secret from each other. So they couldn't betray one another to get off lightly, like Karkaroff had done upon the Dark Lord's defeat four years ago. He kept a lot of 'spies' a secret, to ensure they were never discovered.

"According to the will, which was written just before they went under the Fidelus Charm, it was not Black who was their secret keeper." said Severus grudgingly.

Minerva gasped completely horrified, quite rightfully really since Sirius Black had not only been imprisoned while innocent but never given a trial. Azkaban was hell on earth, nobody came out of there sane, Merlin, it was completely shocking. "Oh, great Merlin's ghost it must have been Peter!"
said Minerva drawing to the correct conclusion of the events that had transpired that night.

"It was my first natural conclusion when I read the will," said Severus nodding his head.

"Naturally," said Lucius, "However, they could have changed their mind and put Black in at the last second."

"True," said Severus, "Regardless if he is innocent, it will come out, a date is being made for their will to be read."

"That will reveal everything much sooner than you wished Severus," said Minerva, the Potions Master had been so adamant about keeping it secret until at least Harry came to Hogwarts. Why would he change his mind? Was Black being innocent bothering him that much? He doubted it; he must have been thinking about reading the will before it otherwise he wouldn't know.

"Indeed," said Severus sighing in mild exasperation. Turning to Harry, his lips twitched when he noticed the child was asleep again. The teddy Minerva got him still clutched tightly in his grasp. Summoning the duvet he placed it over the sleeping boy.

"He looks a little bit like his father, how are you dealing with that?" asked Lucius.

"I haven't really noticed," admitted Severus, his eyes were always drawn to the green eyes on the child. Although there was little doubt he'd look like James more as he grew up. Just like he knew Draco would look like Lucius as he got older. The old pureblood families had traits that they passed down, the eyes and hair the most prominent features.

"It might help if you magically adopt him," said Lucius thoughtfully, he'd take after three of them rather than just the Potter's.

"It might solidify your position as Harry's adopted father as well," said Minerva all for the idea.

"That is a life changing decision; Harry would have to make that decision on his own. Right now he would agree out of fear of being sent away than any feelings he may have for his new situation." said Severus.

Minerva shook her head fondly; sometimes Severus could be the most thoughtful man in the world. He never showed this side of him often enough in her opinion. Instead of saying feelings for him, he was saying situation as if it made everything more meaningful.

"Children shouldn't have to make decisions like this at their age. It's why they have parents Severus, at the end of the day that is what you are. If you wish to keep him safe, then you should brew the potion and safeguard his future." said Lucius seriously.

"They shouldn't," agreed Severus, "But they also shouldn't have been beaten within an inch of their life, unfortunately Harry isn't like most five year old children. Most five year olds have the attention span of a gnat, Harry is different. He observes his surroundings, listens to what people say, whether he understands it or not."

"A normal childhood will change that," said Lucius confidently.

"No, no unfortunately it won't. The responses are too ingrained into Harry now for any hope of him being a normal boy. No amount of love, attention and spoiling will change it, trust me I know." said Severus grimly.

"Well I will have to defer to your expertise Severus, I admittedly don't know much." said Lucius.
He had been reading a few books, on how best to deal with abused children. He would take his role of godfather seriously, and do his best to instil some pride and confidence in the young boy before attending Hogwarts.
Chapter 25

The Vow And It's consequences

Chapter 25

A New Day

Harry blinked sleepily, wakening up from his sleep once again. He'd been doing so much sleeping lately, he wasn't used to it. Normally he was forced to cater to his family's every whim, whether he was sick or tired. He was so warm and cosy, it was really nice, and he couldn't help but wonder why Severus had helped him. Nobody in his life had helped him before, not even the man who'd bowed to him in a shop one day. He'd asked his aunt if he knew him, but he'd just been slapped and sent to his cupboard. He'd been locked in for three days; he should have known better he hadn't been allowed to ask questions. He was allowed now, he'd asked a few questions since coming here, and he wasn't hurt for it. He wasn't used to the food either, but it was the best he'd ever tasted. A smile spread out across his small face, he was in his bear onesie again. He really liked it; it was so soft and comfy, and kept him really warm.

The people he'd seen yesterday had given him presents! He'd never been given any before. They were in his room on his bed, and Severus had said they were his to play with whenever he wanted to. Staring down at the teddies, he felt hope renewing that he was here to stay for good. He never wanted to leave, and if he was a good boy maybe it would stay that way. Clutching his bear and dragon close, he closed his eyes and relished the warmth surrounding him. No more wakening up with loud banging on his door and forced to do chores from the tight enclosed cupboard.

"Good morning, Harry," said Severus entering his bedroom after knocking once. Not surprised to see the child awake, he had wards on him that let him know when he was awake. He would remove them in the future when Harry was more comfortable here. He didn't want the child wandering around the manor, despite the fact he had wards preventing him from going anywhere dangerous.

"Morning sir," murmured Harry shyly.

"Time to get up, let's get a bath ready for you," said Severus, wandering through to the bathroom. Filling the tub as he went about getting things Harry would need. A small towel, face cloth before pouring in some bubble bath for him. Shaking his head wryly, he really had gotten used to this routine too quickly. Lucius and Minerva were coming again today for a few hours; hopefully it would be during Harry's nap. Which by the way he would be stopping in a fortnight, he was up way later than children should be at night. Then again it might have something to do with the fact he was recovering and sleeping a lot during the day.

"Good boy," said Severus, noticing Harry had removed his onesie and was sitting on the toilet. He obviously hadn't been taught to pee standing up. Which didn't surprise him, yet another task that would fall to him. Not yet though, not until Harry was more comfortable with him, and he with Harry.

Severus moved the small blue step box to the middle of the bath, beside the handles so Harry could get in himself. He didn't want Harry to become to reliant on him, he was five years old to do so would be detrimental to his growth. He knew Harry would become reliant on him but he didn't want him to become completely dependant on him for everything. According to the book he was reading, children liked to feel independent at his age. For most part at the Dursley's he had been
forced into independence, in all things.

"Come on then, up you get," said Severus keeping an eye on Harry, but as he predicted he didn't need help getting in. "Well done."

Harry smiled shyly at him, as he sat in the bath.

"Go on then, play with the toys Harry, they are yours," said Severus seriously. Handing one to him, before moving out of the bathroom. Getting Harry's stuff prepared for the day, if he continued growing at the rate he hoped, he would need to buy Harry a new wardrobe. With the potions and regular food he should sprout out. He looked more like a two year old than the five years of age he was right now. With the new potion he was trying, it should remove any permanent damage the Dursley's had inflicted on him by starving him.

Harry slowly began to remove the toys from the little colourful shelf attached to the wall. The soldiers reminded him of the ones he'd had in his cupboard. So he wasn't so reluctant to play with those, he did remain quiet, it was second nature to remain quiet to him. Nobody liked hearing his voice, and if he had cried he would have been walloped a good one. Playing with the odd looking creature, with lots of legs (tentacles) squeezing it, water spouted out its mouth causing him to giggle at the water all over his face.

"I see you like the Giant Squid," said Severus his lips twitching in amusement as he came back in.

Harry nodded, so that's what it was, a squid, he'd never seen anything like it before in his life.

"We will have visitors again today," said Severus dipping the face cloth into the water and washing Harry's face, and wiping behind his ears making sure he was properly cleaned up. "They were here yesterday and they won't hurt you, I promise. Minerva and Lucius are here to help me with something." He was hopeful by christmas that Harry would be more comfortable, so Draco could come and play with him.

"Kay," said Harry.

"Okay," said Severus automatically correcting him, it was best to help him now while his mind could absorb it. Harry was at an age where he would be able to remember things easily, the mind was like a sponge or so the book said.

"Okay," repeated Harry.

"Good," said Severus giving Harry a rare smile. Before helping Harry out of the tub, wrapping him in a towel. Harry wandered back through to the bedroom as Severus cleaned up. He could have left it to the Elves but he wasn't used to them doing everything for him.

"Would you like to take two of your toys down?" asked Severus, as Harry to dress himself.

"Yes please sir," said Harry eagerly.

Kneeling before the child, not wanting to be called 'Sir' all the time, it reminded him too much of being at Hogwarts and teaching students. It's not what he wanted Harry to think of him, his mind had been on Lucius' words and he couldn't stop himself from thinking on it. What if Lucius was right? Could it be up to him as Harry's adopted father to safe guard his future? His fingers automatically buttoning the cloak Harry had left undone.

"Harry, when I removed you from the Dursley's I adopted you, you are officially my son." said Severus softly, "There is a potion that can make it even more official, if you would like to take it."
should he tell him that Dumbledore and Black could make his life hell if they tried to take him?

"Does that mean you won't take me back to the Dursley's?" asked Harry, his sorrowful green eyes beseeching the black ones of his saviour. To Harry that's exactly what Severus was, his black night in shining armour.

"Whether you take it or not, you will never end up back at the Dursley's Harry." vowed Severus firmly. "They hurt you, and it's against the law to hurt children, Harry. They are in prison for what they did, and will never get their hands on you again."

Harry's eyes widened further at that information, he didn't know what prison was but it seemed like a place where horrible people went. He didn't even spare a thought about what had happened to Dudley, after the way the boy had treated him nobody could blame him.

"The reason I ask about the potion," said Severus still deeply conflicted, if he said this then there was little doubt Harry would agree out of fear or worry. Yet whether he took it or not he had adopted Harry, he would remain with him, he wasn't a man who admitted defeat or let others tell him what to do. "Is because your other godfather could gain custody of you, he is close to Albus Dumbledore and I don't want him near you."

"Will he lock my magic again?" asked Harry innocently not understanding how grievous it was to do such a thing.

"He could, it's a bad, bad thing to do Harry, nobody should have their magic locked away." said Severus, his knees were beginning to ache on the floor.

"Can I call you daddy?" asked Harry, Dudley called Vernon that, and he had wished for years to have a daddy. He wanted it more than anything else in the world; it's what he'd prayed for stuck in his cupboard every night.

Severus stared at the five year old stunned, his mind felt as though it had shut down completely. It was the last thing he had expected out of his mouth. Perhaps Harry wasn't as emotionally scarred by what the Dursley's had done after all. Was he even ready to be a father? He'd never imagined being one in his life, not even when he'd contemplated a future with Lily when they were younger. His own father had been a bastard, and the only experience he had was with Draco and Lucius. Staring at the green eyes filled with desperation, he realized this wasn't about him. He was already officially Harry's guardian and father. This was about a desperate five year old who just wanted to be loved.

"Why do you want me to be your... dad?" asked Severus, he wouldn't do this he decided, if it was out of fear he'd be taken away. It wasn't right; nobody should make that kind of decision out of fear. He didn't care what Lucius had said, children were capable of making their own decisions he had.

"I've always wanted one," said Harry, and it was as simple as that.

"Then yes, you can call me dad," said Severus awkwardly, he could tell from the look on Harry's face it was a desire he really wanted, this had nothing to do with fear and he felt elated. Harry sniffled his green eyes filling with tears, then two the surprise of them both Harry launched himself at his saviour. His small arms wrapping desperately around his neck, clutching him close burring his head in his neck getting it wet with tears.

Severus froze in shock, staring down at the brown messy haired child, unable to comprehend what he'd just done. He must be utterly mental; nobody in their right mind touched him. Nobody had
touched him kindly apart from Lily nearly his entire life. Draco hugged his legs when he came but this...this was different. Relaxing slightly, Severus awkwardly hugged Harry back, one hand patting at his back. Harry's magic tingled against where he was against his body. Breathing deeply, he felt a strange foreign feeling, what was that? It made him feel emotional; when he felt like that his instinct was to push them away. He couldn't do that to Harry, or he would ruin any progress he'd made with the child.

Closing his eyes it dawned on him that maybe...just maybe Harry wasn't the only one being saved.

"Alright, Harry?" asked Severus, never stopping in his rubbing his back.

"Yes, dad." said Harry shyly from where he was buried in his neck.

Severus' heart clenched, he hadn't felt this emotional since Lily had died. He certainly hadn't expected this when he woke up this morning. "Let's go eat breakfast." replied Severus, patiently waiting for Harry to let go, as he did he felt ridiculous for wanting those arms back.

Minerva Floo'ed to Prince Hall, staring around curiously, there was nobody here. Not wanting to look around, feeling it too improper she waited for Severus to come. He would know someone was here; there were wards all around the place. She'd eaten at Hogwarts before coming right here; it was safe since Albus was at the Ministry trying to find Harry along with the Auror's.

A doe Patronus message startled her but she watched it appear before her waiting on what he would say. "Minerva we are in the gardens," it said before bowing low and disappearing in a mist having done its task.

Well it was a beautiful day; she couldn't blame them for wanting to make the best of it with it being summer. It wasn't like Severus to go outside though, there was a reason he was so pale, and he preferred the dungeons. Opening the living room door she made her way through the tastefully decorated foyer, the chandelier was absolutely breathtaking. The Prince's certainly had taste, she mused as she passed it and opened the front door, hopefully it would be this way and not out the back. Transforming into her Animagus form after closing the door, she bounced off enjoying some free time as a tabby cat.

As Minerva neared Severus and Harry, the child noticed her first. Quicker than lightning he had her scooped up in his arms, surprisingly not hurting her. "Look, a kitty." said Harry, showing his dad, and he was his daddy, nothing could stop him from being.

"That, Harry isn't just a kitty," smirked Severus in amusement his black eyes twinkling. "Put her back on the floor and watch."

Harry carefully sat it back down hoping she wouldn't run away, he'd never seen many animals. His aunt didn't like dogs or cats; she called them vermin, except when Marge was there. He hated that dog; it barked and growled at him, it frightened him. He shrieked when it begun to turn into the woman from yesterday, it was the most magic he'd ever seen. His green eyes watched her in awe, how had she done it? Could he do it too? He wanted to be a kitty as well! The next thing Harry knew he was looking at the world from an even lower angle.

"Dear Merlin's ghost!" said Minerva gazing at the grey kitten mesmerised. How had he managed to do that? He was five years old! It shouldn't be possible...it took years to master human transformation. She felt herself melt just staring at the grey cat, his green eyes standing out against his fur he was so cute. She went to pick him up, but the kitten flinched from her, before bounding away crawling up Severus' leg and burrowing itself in his lap.
"Severus? Are you okay?" asked Minerva swallowing thickly, he seemed to be in a state of shock.

Severus shook himself out of his thoughts, staring at her as if she was insane; he had custody of a five year old child that could apparently transform himself into an Animagus form! Of course he wasn't alright. He'd only been up a few hours and he just wanted to go back to sleep and get over the shocks of the day already. Was there any more surprises around the bloody corner?

"I am sorry, Severus," said Minerva, if she hadn't used her Animagus form Harry wouldn't have transformed himself.

"Its fine," said Severus soothing the small ball of fur, which by the way fitted comfortably in the palm of his hand without any difficulty. "Harry are you okay? Put your paw up if you are."

The little grey paw rose up, pawing at his clothes. Severus rubbed at his ears, faintly amused, perhaps the focus stone was focusing his magic more than anyone expected. He'd seen Minerva do it and then bam he was one. He was one powerful little boy, given who he had defeated...even if only temporarily he shouldn't be surprised. Bending over he placed the kitten on all four legs back on the grass, he was safe from anything that could get to him here in Prince Hall.

Minerva conjured a ball of catnip and rolled it along the glass, causing Harry to run after it. Her lips twitched at the sight, he was a beautiful kitten, but he was a beautiful boy so why not? The difference was astonishing, what had happened since yesterday to cause this?

"He seems more...happy," said Minerva sitting down next to Severus.

Severus stared at the grey ball of fur having a delightful time with the catnip Minerva had conjured before facing the woman. "He asked to call me dad," confessed Severus, still stupefied over it really.

"Really?" asked Minerva not as surprised as Severus seemed. "I'm not surprised, Severus. You took him in, saved him and are giving him everything he hasn't had since he was a year old...that of which he cannot remember."

"I haven't had him long, how can he trust so soon?" asked Severus, baffled.

"Children don't lose the capacity to trust until they are older, much more jaded that five. Despite what he has been through. I think Harry just believes in you, they also have a great capacity to love." said Minerva.

"I did not trust even as a child," said Severus bluntly.

"Yes you did, but your trust was given to a child your own age...Lily." said Minerva knowingly. "You were also much older, jaded in a way I hope Harry never gets. All the adults failed you, not just your parents...and Harry hasn't experienced that." it was only the dursley's and Figg she supposed who had failed him, he hadn't begun school and watched the rest of the adults ignore him or the signs in front of their eyes.

"Perhaps," said Severus thoughtfully.

"He's adapting to magic with finesse," said Minerva proudly.

"He's adapting to everything too easily," said Severus his voice conveying just how much it was freaking him out.

"They are resilient." replied Minerva. "Did you read the newspaper?"
"No, I didn't, I was too stunned," confessed Severus, he'd barely eaten any breakfast. Things were just moving to fast, he was getting too attached to Harry. Then there was the fact Harry was getting attached enough to want to call him dad. Not only that but the will reading, Black and Dumbledore, it was all happening at once. He'd wanted to wait until Harry was eleven years old before anyone found out.

"They are transferring Sirius Black from Azkaban to the Ministry to stand trial to find out." said Minerva giving him the rundown.

"The Daily Prophet knows?" asked Severus surprised.

"Mmm, Rita Skeeters, she gets her nose in places it has no right being in." said Minerva.

"Indeed," said Severus, wincing at the sharp claws bending over he picked up the exhausted kitten. Now was the moment of truth if Harry could transform himself back or not, thankfully Minerva was here if he couldn't. "I would like to see a human boy, Harry. Just want to turn back to normal and it should happen."

Severus waited patiently, he turned to Minerva, just about to nod at her to help Harry when he transformed into a child once again. Harry scooted as far away from Minerva as he could, it seemed despite earlier he wasn't ready to trust her just yet. "You are a clever boy!" said Severus mesmerised.

Harry smiled shyly, his chest heaving up and down quicker than normal; with all the exercise he had it wasn't surprising. He huddled against his dad, he wasn't a freak, here he was normal and it's all he'd ever wanted.

"You are very clever," agreed Minerva.

"That's Lucius, perhaps we should take this inside," said Severus, standing up, placing the exhausted child on his hip before both of them wandered in. At least Harry would be down for his nap during this meeting like he had wanted.

"Accio Harry's toys," said Minerva grabbing the bouncy ball and colouring and much to her amusement the transfigured catnip ball also came flying through mid air, before getting in step with Severus.

"I recognized the ring," said Severus as they were ejected from the pensive. They felt like they were in the twilight zone, watching Tom Riddle as a student at Hogwarts. Charming the students, even Minerva when he was younger. He had been one hell of a teachers pet, especially with Slughorn. It was certainly a side they had never encountered with the Slytherin heir/Dark Lord.

"You should," said Minerva.

"Should I?" asked Severus sitting down.

"The Gaunt's," said Lucius as realisation dawned. "My father ranted about how such a great name could come to ruins. My great grandfather hoped to merge both names, but when he met Merope Gaunt he decided against it. She was nothing more than a squib if I remember correctly. The ring, it was on the fathers hand when he was arrested…his picture was in the newspaper."

"Yes, but she gave birth to one of the most powerful wizards we've seen, Merope Gaunt is Tom Riddle's mother." said Minerva bluntly.

"I have never seen the Dark Lord with it on, have you?" asked Severus.
"No," said Lucius, "But I did go to the shop and found out that a Slytherin locket was appraised along with a Huffelpuff cup. According to Borgin the woman was found dead, a House Elf was arrested for the murder…and the items were never found." he didn't mention how much it cost to get the information out of Borgin. Honestly he half just wanted to drug the idiot with Veritaserum and get his answers. Nonetheless it was worth it, they had two items now that could be potential Horcruxes.

"Finding out what items could be Horcruxes doesn't help us, we do not know where they are." said Severus reluctantly.

"Yeah, true," said Lucius looking defeated. "Wait…there is only one possible place for the cup to be, the Ministry ceased the Lestrange properties…everything will be in Gringotts." going from defeated to elated in a matter of seconds.

"Of course," said Severus nodding his head.

"Narcissa would be able to get it," said Lucius. She was a Black, which meant they had to move quickly before Sirius Black received control of them again…or rather took control since the vaults weren't ceased since he didn't receive a trial.

"Which leaves two potential Hogwarts heir items, the diadem and the sword, none of which have been glimpsed since the founder's time." said Minerva.

"There is one thing that would know," said Severus wryly, his eyes twinkling deviously.

"What?" asked Minerva and Lucius curiously.

"Actually three things, maybe four." said Severus. "The sorting hat, then there are the House Elves, not to forget the ghosts and Portraits." everyone dismissed them when they shouldn't they were everywhere, they saw everything.

"I shall ask Narcissa to accompany me to Gringotts," said Lucius.

"I'll ask around find out what I can," said Minerva. "I'll come tomorrow afternoon for Harry's first tutoring session."
Chapter 26

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 26

Tutoring concerns, Trials and Horcruxes

Severus was currently writing down all information they'd gathered so far about the Horcruxes on a large piece of parchment. He wanted to find them all and destroy every single one of them so Harry didn't have to put up with the horror he'd lived with as a teenager. Lily had wanted Harry to grow up in a word without fear; it's why she'd been so involved in the war during the last year and a half of her life. She was determined to see Voldemort's reign brought to an end, she hadn't cared about the prophecy, but fear for her son had forced her to go into hiding to protect her son, who had become Voldemort's number one target. He would continue her quest, to rid the world of the Dark Lord and put a permanent end to his reign of terror. Harry would go to Hogwarts and enjoy life, without a looming threat hovering over him. That's if he sent Harry to Hogwarts, with Dumbledore there he wasn't sure if he liked the idea.

"Go play with your toys sweetie," said Minerva as both of them entered the living room which Severus used mostly as an office.

Harry looked over at his dad, smiling when Severus nodded at him he wandered over to the large box that contained all his new toys. A large parcel of things came but he hadn't been able to play with them. His daddy had wanted him to go with Minnie and 'be educated' he'd said.

"Lunch sir," said the Elf placing the large platter on the table before disappearing since her Master was busy.

"Harry, come and get some lunch, you may take it over there while you play, just don't make a mess." said Severus, handing him the plate with crisps, fruit and a sandwich on it. Pouring a glass of milk, he floated it over to Harry's colourful play table. Harry wandered back over, placing the plate beside the milk and gleefully dug into his lunch.

"How did it go?" asked Severus.

"He only knew two of the animals in the book, Severus he is so far behind other children in developments." said Minerva pursing her lips, as much as she wanted to say Harry was good she just couldn't. Not that it was Harry's fault, far from it, but she had to let Severus know so it could be rectified. "Cat and Dog were the only two he recognized."

"I suspected as much," said Severus nodding in acknowledgement to Minerva's words.

"It's not a lost cause of course, it just means we might need an extra half hour to get him caught up with others of his age." said Minerva. "He is very advanced in speaking, most children Harry's age do not speak that way."

"That's because he hasn't been around children, he's imitating the adults around him." said Severus.

"Yes, I suspected as much. I think he would be better of continuing that way." said Minerva. "Perhaps a nice outing to the beach would help him along."
Severus stared at her drolly; did he look like someone who spent time at the beach? Staring over at Harry, he sighed resignedly, he couldn't remain the 'dungeon bat' while looking after a child. His heart clenched, every time he thought about Harry calling him Daddy. He had continued to do so, and Severus didn't have it in his heart to stop him. At least he knew that he'd had another dad, and he wasn't going to be accused of lying down the road.

"Has he said anything about the Potion?" asked Minerva changing the subject, Severus had confessed all to her and Lucius. Severus was surprised by how resilient Harry was, but Severus wasn't used to being around young children so everything was new to him. With Minerva and Lucius though, Severus was learning quickly that everything that was happening was fine and normal at least for a small child who had been abused.

"No, but he did ask about it the evening you left," said Severus. "He wanted to know if it hurt to take it, which doesn't surprise me."

"Will it?" enquired Minerva. She hadn't thought about it, but now that it was raised she was curious herself.

"With him being so young no, if he decided to take it say at the age of eleven or twelve it may. As you know my family tend to be on the tall side." replied Severus wryly, he'd even been taller than Potter and Lily even at the age of eleven.

"Indeed," said Minerva dryly, Severus towered over her when he stood up and most of the teachers at Hogwarts.

"At least he is at the age where most children begin to be tutored, what are you going to do long term?" asked Minerva, curious about Severus' long term plans.

"To be honest, Minerva I haven't thought that far." said Severus rubbing his temple in agitation. "I need someone that will treat Harry normally, someone that I trust and will educate Harry properly in all areas he would need to know. I don't want anyone treating him as if he's special, letting him off with murder and letting him skate by just because of what happened when he was a baby."

"Perhaps taking Lucius up on his offer may be the best idea then," said Minerva thoughtfully.

"Indeed," replied Severus, "Coffee or Tea?"

"I think I'll have a coffee, I didn't get much sleep last night." said Minerva watching as Severus made them both a cup and brought over some lunch for them to nibble on. "Have you thought about asking Remus? It would give him a much needed income and perhaps make him loyal to you and Harry. It would help distance him from Albus."

"He hasn't even tried to see Harry once, otherwise he would have known what was going on and taken him from the abuse." said Severus protesting violently against that idea.

"You of all people know how convincing Albus can be," said Minerva sternly, "You stayed as a teacher despite the fact HE was gone. You felt as if you owed him, Remus feels exactly the same way for being allowed a Hogwarts education."

"That is a different situation," said Severus arguing half heatedly but Minerva had already won the argument.

"It is your situation was just remaining at Hogwarts, not a hardship at all. Remus was probably told to stay away from his best friend's son," said Minerva. "I stayed away as well, but I wasn't as close
to the child as Remus and Sirius were. It was difficult for me, I constantly wanted to go and see if he was alright, I cannot imagine what Remus has been through."

"You've made your point," said Severus wryly.

"As Harry's father now, it's entirely up to you." said Minerva. "At least Remus would treat him fairly; I doubt he cares for him as 'The Boy Who Lived'."

"Indeed," said Severus dryly.

Severus was distracted when Harry came over and handed him a bowl, looking into it, he found scrunched up paper, crayons a few pieces of fruit and the crust from his sandwich and a brown spoon (where he'd gotten that he did not know). He accepted it, slightly bemused. "What is this?" he enquired his attention solely focused on Harry.

"A potion," said Harry proudly.

Severus' lips twitched, barely able to suppress his amusement. "I see, and what is it going to do?"

"Nutrition potion!" he explained staring intently at the bowl.

"Indeed," said Severus, his black eyes twinkling brightly. "Thank you, Harry, go play." he placed the bowl on the table shaking his head wryly.

Harry beamed at Severus before scuttling off to do something else.

"Do not even think about it." said Severus staring at Minerva who was trying and nearly unsuccessful in holding her laughter.

"You've been brewing potions around him?" asked Minerva still finding the entire thing hilarious.

"Twice," said Severus, "He has been in the lab a three times, one when his eyesight was corrected and again when I was brewing nutrition potion and one to help him gain the height he'd missed out on at the Dursley's." He was rather proud of Harry, he'd watched him and remained where he'd put him, on the stool.

"Ah," said Minerva smiling. "I think I might get him a Junior Potions kit."

"I already have three," replied Severus seriously.

"Which levels?" asked Minerva curiously.

"The first three," said Severus, there were ten different junior potion kit levels, and level one, two and three had been the ones he got. They were for children three and up, the higher ones were for older children aged eight to ten. Every one of them required adult supervision at all times, since it was potion ingredients after all.

"Then I might get him the next level up, I have no doubt with you there he will get through them rather quickly." said Minerva, eyeing the bowl, it was obvious to her that Harry wished desperately to please Severus. The child had obviously picked up Severus' love for potions, he truly was observant like Severus had said.

Severus' lips twitched again.

"Are you attending Black's trial?" asked Severus once again changing the subject.
"I hadn't decided," confessed Minerva sipping her coffee now that it was cool enough to drink.

"I was thinking perhaps you should bring the Mutt here," said Severus, "So he can get our side of the story before Dumbledore fills his head with manipulation and makes things uncomfortable." he was terrified the Wizengamot would take Black's side in sympathy. They had wrongfully imprisoned him; they would probably give over custody of Harry in a bid to right their wrong. He didn't want that happening, not only would it confuse and hurt Harry deeply, it would set him back and Black wasn't suited to raising a child. He was an immature idiot; Harry would grow up not knowing structure and rules. He was Godfather and uncle material, not a father figure at least he hadn't been in the past.

"You would willingly allow Sirius Black in your home? Run the risk of him going straight to Dumbledore and revealing everything?" asked Minerva utterly stunned. Harry had changed him already, glancing over at the child she realized he wasn't the only one being saved, somehow someway Severus was being saved too.

"At least here I can do some serious damage limitation," said Severus gravely. "I don't want him here, but given the alternative...I've decided it's for the best."

"And Remus?" enquired Minerva, things were coming together nicely, she was proud of Severus for his new outlook on life.

Severus lip curling was her answer. "I'll give you a Portkey so you can bring him right here and hopefully avoid Albus altogether."

"You want Albus on my tail?" asked Minerva.

Severus smirked "If you do not want to I can simply send one of the Elves. Although having you here may make things easier." conceded Severus.

"I'll do it, it seems the outcome of Albus finding out is inevitable anyway." said Minerva.

"Not necessarily, without the Mutt he doesn't have a leg to stand on," said Severus, which was why he was doing it, to starve him of any support he may gather to get his hands on Harry. For the moment Harry was still simply 'lost' and if he had his way Dumbledore would continue to think that.

"True," conceded Minerva.

"While you do that, I'm going to have to talk to Harry about his Animagus form, make sure he doesn't use it willy nilly." said Severus. He wasn't going to stop Harry from using it, just inform him not to do it without an adult present or to go wandering in it. He really should add Animagus spells to the rooms and the doors so Harry couldn't leave the manor without him. He did have a tracking charm on him, and he was legally in his right to keep it on until Harry was a teenager. He didn't want to, but he would do anything to keep him safe.

"He is so beautiful in his Animagus form," said Minerva proudly, grey hair and green eyed anyone would fall in love with him. Of course anyone would fall in love with him when he was a normal boy; he was so polite and shy.

"Completely besides the point, he cannot just turn into a cat whenever he feels like it." said Severus seriously. Although he had to admit, Harry was adorable in his Animagus form, not that he'd admit it on pain of death.
"Of course not," said Minerva, "I'm sure Harry will listen to you, he pays a great deal of attention to you and everything you do. The potion is a good example of that." she said pointing towards the bowl Harry had given Severus.

"I know," said Severus amused.

"If I have to attend the trial, I best depart now." said Minerva, glancing at the grandfather clock in the corner of the room.

"Thank you for doing this, Minerva, I do appreciate it." said Severus gratefully.

"Well, Harry is my godson now. I have to do what's best for him." said Minerva, feeling warmed by Severus' thanks, he didn't normally say those kinds of things. "Has Lucius managed to get the Huffelpuff cup?"

"I do not know, I'm sure he will let me know if he succeeds." replied Severus thoughtfully.

"I'll see you in a few hours," said Minerva standing, "Goodbye Harry, I will see you soon."

"Bye Minnie," said Harry shyly, getting used to Lucius and Minnie now that he knew and realized they wouldn't be taking him away from his daddy.

Severus chuckled at the name Harry had for Minerva, but the name was so difficult to say especially for a five year old. Minerva flushed glaring at Severus half-heartedly before disappearing through the Floo.

"Harry, come up here for a minute please," said Severus gesturing towards his knee, it was time to have a talk about magic.

Harry walked over and climbed on Severus' knee, staring up at him half worried half curious about what he wanted. His large green eyes staring into Black ones, waiting.

"Harry...magic isn't a toy; it must be treated with respect at all times. You need to be careful turning into a kitten. I'm not saying you can't or shouldn't, I just want you to be with me when you do turn into an Animagus. It's very dangerous to do it without adult supervision. You could end up trapped as a kitten, and I might not be able to find you...do you understand?" asked Severus, having to tell him the consequences he had to make sure Harry truly understood what could happen should he play around with his Animagus form.

"Yes," said Harry solemnly.

"What did I say?" asked Severus wanting confirmation.

"Not to turn into a kitten unless you are there, it's very dangerous and I mustn't play with magic." said Harry proudly.

"Well done, good boy." said Severus hopefully that would have gotten through to him. "Go on then, go play."

"Will I get to look at animals again?" asked Harry hopefully.

"Of course, how about we look at one tonight?" replied Severus, planning on teaching Harry himself even when he wasn't being tutored.

"YES!" cheered Harry, hoping from Severus' lap and going back to his toys excitedly.
"Ah, Minerva, I did not expect you here," said Albus, surprised to see her there.

"Sirius used to be my student, I don't see why it's a surprise," said Minerva staring curiously at the Headmaster. Wondering what he planned if Sirius was innocent, either way she was about to put a spanner in his work. Harry was happy with Severus, and she wasn't about to see him removed - not for any reason. Not only was Harry starting to get better and open up, he loved Severus already. Then there was the fact that Severus was more alive than she'd ever seen him before.

"Of course," said Albus, sitting himself down he wasn't presiding over the trial. Since they'd found out about the Dursley's he hadn't been favoured at all. He had lost the respect, as well as his place as the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, he was holding onto the Headmaster's position by the skin of his teeth. He was hoping finding and bringing the child back into the magical world would smooth things over and get everything back to normal. Hopefully Black would be able to find him through the Godfather/son bond. Then he could begin moulding the boy through Black who always hung onto his words. Perhaps it was for the best that it happened so soon, a child was more impressionable than a teenager.

"Bring in the accused," said Cornelius starting the proceedings, only the wizengamot, Dumbledore, Cornelius, Amelia Bones and the scribe Penelope Cooper was in attendance. The trial was going to be a short one, they were here only to find out if he was innocent as the will may suggest. They'd been given a copy of it by Gringotts, since it dealt with the heir to the Black fortune since the rest of the Black's were dead.

"Sirius Black, Minister." said Moody bringing in Black with more care than they usually handled with criminals. He didn't even spare a glance for Dumbledore, who he wasn't happy with at all, he'd been investigating at Privet Drive the information he'd learned turned his stomach. He was placed on the seat before Moody made his retreat.

"Sirius Black, do you consent to the use of Veritaserum to get to the bottom of this matter?" asked Cornelius beginning by being frank.

"Veritaserum?" asked Sirius blankly; since it was a new invention he couldn't be expected to know what it was.

"A powerful truth potion," added Cornelius.

"Yes," murmured Sirius bewildered.

"One drop will do," said Cornelius as Penelope stood up to administer it.

"What is your name?" asked Amelia once the potion had been given to Sirius.

"Sirius Orion Black." started the convict.

"What happened on Halloween? Start at the beginning." asked Amelia.

"I woke up, went work, and came home…later that night I went to check on Peter, he wasn't at his hideout. I grew worried; I immediately took off towards Godric's Hollow. I used my enchanted motorbike, it was dark by the time I got there, but people were milling around, the house was in ruins, right next to where Harry's nursery was. I ran in, James was lying on the floor…I heard Harry crying and bolted up the stairs. Lily was gone, and Harry was crying, demanding to be lifted up. I had just managed to calm Harry down stopping him from seeing his parents…when Hagrid arrived. He took Harry off me, claiming he was to take Harry to Dumbledore, on Dumbledore’s orders. I knew Harry would be safe with Dumbledore since nobody would attack him. Not that I
had a choice, Hagrid took Harry off me, and I wasn't going to risk my godson's life by righting over it." said Sirius hoarsely.

"Excuse me? Hagrid took the child on Dumbledore's orders despite the fact you were his godfather and were legally responsible for him?" asked Amelia glancing at Dumbledore disapprovingly.

Dumbledore's heart sank; he hadn't expected these events to get out. He'd expected them to realize Black was innocent and get it over with. Dear Merlin, his reputation was ripped and torn as it was, without adding this to it. The looks on everyone's face infuriated him, he had destroyed Grindelwald for them all, and they had the nerve to judge him for doing what was best? Voldemort would be back and Potter need kept in line.

"Yes," confessed Sirius.

"What happened after?" asked Cornelius.

"I went after Pettigrew, determined to get revenge on him for what he did to my best friends. In the early morning I successfully managed to corner him after hunting all night. He was yelling and screaming at me for betraying Lily and James, making me even madder. He drew out his wand, before I knew it he cast a blasting spell, cut off his own finger and took off into a sewer in his Animagus form. It was only once I was in Azkaban did I find out Voldemort had been defeated by my godson. So giving him over to Dumbledore to keep him safe had been for nothing. If I had just told Hagrid no, I would not have been imprisoned." said Sirius, able to talk thoroughly but tell the truth since he hadn't been given three drops of the powerful truth serum.

"He's an Animagus?" asked Amelia.

"We all were," said Sirius.

"What are you all?" asked Cornelius.

"I'm a dog that resembles the grim, Pettigrew is a rat and James was a stag." said Sirius.

'And Harry is a cat' thought Minerva, and he'd learned well before anyone and with one single try. She was very proud of her godson, and so grateful she was able to be part of his life. With Severus, he would take his place as the Potter heir or rather Potter-Snape heir when the time came. Not enter Hogwarts completely clueless about everything.

"Do you have any idea where Pettigrew may have gone?" asked Cornelius.

"No," confessed Sirius a maddening glint in his eye.

"Sirius Black you are innocent of the crimes in which you were imprisoned for, since you were an illegal Animagus we shall concede it squared. Now before you leave, you will go to the registry and register your Animagus form." said Amelia.

"Yes, ma'am." said Sirius grateful she hadn't asked the how long and why, he under no circumstances wanted to betray Remus, despite the fact the man hadn't visited him even once. "Will I be allowed my job back?"

"If you pass the physical and written tests I don't see why not." said Amelia Bones, "But I think you should wait a year or two before coming back, you need to recover from the affects the Dementors have had on you."

"Yes ma'am." said Sirius gratefully.
"You won't be taking part in the hunt for Peter Pettigrew, even if you do return as an Auror. You must understand we cannot risk you blundering things up," said Cornelius seriously. Sirius grumbled under his breath not happy at all.

"Can I get custody of my godson?" asked Sirius. "Where is he? Can I at least get visitation rights until he's used to me?" as much as he wanted to take him for good, he knew the Ministry wouldn't allow it.

The child always came first, especially magical children. If you uproot them, it would upset the child and their magic, and it was important not to do that.

"Sirius, we need to talk," said Dumbledore, "I shall let him know what's happening."

"But first I shall accompany him to get his Animagus form registered," said Minerva standing up, she knew where it was. She had signed up her own Animagus when she was a young woman; she had done it because of her own Transfiguration mastery.

"Alright," murmured Sirius staring at them weirdly, why were they acting so oddly?

"I shall accompany you," said Dumbledore, not letting Black out of his sight.

"We will be back in a few minutes," said Minerva brushing the invitation off.

"Its fine," said Dumbledore insistently.

The walk and elevator ride was in total silence and tense too. Sirius signed the registry, turning into his Animagus form and allowing the woman to see and take a picture of it. As soon as they were out of the room and in the hallway of the Ministry he turned and asked the question that was burning him.

"Where's Harry?" asked Sirius once they were done staring at them not about to budge.

Minerva removed the Portkey touching Sirius she whispered the words to activate it and disappeared with the Black heir. The last thing she saw was the enraged shocked look on Dumbledore's face his mouth opened but whatever he was going to say was lost as the Ministry disappeared and Prince Manor took its place. Minerva helped Sirius holding him still as he regained control of his equilibrium.
Chapter 27

The Vow And It's Consequences

Chapter 27

Sirius Black Enters The Picture

Sirius looked around, trying to figure out where they were, but he couldn't find anything familiar about this place. Was it Minerva McGonagall's home? It couldn't be, not unless she'd bought it since McGonagall wasn't a wizarding name...Although it could be in her mother's name? Squinting at the gates was that a PH? Or M maybe? His eyesight wasn't bad its just he was unused to using his eyes anymore. He'd been stuck in darkness for what felt like years, and since nobody visited he didn't get out of his cell and put in the visitor centre where no Dementor was allowed. Looking up, closing his eyes the sun on his skin felt so good, the adrenaline he'd been running on was beginning to wear of now.

"Are you ready to begin moving?" asked Minerva, watching Sirius in concerned happiness. He was free; no doubt he was a little overwhelmed.

"Where are we?" asked Sirius turning back to face Minerva, he was confused she obviously had done this without Dumbledore's approval, since he had been shocked and enraged when they Portkey'd away. Sirius had never seen such a look on his face before, and it actually concerned him. Groaning, he was finding it extremely difficult to concentrate on one thing, he'd been asking about Harry, it was him he was worried about...who had taken him in?

"I though you wanted to see Harry?" questioned Minerva, beginning to slowly walk towards Prince Manor, which would take a while with a man who had been imprisoned for a few years.

"Harry's here?" asked Sirius perking up, his face showing hope and love.

"He is indeed," said Minerva a tiny smile on her face, thinking of the gorgeous child.

"Who has custody of him?" asked Sirius, walking up to her; he needed to know everything he'd missed.

"There are a few rules if you want to see him, do not approach him, touch him or frighten him." said Minerva grimly, her voice conveying how important these 'rules' were. Harry was just starting to recover, and she did not want him scared again, hell he'd just gotten used to her for Merlin's sake.

"Why?" Sirius couldn't help but cry indignantly. Had they been telling Harry about how evil he was? That he had betrayed his parents? He hoped not or he wouldn't be happy the slightest, he wanted his godson to love him! No he was only a child surely they wouldn't tell him nasty things?

"I do not recommend starting with his guardian either, it wouldn't be a good way to begin a relationship with Harry." said Minerva in warning.

"Why would I do that?" asked Sirius staring at Minerva strangely, he wanted to be part of Harry's life and to do that he had to at least be on good terms with whoever it was.

Minerva's lips twitched, why would he indeed? Just wait until he figured out who it was. Honestly their fights had been blown to ridiculous portions; at least Severus was trying to do the right thing.
He wouldn't put up with any crap coming from Sirius though, so Black had better behave himself or he would find himself evicted from Prince Manor. "Just remember what I have said," said Minerva seriously. "I won't have my godson upset."

"Your godson? Who's that?" asked Sirius confused, they were obviously not talking about Harry, and he was Harry's godfather. Harry didn't have any other godfathers or a godmother, come to that; it had been a small private ceremony with just Lily, James, Harry and himself as well as the Minister.

"I was made Harry's godmother," said Minerva, knowing better than to tell him who else was given that privilege. Although she herself hadn't been able to believe it, but now she realized Severus had known best after all. She had seen a whole new side to Lucius and she was awed at the length he'd go for a friend. She had known he could make anyone's life a misery if he wished…but the way he had done it was truly vicious and rightfully deserved. Although Dumbledore certainly looked shaken by the lies, she was surprised he hadn't had a heart attack yet.

"Oh," said Sirius hollowly. He wasn't Harry's godfather anymore that meant he had no rights to him at all; at least it was someone light otherwise Minerva wouldn't be part of Harry's life. He prayed to Merlin that whoever it was, allowed him to be part of Harry's life whether he was chosen as a godfather through magical means or not.

"Let's go," said Minerva stepping in, opening the door far enough for Sirius to get in before closing it. Hopefully Severus would already know they were here.

"Harry," rasped Sirius watching him from the door, he was playing with his toys and he was so big! His hair was short, very short indeed; James had never had short hair like that. Why had they made it so short? If he had been older maybe, but he was just a child they'd basically shaved it all off. Looking around the house trying to figure out who had custody of Harry, but he still couldn't figure out where they were.

"Remember what I told you," said Minerva, in warning as Sirius stepped forward. Stopping he reluctantly acknowledged Minerva's words. She knew Harry wasn't going to be happy with Sirius' appearance whether he touched him or not, he didn't like strangers and she wasn't sure if that would change. Harry was even less appreciative of men, at least according to Severus anyway and she trusted his word.

"Who has custody of him?" Sirius demanded again, once he remembered he wished his mind would stop wandering. Unfortunately he wasn't used to being able to think so clearly, the Dementors had just made him relive his worst memories - no thinking required for that.

"You'll find out in a second," said Minerva stepping in, Sirius for some reason was rooted on the spot, he dreaded finding out who had custody of his godson. It was stupid really, after all he must have permission to be here, and they must be on his side. Shaking off his ominous thoughts, chalking it up to the exposure to Dementors. It would take him a long time to get over it, he knew that.

Severus placed the 'potion' Harry had made on the kitchen counter, extremely bemused at his own thoughts and feelings. He didn't want to throw it away, and what sense did that make? It was completely idiotic it wasn't even a real potion just items he'd stuffed into a bowl, yet the feelings the gift inspired moved him in a way he had never experienced before. It was pure, untainted and without possible demands behind it, or expectations such as Christmas time when he had to go and find a gift for them in return. No receiving things just because someone cared wasn't something Severus was really used to. Lily had done…but that was such a long time ago he could scarcely remember what it was like.
Sighing tiredly, he rubbed at his eyes, the things he had to do. Black of all people coming into his home, oh he knew it wasn't going to be easy, and who knew how Harry would react as well? Breathing deeply, he opened his medical cupboard, one the Elves were allowed into if any of them got hurt. He didn't need to see the writing to know which one he wanted, he knew from colour and texture alone. He drank the calming draught down, he knew if he confronted Black without it he'd terrify Harry it was the last thing he wanted. Harry was making so much progress, he didn't understand it himself, but he didn't want to see it brought to an end.

Opening the fridge he brought out the orange juice and poured himself a large drink before replacing it. He drank the large glass in one go, the refreshing strong taste wiping away the taste of the Potion. What would Black be like after spending three years in Azkaban? Well three years and six months at the very least. Then he felt the wards shift, Minerva was here and she had a guest with her. Turning to face Harry, watching him from the kitchen door, he realized he'd deal with the devil himself if it kept him safe. He hadn't been able to save Lily, but he sure as hell would do anything and everything to save her son...to save Harry.

Severus came out of his thoughts alarmed when he heard Harry cry out in fear. The next thing he came aware of was a kitten running across the floor and painfully climbing up his leg, its nails digging and biting into his chest shaking and clearly terrified. Wincing in agony, he pried the kitten off him and held him in his arms soothing him. Doubling back he entered his medical cabinet again and drank a pain reliever. Keeping a hold of Harry the entire time, in his left hand half under his armpit.

"He's an Animagus?" cried Sirius awed.

"Oh do be quiet," said Minerva irritated by the fact Harry had reacted so strongly. She had thought he was beginning to trust them; it was obvious to her that it wasn't the case. Otherwise Harry wouldn't have run the way he did, not only that but he'd turned himself into a kitten to make himself a smaller target.

"Why did he react like that? What has he been told?" asked Sirius fearfully. It wasn't the welcome he'd been hoping for let's put it that way. Even with Minerva's words earlier, after all why would Harry be scared? It made no sense to him.

"Is he alright, Severus?" asked Minerva stepping further into the room and able to see Severus from where he stood at the kitchen door.

"SEVERUS? AS IN SNAPE?!" cried Sirius unable to believe it. Snape had Harry? Why the hell would Snape want him? He hated everyone! No wonder Harry was bloody terrified! No doubt the bastard had told him everything he did over the years! Harry probably hated his own father, Snape was an utter bastard Harry was just a child! How could he go about getting revenge this way?

"He'll be fine," said Severus, ignoring Black's words completely, oh yes, he was glad he had taken that bloody calming draught. He couldn't find it in himself to get worked up over the presence of a boy who had tried to kill him years ago. "Harry, I want to see a human boy right now." he said to the shaken bundle in his arms.

Sirius took a step back, blinking in shock he'd never heard Snape sound like that before...was it possible he actually cared? But no, he'd been a Death Eater! Although he grudgingly admitted he had changed sides, although he wasn't quite sure why. Still, what on earth was going on? Harry obviously trusted Snape, and Snape was his guardian...why did Minerva bring him here? Against Dumbledore's will since he wasn't happy!

Severus sighed; it was obvious Harry was in no state to answer him right now, he was still badly
shaken.

"Flippy?" called Severus; he would need his Elf to help with this.

"Yes sir?" answered the House Elf making an appearance.

"Bring me a saucer of milk," asked Severus, plucking another calming draught from the cupboard before making his way through to the living room. He just took a seat with Harry when Flippy returned with the saucer of milk he had demanded.

"Thank you," said Severus placing three drops of the calming draught into the milk and placing it on his lap. "Drink it, little one, come on." quietly urging the child to drink the calming draught so he may calm down enough to turn back into human form. He hoped this wasn't going to be a regular occurrence; Harry couldn't turn into his Animagus form every time he got scared. Rubbing at his back, he sighed in relief when the trembling finally stopped.

"How can he do that?" asked Sirius staring at the kitten, you didn't see any Animagus kittens just cats since nobody was young enough to turn when one would be a kitten. By their actions he knew it must not be the first time, so Harry had done it before...children didn't have the ability...he was at a loss.

"We aren't entirely sure, he saw me transform once and copied me, he even turned back by himself." said Minerva taking a seat of her own, watching Severus and Harry intently. Well, no big explosions from either of them, she considered this a win-win scenario. With a bit of luck Sirius might actually hear what they have to say, before he lost it.

"Turn back, Harry, remember what I said, magic must be respected not played with, I want a human boy right now." said Severus, removing the saucer from him. Waiting on Harry gathering the courage to turn back, hoping that he would do what he asked. Then he began to morph back, until a young boy was sitting on his lap. Harry grabbed onto Severus' clothes, burrowing himself as far as he could without literally hurting both of them.

"Accio teddies," said Severus summoning both of his favourite soft toys. Giving them to him, the one from both Minerva and Lucius, which Harry placed under his arms still keeping a tight grip of Severus.

"Here," said Minerva placing Harry's cover over him.

"Thank you," said Severus, shifting Harry so his knees weren't digging into a very sensitive place where no knees had the right to be. Feeling Harry's forehead afterwards and found he was a little bit too warm, but not overly so. "Using magic is exhausting Harry, and you've done too much, you must be careful. I think its time for a nap, now don't you?"

"Sorry daddy," murmured Harry quietly, before his eyes immediately began drooping as the calming draught did its work.

Minerva quickly silenced the area around Harry, waiting for the inevitable explosion - and she wasn't wrong, nor did she have to wait long.

"DADDY?" shrieked Sirius from where he had remained beside the door, gaping at them in betrayal.

"He knows I'm not his biological father," said Severus, "Do you wish Harry never to know a parents love in his life? Would that content you?" sneering the last four words.
Sirius shifted awkwardly, when it was put that way it made him sound like a shit. "No," sighed Sirius, moaning in pain, Dear Merlin his back, legs and feet ached like blazes. He had no choice but to sit down or fall and he hurt enough without ended up on his arse, that's only if he was lucky.

"Flippy?" called Severus.

"Yes sir?" asked the Elf making another appearance, noticing that their little Master was once again human. Flippy collected the saucer seeing it wasn't needed any longer.

"Bring some food through for everyone, coffee too and bring me my emergency potions supply kit it's in the second drawer." said Severus. Black was probably in agony, as much as he'd like him to suffer he needed the bloody idiot on his side. He'd never thought he'd see the day where he and Black got on that's for damn certain.

Sirius drooled at the thought of food; he hadn't had anything decent in the past three years. Just really disgusting stew stuff that they put through the cell every day, although he did occasionally enjoy a rat as Padfoot when they were stupid enough to enter his 'abode'. His mind drifted to all the different foods he'd missed in Azkaban...lamb, chicken, and the hearty soups Lily used to make, she had been one hell of a cook. Oh Butterbeer, whiskey, and chocolate, how he longed for everything, to pig out and stuff his face with the rich tasty foods. Cursing inwardly, damn his bloody mind, he hoped this didn't go on forever; he wouldn't pass his Auror exams if he kept getting distracted like this.

The food appeared on the table without Flippy coming back; Severus arched an eyebrow and withheld his sneer. Black was staring at the food as if he'd never seen anything like it before. The only reason he didn't sneer was because there was a look in Black's eyes, the same one Harry had when he first started getting food.

"Help yourselves," said Severus, nodding curtly in thanks when Minerva handed him a cup of coffee and some food. He couldn't move without wakening Harry up, considering the conversation they were around to have - it was a good idea to keep him asleep. He wasn't sure whether to tell Black about the Horcruxes, could he take the chance that he would do as Minerva had spoken off and go straight back to Dumbledore and parrot everything back.

"Your potions sir," said Flippy handing them before leaving once more.

"Black?" said Severus, staring at the man who was currently stuffing his face full of food.

"Sirius?" said Minerva turning to face him, was he deliberately trying to wind Severus up?

"Black?" repeated Severus his eyes narrowed. "BLACK!"

"SIRIUS BLACK!" snapped Minerva, slapping him on the knee.

"What?" asked Sirius facing them after swallowing the food he had in his mouth.

"We called you five times," said Minerva eyeing him with some concern.

"Sorry, I find it difficult to concentrate," admitted Sirius shame faced.

"Perhaps he should get some rest first before we speak to him?" said Minerva, turning to Severus acting as though Sirius wasn't even in the room. "His flat if I remember correctly was destroyed when someone cast the Fiendfyre spell on it, and none of the Black homes will be livable in right now. He cannot go to Hogwarts that's definitely out of the question. He can use the flat I have in Hogsmeade, I haven't used it in years." she preferred to stay at Hogwarts, she didn't see the point to
packing everything up for a few months out of the year she was at Hogwarts.

"I'd rather he wasn't out of my sight," said Severus eyeing Black, he didn't want to risk him going to Dumbledore before he could tell him everything. Black always had been impatient, and if they didn't answer him, he could get his inheritance Black would run straight to Dumbledore to demand answers. "He may use one of the guest rooms tonight; tomorrow we will bring him up to date."

"Up to date on what?" demanded Sirius wanting answers. "What is going on?"

"Flippy?" called Severus.

"What can Flippy do for Master Severus?" asked Flippy.

"Show Mr. Black to the guest room on the second floor," said Severus. The House Elf would know what he was talking about; he wanted him well away from where Harry and he were. He didn't trust the man as far as he could throw him.

"I'm not going anywhere, I want answers." said Sirius frowning in irritation at the fact both of them were ignoring him.

"Sopor!" said Minerva; spell aimed at Sirius' back, the man immediately fell back onto the seat he'd been sitting in. It immediately sent him into a stupor, a strong sleep, much like the potion to aid sleep would have done.

"Give him this," said Severus raking through the bag and handing it to her. Black could wake up in a few hours even with the spell, with this dreamless sleeping potion he'd sleep for a minimum of twelve to fourteen hours. Judging by the state of his body, he'd say it would be more like sixteen hours. It would keep him unconscious until his body was ready to be woken once more.

With great difficulty, Minerva succeeded in giving the dreamless sleeping draught to the unconscious wizard.

"Go on Flippy, take him up, keep an eye on him let me know the moment he awakens, he must never leave the Manor before I say he can...is that understood? Harry's life may very well depend on it." said Severus giving the Elf the consequences of slipping up on his task.

"Flippy won't let Master Severus down," said Flippy bowing before taking hold of the wizard and both of them disappeared from the room.

"If you wish, you can remain for the night also," said Severus.

"I'm very tempted, Severus, Albus looked furious." replied Minerva retaking her seat.

"Ah, you activated the Portkey with him nearby?" stated Severus; he had hoped Minerva wouldn't have to.

"I did, no doubt he's awaiting my return," said Minerva, picking up some food for herself now, and getting comfortable now that the tense conversation wouldn't be happening yet. Poor Harry, hopefully he would get used to people without being scared of them.

"Then stay," said Severus as if it solved everything, and it did.

Just then the Floo activated, spitting out Lucius Malfoy, who stepped out gracefully as if he'd been doing it since he was born.
"Were you not successful?" asked Severus, glad Black was out of the way, it would have been extremely bad timing.

"I was," said Lucius, opening his cloak pocket and revealing the cup.

"I am surprised," said Minerva, "Mr. Black was found innocent, I would have assumed they would deny you access."

"When was he found innocent?" asked Lucius arching an eyebrow in curiosity.

"Less than an hour ago," said Severus immediately.

"Ah, well I was already looking through vaults at that time, I entered at least seven vaults before I found what I was looking for." said Lucius irritated.

"How many does Bellatrix have?" asked Severus surprised.

"Bellatrix has six, one of them was her own vault she opened when she was eleven, and the other was the dowry which hasn't been touched another was of course the trust vault which also remains untouched. It was in one of the main vaults though, which surprised me, those were the last ones I entered for a reason." said Lucius smoothly, as he took his seat.

"She got it from the Dark Lord, she was going to make sure it was protected, Lucius." said Severus.

"True," conceded Lucius, "I didn't think of that." it should have dawned on him really, but it was over with now.

"Perhaps we should destroy it immediately," said Minerva. The thought of Harry getting his hands on such an item made her cold to her very bones.

"I promised my son to teach him to fly after dinner so I must depart straight away." said Lucius, and he always kept his promises, especially when he made them to his wife or son. He wasn't cold and hard towards his family, no matter what anyone else thought. "I shall be over in a few days, if you need me before then, you know how to get in touch."

"Of course," said Severus nodding his head allowing Lucius to go.

"Good evening," said Lucius in farewell before he Floo'ed directly back home to Malfoy Manor.

"Good evening," said Minerva quietly but he was already half away.

"I cannot risk using Fiendfyre in the house again, not with such an item…we must do it outside." said Severus, quietly and softly, beginning to untangle himself from Harry. Who thankfully remained asleep despite being disturbed. Placing a pillow under his face, stroking it softly, unable to believe this little child loved him enough to call him dad.

"Back or front?" asked Minerva disturbing Severus' thoughts.

"Back is closer," said Severus, they were after all nearly in the kitchen.

"Then let us be rid of it, once and for all." said Minerva her lip curling at the sight of such a despicable thing.

"Wingardium Leviosa," murmured Severus, not wanting to touch it despite the fact it was obviously un-hexed and un-cursed since Lucius had been holding it a moment ago. Both the
stubborn and proud Wizard and Witch followed the cup through to the kitchen and out of the open back door.

"Oh my, it's beautiful out here!" said Minerva gaping, there was a lake and everything, and further along nearly at the corner there was a tree house. Perhaps something Eileen had asked for? Since it did look like the design that was available at the time when Eileen was a little girl.

"It is isn't it?" said Severus his breath lost at the beauty in front of him. Yet they weren't here to gape, no they had a job to do and once he would see through to the end. Placing the cup on the ground while Minerva cast containment spells so the fire did not spread. The last thing they needed with two sleeping wizards inside the house was a fire to spread rapidly.

"Done," said Minerva keeping her wand out just in case, with magic they can never be too careful. As Severus had so eloquently put just a while ago, when Harry turned into a kitten, magic wasn't to be played with and must be respected. Its something all children should be taught but regretfully weren't these days. They all took magic for granted, unless of course, when it wasn't granted and they were treated like a Leper.

"Ready," said Severus grimly, before pointing his wand at the heirloom regretfully and cast "FIENDFYRE!" the red hot flame shot from his wand, landing on the first thing it came into contact with. Now with the diary, the Horcrux began screeching horrifically, it was after all a part of someone's soul basically being murdered. It didn't last long, as the sound began to taper off until the cup was nothing but liquid, gold liquid on the fire scorched grass. What should have been a Hogwarts heirloom was now destroyed. "Such an irreplaceable item, it should have been placed at Hogwarts for all to see and admire."

"It should," agreed Minerva, to actually have something the founders had touched would have been a good booster for those learning the craft. "To think we may yet have to destroy another." Severus turned to stare at her uncomprehendingly.

"The Slytherin Locket," said Minerva.

"Of course," said Severus shaking his head, they were both suspected Horcruxes with the information Lucius had on them it was more than just suspect at this point. "Do you think we should alert Black?" he asked Minerva needing council, he knew he was always irrational when it came to him so he was hoping she'd give him an answer to the question.

"I assume you mean about the Horcruxes?" asked Minerva only for confirmation.

"Indeed," replied Severus, closing the back door once they were in, he desperately needed a coffee.

"I do not know, Severus," sighed Minerva. "After everything he's been through…he could be easily manipulated against you and reveal everything. Then again we have ways against that; a simple vow could prevent him from betraying you. He was an Auror, it may come in handy."

"That is what I dread, plus you know I hold no love for Black and I think the worst of him…" said Severus wryly.

"That's because he's always done the worst to you, Severus. He tried to kill you when you were a young boy, I was furious with him and demanded Dumbledore expel Sirius. Unfortunately I was overruled, if there was ever a time I had wanted to leave Hogwarts it would have been then." said Minerva. "I didn't teach at Hogwarts to watch students kill one another, I came to educate them in a craft I found to be interesting."
"I had no idea," said Severus surprised and amazed, he couldn't believe she had nearly given up her job for him.

"No, you didn't, you immersed yourself too deeply in the Dark arts after that. You paid no attention in any of your classes, I was surprised you got such high scores." said Minerva honestly.

"I was always ahead in nearly all subjects, my mother kept her course books and I had read them all before coming to Hogwarts first year through seventh year. Defence and Potion books got read a lot more regularly of course." said Severus, he may not have been able to cast the spells but it didn't mean he couldn't memorise them.

"Of course," said Minerva dryly.

"And we are getting rather off the subject," Severus said sighing in irritation; he sat on the couch since Harry had his favourite chair. Immediately pouring himself a coffee, letting Minerva do whatever she wanted.

"Just ask for a Vow then tell him, Severus, that way you have taken all the precautions necessary. If he tries to tell anyone you know what would happen, he would die before he could reveal what he knows." said Minerva.

Severus drank his coffee, nodding thoughtfully, rubbing his chin as he thought through the pros and cons of doing so.
"Bed time, Harry." said Severus, in fact it was later than normal but since Harry had been sleeping earlier he'd allowed him to remain up an hour and a half extra. It was now nine o'clock at night, with a bit of luck Harry would go down no problem. He was trying to get Harry out of the habit of sleeping during the day, not an easy feat since Harry's body was currently healing after going through so much. His magic being bound, nearly dying and he was adjusting to his new home. It didn't help that he was using accidental magic whenever he wanted. Turning into an Animagus form was exhausting for a seventeen year old learning to do it, never mind a small five year old like Harry.

"What about that man?" asked Harry, his green eyes filled with worry and fear, he didn't like him he was scary. He knew instinctively that the man was still in the manor, he wasn't sure why but he just did. He hated strangers, and didn't want to be taken away from Severus who he called daddy now. The others never remained overnight, Lucius and Minnie always left after a few hours. Minnie was staying overnight too, but he wasn't as worried about her as he was with the newcomer.

"That man is Sirius Black, and he won't hurt you, the house elves are keeping an eye on him." said Severus kneeling down, reassuring the small boy that no harm would ever befall him. When he'd agreed to keep Black here, he hadn't anticipated Harry being worried or scared if he was honest. What's more surprising was the fact Harry knew he was here, they hadn't mentioned him since Harry woke up, so he had to have some help with the wards to detect Black's presence.

Harry bit his lip, he wanted to believe his daddy but he wasn't one hundred percent sure about it. "Can I stay with you?" whispered Harry, so low that Severus had to strain to hear him.

"Will that make you feel better?" asked Severus softly, bringing Harry's head up from where it was staring at the floor. He truly was worried; he didn't like seeing those green eyes apprehensive and terrified. It meant Harry didn't trust him to keep him safe yet, either that or he was worried Black would do something to him and take Harry.

"Yes, daddy." whispered Harry, his green eyes beseeching Severus'.

"Very well, now let's go." said Severus, taking the small hand in his large one, he took them up the stairs and into Harry's bedroom and through to his bathroom. "We are only here because all your toys are." he added assuring the young boy, who evidently thought he'd gone back on his word. One day Harry would come to realise he meant every word he spoke, whether it came to punishing him if he did anything wrong or keeping him safe.

Turning the taps on, he allowed the water to fill up to its usual spot as he added Harry's bubble bath and toys into the bath. Turning them off he let Harry get in himself as he grabbed a small towel and placed it on the radiator until he needed it. Letting Harry play for a while, he gathered his Onesie and the book with the animals in it, since that was what the child had asked for earlier. As he'd said Harry needed all the help he could get to catch up to the children his own age.
Which got him thinking about Lupin, the thought of letting him near Harry turned his stomach. Yet he knew Lupin would do whatever he asked of him, just to be allowed near Harry. Which meant he would teach him what he wanted Harry taught, and wouldn't allow Harry's supposed fame to get the better of him. There was no guarantee even tutors abroad would be impervious to the lure that came from tutoring 'The-Boy-Who-Lived' he didn't want it getting out. Dumbledore had contacts everywhere, even abroad so it was worrisome. Sighing tiredly, rubbing at his temples, it was difficult to trust anyone, let alone people who knew Harry and his parents.

He was brought out of his thoughts by Harry's voice playing in the bathtub with his toys. Smirking wryly he rolled his eyes, he was becoming a sentimental fool. Looking at the time he was surprised to see nearly fifteen minutes had gone by, he must have really been preoccupied. Putting the book and the Onesie on the bed, he wandered back through to the bathroom and helped Harry from the tub. Wrapping the towel around him, Harry wandered over to the sink out of sheer habit, and grabbed his snitch toothbrush and waited on his daddy putting the toothpaste onto it and begun brushing his teeth.

Taking the plastic cup he gargled the water and spat it back out, wiping his face on the edge of his towel as his daddy dried his hair. Walking out of the room, Severus once again scooped up the two items on the bed, before ushering Harry to his own bedroom. Helping the five year old into his Onesie and into his big bed, sitting beside him as Harry cuddled in, waiting on his story. Severus opened the book ready to begin his little story, when Harry's voice interrupted him.

"Daddy?" asked Harry, peering at Severus.

"Yes?" asked Severus, wondering if he was still worried about Black.

"I want you to be my proper daddy," stated Harry solemnly.

"I am your proper daddy now," said Severus, but he had a good idea what the child was talking about and his heart was racing violently in his ribcage.

Harry bit his lip, wondering if he had misunderstood their earlier conversation. Wouldn't the potion make Severus really his daddy and stop anyone taking him away? Severus was a great daddy, and he wanted to keep him to himself. He wanted as he had said, for Severus to be his proper daddy not just his adopted daddy.

When it became apparent Harry wasn't or couldn't speak again Severus asked the burning question on his mind. "Do you mean you want the Potion Harry? Just remember little one, I am your dad whether you take it or not." he said firmly.

"I know," said Harry cuddling into his daddy smiling, he knew that and that's why he wanted the potion. Not because he was scared, but because he wanted a proper daddy just like Dudley had Vernon, he wanted to be a normal boy. He wasn't freakish he knew that now, he was normal and having a dad was normal. Although he could admit he was scared sometimes, not so much anymore when Lucius and Minnie came, but Black was actually really scary. He knew his daddy wouldn't let him hurt him; it's why he'd run to him when he saw the scary man.

"Are you absolutely sure, Harry?" asked Severus, carding his hands through Harry's hair his heart felt fit to burst and wasn't that bloody odd? He who kept a tight reign on his magic, emotions and life unable to control them since this little boy had wormed his way into his life and heart.

"Yes daddy," said Harry nodding his head vigorously.

"Very well," said Severus digging into his side drawer where he kept the potion. Uncorking it he
handed it over, making sure the small hands didn't tip it out. It had everything they needed in it, including his blood and it was the only one he had left. Watching as Harry drank the potion, his distaste evident, but as he finished you could see it had been what Harry wanted, he was beaming completely overwhelmed and happy.

Severus took the vial back, banishing it to his potions lab where the elves would clean it for him. It had to be sterilised before another potion could be put in it, otherwise the potions would mix and that wasn't a very good thing. Sliding the child back into his covers, he began telling the story, making sure Harry could see all the animals he was talking about.Until sleep finally claimed him, no doubt he'd see significant changes in Harry tomorrow morning as the potion did its work overnight. He didn't think the changes would be obvious to those who hadn't seen him in a long time, but to him, Minerva and Lucius it would be obvious, and they would know he'd taken the potion.

Severus sat there for hours just staring at Harry, he had his own son, a biological one now, and most important a son of his heart. For he loved Harry, more than he'd ever loved anyone, even Lily and that was saying something. Somehow someway that child had gotten past all his defences without even trying, and Severus wasn't even sure how, perhaps it was because of their similar pasts, or the undying desire to be loved. Many thought Severus was without a heart, but it wasn't true, he just kept himself stoic to remain safe from being hurt the way Lily had hurt him all those years ago. Despite that Severus had wanted someone to love, for someone in turn to love him. It hadn't happened quite the way he'd expected it, instead of a love of a partner he had the love of a son. And you know what? Severus was perfectly content with that, yes, his life strange as it may seem was complete.

Severus woke abruptly at seven AM, realizing immediately what had made him wake up so early. Harry was moving around in his sleep. He was used to silence, and being a slight sleeper, anything could wake him up. It's something he'd kept from childhood, trying to listen out for his drunken father and of course later when he was spying. The House Elves knew never to come into his room while he was in it, both at Hogwarts and here in Prince Hall. If they did well, let's just say they wouldn't be doing it again any time soon after being cursed or hexed into oblivion.

No doubt Minerva would be up soon as well, she had always been the earliest riser out of all the Hogwarts teachers. No doubt after forty nearing fifty years of teaching, it was habit just like it was for him, but he was able to go back to sleep if he wanted to thankfully. Today though wasn't one of those days, he was wide awake; the knowledge that Black was there definitely put a damper on things. Removing himself from his bed, he quickly took a shower and brushed his teeth, ready to face whatever may come that day. Although if he was completely honest, he wasn't looking forward to trying to explain everything to Black. Perhaps giving the bloody idiot a calming draught may be beneficial to the conversation.

"Flippy?" called Severus once he was in the landing, speaking softly so he didn't wake Harry up.

"Yes sir?" answered the House Elf immediately. His green tennis ball eyes staring curiously into his masters, wondering why he'd been called.

"How has he been?" asked Severus without really caring about the answer.

"He's slept all night sir," said Flippy promptly.

"When he wakes up, make sure he bathes he seriously needs it," said Severus, "Do not let him come down the way he was yesterday, Harry was scared by him."

"Flippy will make sure Mr. Black is clean and presentable." said Flippy grimly. He didn't want
"He will put up an argument, if you must - subdue him." said Severus grimly. "The same rules apply from before, he cannot leave the manor."

"Flippy won't let Master Severus down," said the Elf bowing before he disappeared again, to do his Masters bidding.

"Daddy?" murmured Harry opening the door with one hand, the other rubbing at his tired eyes.

"Good morning, Harry." said Severus, evidently he hadn't been as quiet as he would have liked. For the first time he actually looked at Harry and noticed the changes he'd undergone overnight. His hair had gone darker, not that there was much hair there since it had been shaved off due to his injuries. He had more prominent cheekbones, the Prince cheekbones; he was relived to see Harry still had his mothers green eyes. How could just simply changing the colour of his hair and cheekbones change him so much?

"Morning daddy," murmured Harry still sleepy.

"Go do the toilet and brush your teeth," said Severus, ushering the child into his own bedroom and through to the bathroom. While Harry did that Severus got Harry's clothes ready for the day, he was still using Draco's old things, they were getting tight though, so he would no doubt have to take Harry to get new clothes soon, or just go with his measurements and get them from Madam Malkin's. Putting them on the bed, since Harry was five years old and able to dress himself.

Severus paused when he heard footsteps outside the bedroom; it must be Minerva otherwise Flippy would have come to tell him. Heading for the door he opened it abruptly causing Minerva to jump in fright.

"Severus! Don't do that!" said Minerva clutching her chest dramatically.

Severus smirked at her, "Good morning, Minerva, I trust you slept well?" asked Severus being a polite host.

"I did, thank you." replied Minerva.

"I'm sure there will be breakfast and coffee set out if you wish to go down," said Severus. "Harry and I will be with you momentarily."

"I assume by that Black hasn't woken up yet?" said Minerva. Averting her gaze, five year old or not she didn't want to see a boy she'd one day teach and watch grow up (her own godson no less) completely starker's and she knew Harry wouldn't want it either. It was different with babies and toddlers, and Harry wasn't either of these things anymore.

"No, but the Potion probably won't keep him sleeping much longer." said Severus exasperated.

"You are the expert," said Minerva, and he was. "I'll meet you down there." she added before moving off down the stairs, she knew the way having been shown the way just last night. The place was magnificent, very homely, and that was something missing at Hogwarts even in her own private quarters. Yes it was her space, but it didn't cry home, she'd never been back to her flat since her husband died.

"Can I have pancakes today? And waffles?" asked Harry jumping up and down clearly more awake now and finally dressed. It was Gladrags wizard wear, Draco only got the best, it was a bit too dressy to be playing around in, but considering it would just be gathering dust they might as well get used. Narcissa always bought Draco too much; half the things she bought only got used once.
"We shall just have to see what the Elves have cooked wont we?" said Severus, as both of them left Harry's bedroom and made their way down the stairs to breakfast.

"Yup!" cried Harry hyperly, it seemed he'd forgotten his worries of the night before.

"Morning Minnie!" said Harry sitting down in his usual seat which had a booster on it so he could see over the table.

"Good morning Harry," said Minerva staring at Harry before meeting Severus' eyes in enquiry, Severus nodded as if he understood her unasked question causing the Transfiguration teacher to smile. It seemed as though Harry had indeed took the potion. She could tell really, all she'd asked for was confirmation. He had Severus' cheekbones, and his dark hair, the rest of him was the same, including the eyes and he still had a little bit of the Potter look. He was a unique blend of all his three now biological parents, and that's what the potion had done, given Harry part of Severus' DNA so he had three parents now. Not many chose to use the potion; they preferred having their own kids, to the pureblood's it made the lines less pure if they use the potion. Severus plated up food for Harry, and put it in front of him, nodding proudly when Harry drank the nutrition potion without needing to be reminded. His lips twitched, at the way Harry's nose screwed up just tasting it, without thinking he handed over some juice so Harry could wipe the taste from his mouth.

"Sirius Black is wakening up sir, I'll make sure he baths before coming down," said Flippy before disappearing once more.

"Eat up, Harry. He won't hurt you, I promise." said Severus seeing the queasy look coming to his sons face.

Harry nodded and with less enthusiasm began eating his breakfast.

"Why is he so scared?" asked Minerva, her voice low so Harry didn't hear her.

"I have no idea," admitted Severus, "But Black does look terrible, perhaps that's what scared him?"

"I suppose he does," replied Minerva thoughtfully she hadn't really thought of that, he wasn't scary to her, but they were speaking about a five year old child. Black did look a right state, his hair tangled, greasy and messy gaunt face and the clothes he had on were mismatched and obviously borrowed from whoever they could get the items from within the Ministry. After all they didn't want Black in the courtroom with his Azkaban clothes on, which was a good thing really or it would have scared Harry further. "You need to eat as well," Minerva pointed out seeing that Severus wasn't eating much either.

"I know," sighed Severus, but his appetite had completely diminished; he seriously wasn't looking forward to this upcoming discussion. No pun intended. He'd hoped Black would sleep for at least a few more hours, give him time to prepare.

"I'm going to kill them," growled Sirius wakening up, he couldn't believe they'd used a spell on him to make him sleep. Standing up ready to confront them, a small part of him realizing he felt better than he had in a long time, but that little part didn't matter right now. "Move out of the way." he demanded upon seeing an Elf at the door - stopping him from getting by.

"Mister Sirius must bath first," said Flippy.

"Move!" cried Sirius angrily.
"Master Severus has demanded Mister Sirius bath and be presentable, and Flippy be doing as Master orders," said Flippy his hands out ready to make the unwilling guest comply with her Master's orders if need be.

"I'm fine, now just let me out!" said Sirius agitated.

Flippy twitched her fingers causing Sirius to disappear from view, Flippy followed, and if Severus Snape had been there, he would have found the entire thing amusing, minus the fact that Sirius Black was now completely starkers and looked for all the world a drowned rat in a bathtub full of water. Sirius looked ready to explode violently, never in all his years had he been so humiliated by a House-Elf.

"Now will Mister Sirius wash himself or does Flippy need to do that too?" asked Flippy, clicking his fingers he cut Sirius' hair and untangled it, now it looked manageable. It was still wet though, and he wouldn't bother drying it until he was dressed. Sirius Black was acting like a petulant sixteen year old not the twenty six year old man he was, but after being in Azkaban his emotions were bound to be screwed.

"I'll do it," scowled Sirius, realizing the Elf was serious and he would do it, and he wasn't about to test the elf again any time soon. With great reluctance he picked up the shower gel and sponge before he began to scrub himself clean. Aware that the Elf wasn't even leaving the room. He felt as though he was three years old again being watched by Kreacher, he couldn't help but shudder. After a few minutes though, the warmth began to set in and he relaxed back against the tub.

"Mister Sirius must wash his hair," said Flippy after ten minutes of watching the wizard nearly fall asleep.

Sirius grumbled the elf was a bloody dictator; he wasn't surprised it belonged to Severus Snape that was for damn sure. Giving his hair a good scrub so all the dirt and mud in his scalp would wash away, he then sank under the bubbles and let it wash away, before putting the conditioner in, massaging his scalp getting it deep into his straw feeling hair.

"Time for Mister Sirius to get out now," said Flippy impatiently, he had other duties to do today, so he could do without babysitting Sirius Black all morning.

"Alright!" sighed Sirius exasperated, grabbing the towel putting it around him so the elf didn't see him. He was so thin the towel nearly wrapped around him twice. Each rib stuck out mockingly, he didn't have a single piece of fat upon him at all, and that was only four years in Azkaban. He was glad to be out, make no mistake, since he'd been imprisoned for life without trial but it wasn't the way he'd hoped it would. At the trial he'd expected to be able to get custody of his godson, not find out he wasn't even his godfather anymore, and that Snape had custody of him...and he couldn't get the look on Albus' face out of his mind. He looked furious, why? What could he have wanted from him that made him so angry at Minerva for taking him here? Did he even know? He wanted answers, and right now he couldn't get them up here. Taking a deep breath, he quickly dried himself off. He had just thought about clothes when the Elf spoke again.

"Mister Sirius has fresh clean fitting clothes on the bed, get dressed." said Flippy.

"Thank you," said Sirius, forgetting his earlier ire at the House Elf.

"Follow Flippy," said the Elf, opening the room door once Sirius was in a proper attire. He went slowly so the wizard could keep up; he did look as if a feather could knock him over.

"Master Severus, Master Harry, Miss Minerva, Sirius Black." said Flippy announcing him.
"Thank you Flippy, you may get some rest, leave your duties until the afternoon." said Severus firmly, knowing if he didn't he would try and do them - he'd not had any rest last night.

"What's going on?" said Sirius, deciding against demanding - it hadn't gotten him anywhere yesterday or this morning. It was difficult but he managed to reign in his impatience.

"Sit down, drink these potions and eat breakfast first," said Severus, glaring at him daring him to argue.

It wasn't Severus' glare that had him sitting down, it was the apprehensive green eyes of his godson (official or not) that prompted him to just do what they asked.
Chapter 29

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 29

Talking Sense Into Sirius Black

To say breakfast was a tense affair was putting things lightly, and it was a testament to how far Harry was coming that he wasn’t affected by the tense silence. He continued to munch on his breakfast just enjoying it for what it was; he had gotten his wish, at least one of them. Harry adored pancakes, something he hadn’t tried before, which went for most things he got at Prince Hall. Although waffles and pancakes were definitely his all time favourites, and would have them every day if he could. Severus didn’t allow it, wanting Harry to have a very wide variety but it couldn’t have escaped Harry’s notice that they had pancakes at least two or three times a week.

“Now can I know?” asked Sirius, his stomach felt fit to burst, he wasn’t used to large meals anymore. They barely fed him in Azkaban, it was little wonder he’d lost so much weight. It ached to move, his bones felt brittle and he tired so very easily, and his emotions were all over the place. Now that the Dementor went there sucking everything away, he was being forced to deal with them. It wasn’t an easy feat, since his mind and body kept going through so many emotions he’d never had to deal with for years. Thankfully Snape had known to give him a stomach soother so he didn’t expel the lovely food he’d eaten. Although there was still another one looming there, taunting him. He did notice Harry had an empty vial at his own plate, why would he need to take potions? Was he sick? Suffering some sort of illness? Was his placement with Snape only temporarily? He could dream right?

“Take the other potion.” stated Severus, before completely ignoring Black as he finished his coffee, which had a few drops of calming draught in it. He needed to keep his cool with the insipid fool, as nauseating as that was; he had to do it for Harry. He had to set a good example for him, otherwise he’d raise a child who thinks it’s alright to say what he liked when he liked. He was five years old and extremely impressionable, hopefully between himself, Minerva and Lucius he would turn out to be a well mannered, young man. Severus chuckled wryly at his own thoughts, he’d barely had him a few months and here he was thinking of him grown up.

“What is it?” scowled Sirius, glaring at the damn thing hoping it would explode.

Severus’ face tensed, his eye twitched as he tried to keep control of his anger. Why did the bloody idiot continue to fight him every five seconds? Why was he doing this again? Oh yes, to get one over Dumbledore and stopping the old fool from getting his hands on his son. Even with the potion, the Wizengamot could take him if they felt like it, the things he had to do to keep Harry safe.

“Alright, alright,” said Sirius, taking the potion, Snape looked really to kick him out and it was the last thing he wanted. He was desperate to get to know his godson, and why he’d ended up in Snape’s care. Why Dumbledore had been so furious that they had disappeared, what had happened in the few years he’d been in Azkaban? It had been hell on earth for him…but he’d expected the world to continue on…which it didn’t seem to have. Everything had gone topsy-turvy. Grimacing at the taste, gagging, wiggling his tongue to try and get the taste away. His eyes turned to Harry when he heard him giggling behind his hand. Harry stopped abruptly when he noticed him watching, sighing softly, and wondering if Harry would ever be carefree with him.
“If you are done acting like a two year old,” said Severus arching an eyebrow Black’s way, not even Harry acted so immaturely, admittedly there may be a reason for that.

Sirius flushed red, but couldn’t bring himself to get worked up as the calming draught kept him from becoming hysterical.

“Thank you, Flippy.” said Harry as the elf removed everyone’s dishes. He still wasn’t used to someone doing everything for him. It was usually him doing everything for everyone else…or rather everything for the Dursley’s. So he always made sure to say thank you, its something nobody had ever said to him.

“Young master is welcome,” said Flippy, smiling at the little boy before he disappeared to do the washing up.

Sirius stared at Harry, barely able to believe his ears; he was thanking a House-Elf? A bloody House-Elf? That’s what they were there for; his lip almost curled just thinking about the one he owned, Kreacher the disgusting thing. It was horrible, parroted everything his mother said and adored the ground they had walked on. He would probably give it clothes; he certainly didn’t want anything to do with it.

“Harry?” called Minerva.

“Yes Minnie?” asked Harry turning to face her.

Sirius’ lips disappeared, watching both of them interact, the weirdest thing of all was that Minerva didn’t seem to care what Harry was calling her. He could have imagined a scenario where he got blasted for that! Or if he was in Hogwarts detention for an entire year. It boggled his mind, even after working with her in the Order over the years until Voldemort was defeated. It was a new side to the stern teacher he’d known, and he wasn’t sure what to make of it if he was completely honest.

“I have a book here would you like to look at it?” asked Minerva bringing out the magical educational book. Opening it wide, Harry slid of the chair and wandered over, still slightly weary but not as bad as he used to be. Minerva touched it, and ‘Red’ was magically spoken over the colour. Minerva then touched a different colour, and it said the word ‘Blue’. It didn’t just have colours, but Quidditch pictures, basic numbers, alphabet and other things notably magical in nature that Harry might not know yet.

“Do you like it?” asked Minerva, her lips curling barely smiling but Harry didn’t seem to mind, he just beamed at her as if she’d just handed him something rare and precious.

“I do!” said Harry, touching it and listening to the words, he knew some colours, but others he didn’t. It wasn’t as if the Dursley’s had taught him, it’s only what he heard them say while he was out of his cupboard. His new daddy always seemed proud of anything he did, and he strove to always see it.

“Go on then, Harry, go play.” said Severus; the entire right side of the living room was Harry’s to play with. He had all manner of toys, tables and books in which he could look at. He was by no means spoiled, but well looked after which was what Severus wanted, difficult to balance especially knowing Harry had been abused but he was trying.

Harry looked at them all, mostly Severus and Black cautiously.

“I am not going anywhere, we are remaining right here.” stated Severus firmly, as always able to understand Harry’s fear in a way nobody else could.
Harry nodded before walking over to his colourful desk, and opened the book from the beginning. His sharp green eyes looked at everything, touching it to see what it was and if he was right. His green eyes would light up with every new thing he learned. He had been looking forward to going to school, since the Dursley’s had signed him up for it. She’d even made his uniform, Harry had through it horrible, but the prospect and relief of getting away from them had been much greater. Now he didn’t just have to wish for school, he had a new daddy that loved him and would always look after him. He had promised, and so far he’d always kept his promises to him.

“Muffliato!” muttered Severus, surrounding the area with the spell, his own invention and he was rather proud of it. Back then he hadn’t realized just how handy it would be, and it had indeed been just that. He didn’t want Harry hearing even a sentence of what they were saying. Thankfully he was used to magic now, and wouldn’t be alarmed if he couldn’t hear what they were saying. It reminded him of the first time he’d cast a silencing spell, Harry had saw their lips moving but heard nothing, he’d rubbed at his ears terrified at the loss of sound.

“Dumbledore had already ordered Hagrid to take Harry to the Dursley’s before Sirius was implicated.” said Minerva immediately.

“Yes, we already knew that,” said Severus, staring at Minerva curiously, perhaps she was using it as way to begin the conversation perhaps.

“Dumbledore? Why would you call him that? Why did he look so angry? What’s going on? Why do you have Harry, Snape?” asked Sirius irritated beyond belief.

“Remember, Black you are here on my say so, it can just as easily be rectified.” said Severus narrowing his eyes at the idiotic rambling.

“Please…I just…I want to know what’s happened to my godson,” said Sirius tiredly, staring at both of them just feeling drained.

“Unvarnished truth or one that will make you bear the burden easier?” questioned Severus impassively.

Sirius stared at Snape blankly, since when did he hold anything back? He never had before, which actually made his stomach twist uncomfortably. Was it really that bad he was asking him what he wanted? He turned to Minerva and saw she was just as grim as Severus was. Unsurprising really since she rarely showed emotion, she had to be really wound up to get any glimpse of feelings. He opened and closed his mouth, before snapping it with a final move with a click.

“I returned home to Spinners End for the summer holidays, as I normally do. The first few weeks were normal, and then I came across something that concerned me a great deal. It appeared to be two five year old boys bullying a three year old who had clothes that looked like rags and were ten times too big for him. They shoved him so badly his head cracked on the pavement, all he did was curl up against any oncoming punches or kicks. I scared them off, but when I tried to help the child he flinched away from me, I tried to reassure him of course but he grew terrified and ran off. I cast a locating spell on him as he ran, deciding to check upon him. I suspected abuse, but I had no way of knowing of course…and since he was magical I had to be sure. You know as well as I do, why it’s so wrong to abuse a magical child, the magic defends its host, and well sooner or later something would have happened. It didn’t help that his magic was so advanced, he looked three but the magic was that of a fourteen year old.” said Severus pausing to let it sink into the mutts head.

Minerva stared at the floor; she’d only ever received cursory visions of the tale, not the real unvarnished truth. Unlike Sirius she already knew it was Harry he was talking about, Black just
stared at them curiously.

Sirius wondered briefly if Snape had had Harry since he was three years old, his godson had been bullied? James would be rolling in his grave…it was funny though, they had been the bullies and now it was his godson’s turn to suffer…maybe the saying was right - Karma was a bitch, Merlin Harry was paying for what they did. No, it must be someone else, Petunia didn’t live in Spinners End, Lily and she had when they were children but they’d all moved out of the area hadn’t they?

“I went and did my shopping before returning home; unfortunately my conscience wouldn’t let me rest. So I cast the spell and found the boy, he was in a hotel in Cokeworth, he was alone, and injured simply put I was infuriated. Getting inside I checked the child over, and found out he wasn’t three years old…but five. He needed a healer, I was about to take him to St. Mungo’s for aid when his guardians came back.” said Severus pausing once again.

Sirius’ heart sank, there was no way he would be talking about someone else…it had to be Harry. Unless it was his cousin? Could it be? No the child Snape spoke about had magic…but for all he knew the cousin could have magic. He knew he was just being ridiculous but this was his godson they were talking about. It might have been the past, but to him…it felt as if it was happening to him right now. He could see even Minerva was uncomfortable, why though? This was all so strange to him. He was tempted to believe he’d ended up in a parallel world.

“I knew who it was as soon as I saw her, she had a child with her…it was her son that much I deduced. I quickly joined the dots and realized the child I had just run a diagnostic on…the boy who was near death was in fact Harry Potter.” said Severus grimly, waiting for the inevitable explosion. Instead all he saw was tears running down Black’s face…out of all the scenarios that had played in his head; this had not been one of them.

“I could have patched up a scrape, fever or cold…or any minor ailment but I was in no way qualified to help a child that was dying. Not only was he still bleeding from the crater in his head…but he was injured all over, bruised and broken boned.” said Severus, not sparing Black’s feelings the slightly, he had to know how bad it was. “I knew if I took him to St. Mungo’s I wouldn’t get near him, and there could be a chance of him being returned right back to the Dursley’s.”

“Why would they take him back?! They wouldn’t do that!” said Sirius loudly, how bad did Snape think the wizarding world was? He could barely believe it.

“Quiet.” said Minerva her tone clipped and angry.

“Poppy would have healed him, but she has an obligation to tell the proper authorities especially on cases as bad as this was.” said Severus, Merlin he could remember just how powerless he felt, not a feeling he liked at all. “I went to Lucius; he was the only one I could turn to.”

“DO NOT START,” snarled Severus, when Sirius looking cross between horrified and furious red in the face and about to open his mouth. “He was the one that saved Harry’s life.”

Leaning back, eyeing Snape warily, still aware he didn’t have any means of protecting himself against the infuriated wizard. It was hard to believe that the Lucius Malfoy, the Death Eater had saved his godson’s life. You would think he’d do a dance if he was dying, after all Harry defeated Voldemort.

“When the healer did a full scan, he found it to be the worst case of abuse he’d come across in his profession as a healer. Nearly every bone in his body had at one point or another been broken, magic of course tried to heal it, but it does so incorrectly. He deduced it was Muggles, after all we have spells that can do the damage done but there wasn’t one. Once he was healed as much as
possible, he immediately asked me what happened the night the Dark Lord was defeated.” said Severus, looking over at Harry, unconsciously a small smile stole over his face, his son, Merlin he never thought he’d have one.

“If he wasn’t a healer, I would have assumed he just wanted to know for the sake of it. I knew there was a reason for asking, so I told him what I knew. That is when he informed me that seventy five percent of Harry’s magic had been blocked since that faithful Halloween night.” said Severus.

“Why would Voldemort bind his magic?! He tried to kill him!” said Sirius baffled to the core of his being.

“Or more specifically the morning after it happened, since it was a brand new day. There was the thought that you could have done it Black, but we really quite quickly it wasn’t possible. There is only one person with enough power to bind seventy five percent of Harry’s magic.” said Severus, knowing Black wasn’t going to believe or like this, the slightly.


Severus snorted; the thought of that disgusting thing having enough power to do anything actually amused him. He wasn’t a total idiot like he had assumed, he’d managed not only to fool Potter and Black, but the entire wizarding world on a whole. “No, Black. It was Dumbledore.” replied Severus, staring intently at him, getting some perverse pleasure out of blowing all his preconceived notions to hell.

“He wouldn’t, he couldn’t do something like that! You lie Snape!” said Black defensively, standing up only to be spelled back on the couch by Minerva. He realized he couldn’t get back up but could move they’d blued his backside to the chair.

“I wish I were, but that wasn’t the worst of it all Black.” said Severus, sighing tiredly, extremely weary at bringing all this badness back up.

Black gulped, Minerva wouldn’t go along with Snape’s madness…not unless she had irrefutable proof surely? She’d known Dumbledore a long time…which meant what Snape was saying could actually be true. His stomach felt like vomiting everything he’d eaten but the potion prevented it from reappearing.

“Harry would not have survived another week in his aunts care…he wouldn’t have made it to Hogwarts for anyone to become aware of what was happening should I have not intervened.” said Severus, his sorrow making its way through his shields.

“Dear Merlin!” murmured Minerva; she had preferred the cursory version.

“Lucius went to the Dursley’s to get custody of the child for me, he knew if I went that I would kill them.” said Severus a vicious glint in his eyes showing the seriousness of his words.

“Where are they?” demanded Sirius coldly, the first thing he was going to do was buy a wand in Knockturn Alley and then he was going to kill them slowly, torture them until they were completely insane. No one was going to get away with hurting his godson.

“Trust me, Sirius, they are paying for what they did.” said Minerva feeling vindictively amused.

“Before I tell you the rest I need a vow sworn from you Black.” said Severus gravely.

“Why?” Sirius asked confused.
“Because I said,” stated Severus grimly.

“Severus, your son wants you,” said Minerva noticing him coming over.
Removing the spell temporarily, he gestured to Harry to sit on his knee, the picture of calmness.
Harry immediately ran over, and climbed on his daddy’s knee, and cuddled in. He was tired, yawning sleepily; he burrowed in more firmly and was content to just feel the gentle thumping of his heart as it drifted him to sleep.

Sirius felt jealousy stab him in the heart that should be him who Harry trusted above all others. Yet all he got was stared of wariness and fear. He didn’t understand it either; it wasn’t as if Snape had him long enough to turn Harry against him surely? But no, he knew why he was scared now, he closed his eyes, abused, his little godson had been beaten and abused for four years nearly. Merlin he hoped whatever they did would last for thousands of years, they deserved no less. Would Harry ever trust him? Or had the abuse left a mark that would never ever leave him? That thought left him cold all over, the great big what if.

Severus rocked Harry gently, as he absently retrieved the throw from the back of his couch. He didn’t normally sleep in the morning, not anymore. He would need to get him out of the habit of it, since he would be learning every morning from Minerva. That was only until Hogwarts started up, which was right around the corner making it more urgent to get someone. Once he was sure Harry was soundly asleep, he stood up keeping a firm grip of the child and placed him on the couch, head on the pillow and the throw wrapped around him.

Minerva cast a silencing spell around Harry; instead of them this time as Severus retook his seat.

“Alright,” grumbled Sirius, reluctantly as he removed his wand which had been returned to him straight after the trial. He hadn’t had a chance to use it, and the first time he did it was for a bloody Vow of all things.

Three minutes later the vow was cast and accepted, the barbed wire looking fire sank into their bodies binding them to their word. The Vow was the most important and binding of all magical oaths, it didn’t just cause you to lose your magic, but killed you if you even thought of breaking your word.

“Harry and I moved here, I couldn’t raise him in Spinners End, it wasn’t protected enough. Once he was recovered at least partially, I took him to Gringotts so they could remove the bindings on his magic. I found out there just how the Dark Lord succeeded in surviving that night.” said Severus.

“Surviving? He’s dead! I saw it Snape, I saw his remains, he was nothing but ash!” said Sirius, wide eyed quite understandably shaken by the wizards words.

“No, all the Death Eaters and Dumbledore know he’s not dead…the mark endured, faded for sure but still his spirit and magic endured.” said Severus dourly. “Nobody understood, at least I assumed so but I fear Dumbledore found out…it may explain his actions after that night.”

“NOTHING absolutely NOTHING gave him the right to do what he did!” shrieked Sirius beyond infuriated.

“I did not say otherwise.” stated Severus still calm, “The goblins did not just remove the bindings on Harry’s magic, but also a shard of the Dark Lord’s soul…”
Sirius gulped, “His soul?” he asked weakly, why would Dumbledore even contemplate keeping the soul piece in Harry? Surely he could have had the goblins remove it? He didn’t know what to think anymore.

“Tom Riddle created Horcruxes, which are basically rituals that rip away pieces of your soul to keep in containers so you could have ties to this earth should your body die…a way of cheating death and achieving immortality.” said Minerva, pitching in.

“Tom Riddle?” asked Sirius feeling like laughing that was Voldemort’s name? Tom Riddle? How boring did that sound…but he wanted blood purity! Riddle was not a pureblood name, he should know he’d been weaned on all pureblood names and if they were ‘proper’ to talk to and not blood traitors or Mudblood’s.

“The Dark Lord’s true name,” said Severus, not amused like Sirius was, but Severus could see it had a hysterical edge to it. He was glad he’d given the man a calming draught, otherwise he dreaded to think how he’d have reacted to everything that “When I found out the steps he’d taken, Lucius, Minerva and myself snapped into action…hunting down what Horcruxes we could find.”

“How many times can you split your soul?” asked Sirius woefully ignorant.

“Nobody has dared to create more than one,” said Minerva, truth be told she was still trying to come to terms with everything that had happened over the past few weeks. “But back to our original topic, we went to the social services, it’s a place that protects children…and found out people had visited Privet Drive because others had called about the Abuse.”

“Why would he still be there then?” asked Sirius, closing his eyes, defeat thrumming through him, he’d caused this…he’d given Harry to Hagrid. “Don’t tell me he did this…please don’t.”

“He Obliviated them,” said Severus disgust coating his voice. “Also gave the Dursley’s forgetfulness potion in a way he was worse than the Dursley’s…or anything the Dark Lord did.”

“I’m going to kill him, I don’t care if I end up back in Azkaban!” snarled Sirius, fury rolling off him in waves. James would be rolling in his grave at what Dumbledore had done, lets not forget Lily! Perhaps them not letting Dumbledore be the secret keeper had been a good one…he didn’t even want to imagine what the old bastard would have done otherwise.

“Yes because you haven’t already let Harry down, you just have to go out and do it again,” said Severus sarcastically, his black eyes glinting in rage.

“He can’t get away with it!” cried Sirius furiously.

“Do you think we are going to?” said Severus all emotion shutting off his face.

“You mean he’s going to be caught?” said Sirius taken aback, his tone of voice returning to normal.

“Eventually, yes,” said Severus bluntly, he wasn’t going to let Harry attend Hogwarts with Dumbledore as Headmaster he would rather teach Harry at home.

“Can I help?” asked Sirius, his haunted blue eyes beseeching Snape’s begging for something to do - anything to help his godson…hell he’d get down on all fours and kiss the hem of his robes, apologize for everything he did…take Veritaserum…let Snape use him as a punching bag…or hexing dummy anything just to see his godson.
Chapter 30

The Vow And It’s Consequences

Chapter 30

Sirius Black

Sirius Black paced the bedroom agitated beyond belief, he felt so lost, so tired yet so very vengeful
the desire to hunt Dumbledore down and kill him was very strong. His mind couldn’t help but go
over everything Snape had said, the proof of his words at least about the abuse was laying
innocently enough on the table. Then there were the recorded transcripts of the social workers,
there were even pensive memories but he didn’t have them. They were locked up, a set with Lucius
Malfoy and a set at Gringotts so if anything happened to Severus then it would be sent directly to
Madam Bones. Sirius couldn’t help but admire that, their sense of self preservation and making
sure they won in the end. If James had done that…he wouldn’t have spent time in Azkaban, Merlin
he owed his freedom to Lily, who actually had the forethought to state clearly in her will who the
secret keeper was. Lily…James Merlin, if they knew what Dumbledore had done he would kill
them.

How could she have left Harry to be abused? What kind of woman was she? And it was her job! It
was a good job she was in prison now, Lucius true to his word had made sure of it. She would
never get a job involving children again; never allow harm come to another child in need of a
social worker. If Harry had died…no force in this world would have kept him at bay. Even if he
had revealed the magical world, nothing but getting revenge would have mattered to him.

Stepping out of the room, he began to wander around the manor in mindless curiosity. Prince Hall
was structurally a bit like Grimmauld Place, but much nicer…well that was putting it lightly.
Grimmauld Place was so disgusting, he’d hated growing up there, this place was beautiful and
Harry would grow up here. Sighing softly, his fingers running along the wall, this hadn’t been how
he imagined what it would be, stuck in Azkaban imaging his release and getting to raise his
godson.

Sirius stopped at the doorjamb, staring into what could only be Harry’s bedroom. It was filled with
an assortment of children’s toys and teddies. A stuffed welsh green dragon, an animal teddy he
couldn’t see properly but the whiskers gave it away, a cute light brown teddy bear with a purple t-
shirt on with HS sewn on sat in the centre of the bed, it caused his heart to jerk painfully. Harry
wasn’t a Potter; no he was a Snape…as much as he hated to admit it, better a Snape than heaven
forbid dead. It was going to take a lot of getting used to; he was so used to belittling Snape and
making his life a living hell. Yet here he was, part of his godson life, he still didn’t quite
understand the why. He knew there was a reason…but he couldn’t think of it right now his mind
was tired as was his body. Then he saw on the nightstand a large leather bound photo album and a
few pictures in frames. A picture of Lily, James and Harry together, one with Lily and Snape
together by a tree, the last one was Lily on her own, beaming at the camera with a charms text
book in her hand unsurprisingly. Lily was rarely without a book during the seven years he’d known
her at Hogwarts.

“What do you think you are doing?” demanded Severus eyeing the Black heir suspiciously, as he
turned a corner to see Sirius Black looking into his son’s room.
“What do you think I’m going to do? Steal my own godson’s belongings? I’m sure I could find a use for a stuffed animated dragon.” said Sirius, biting his own tongue, damn this was difficult.

“Animated?” echoed Severus, peering into the room to find Black was right, the dragon was animated. Harry must have fully accepted and embraced his magic for that to have happened. Severus withheld the smile at that, well it had been a long time in coming, considering he could transform into a cat and did so more than once.

“Go near my room, Black, you’ll find yourself trying to get around minus your arms and legs.” stated Severus coolly.

“What happened to you?” said Sirius, Snape had always said what he meant, was down right vicious but there seemed to be something different about him…a new ferociousness to him. He didn’t know if he liked that or not, especially with not being sure how it came about.

“Do you think you were the only one to suffer in life, Black? That it’s you the world was out to get?” sneered Severus almost nose to nose with Sirius.

“No,” said Sirius, his eye twitching slightly.

“Liar,” hissed Severus, he knew Black’s tells, always had done, they knew each other well, too well, but not in a good way. They had compiled a list of their weaknesses and constantly tried to use them. “The world doesn’t revolve around you, Black, it never has. You weren’t the only one to grow up with parents that detested the very sight of you. You were however, lucky enough to get away from them.”

“Don’t start pissing about who had the worst life;” snapped Sirius defensively, not wanting to admit that Snape had a point.

“After everything Harry’s been through we’d be hypocrites to complain,” replied Severus with deceptive quietness.

Sirius had to reluctantly nod his head, not able to refute THAT statement even for a second. Sure he’d been whacked a few times by his parents but they’d never truly lifted their hand to him to really hurt him. No they’d just made him feel inferior and a great big disappointment. He’d never told anyone how it affected him, then he’d felt better doling out the shit his mother gave him onto others. It had become a way of life to help him cope with his self esteem even if he didn’t show it.

“Look we won’t ever get on, but can we try for Harry? I meant what I said before…I’d do anything.” said Sirius weakly, part of him was dying having to ask Snape this but for his godson he’d Abseil butt naked down the biggest slope in the Antarctica for a year without warming charms

“Wont get on?” repeated Severus staring blankly, biggest understatement he’d ever heard. “I hate you, Black. I always will, I loathe you more than I loathed James Potter. Don’t try and deny the fact you despised me as well, only your hatred ran pretty fucking deep since you tried to kill me!”

“I didn’t mean for that to happen!” spat Sirius, running his hands through his hair. At the time he’d acted nonchalant about it but truth was he’d almost become a murderer, no better than the Death Eaters running around killing people. He’d tried to hide his true feelings with falsities, that Snape deserved it, that he had it coming. Unfortunately the Dementors had seen right through it, and it had haunted him on more than one occasion stuck in the hell on earth they called Azkaban.

“YOU SENT ME AFTER A SODDING WEREWOLF, BLACK! WHAT DID YOU THINK
WAS GOING TO HAPPEN?" snarled Severus loudly, incredulity thrumming through him.

“I wasn’t bloody thinking, alright?!” sighed Sirius, rubbing his left temple as a headache formed causing him to wince in pain, Merlin that hurt like blazes.

Severus felt like throwing his hands in the air, but reluctantly realized he’d probably never receive an acceptable answer. Just like he hadn’t from Arabella Figg…or just like he knew he wouldn’t receive one from the Dursley’s and Dumbledore.

“Snape…why did you bring me here?” asked Sirius, “In all honesty.” he asked solemnly. His blue eyes gazing at Severus’ hoping for an answer.

“Haven’t you figured it out yet?” asked Severus, giving Sirius a look to say he thought he was an idiot.

“You don’t need me, Snape. Although your actions would suggest otherwise…I just can’t figure out your game plan.” admitted Sirius.

“Gryffindors,” said Severus exasperated. “If Dumbledore got his hands on you and made it seem like I am an unfit guardian, and take you before the Wizengamot to ensure you get the boy…what would happen?”

“You told me he doesn’t know…” said Sirius seeing the flaw in that logic.

“Not yet, but there will come a time when he finds out, it is…inevitable.” replied Severus. He would try his hardest to keep it from the old manipulative bastard for as long as possible, but he had to be prepared for all eventualities. The more people he had backing him, the less chance Dumbledore had of succeeding. If it went that long, Lucius was trying to get more evidence to present to the Wizengamot an airtight case he couldn’t talk himself out of. Dumbledore was as slippery as they came, he could convince a brick wall to move, so it had to be presented with caution.

“So bring him down…I’m sure between the two of us we can get away with it…make sure there is nothing left to find.” said Sirius darkly, his blue eyes gleaming with murderous intent.

“He deserves to suffer, you will leave him alone or I will kill you.” said Severus, “He will have his name disgraced, and the magical population would go from revelling in his presence to reviling him. All he would be remembered for is the wizard who dared to harm Harry Potter, their beloved saviour. He will see his good name and image crumble before being carted off to Azkaban or worse fate still…he kiss. He deserves no less, and I will see it through even if it means my end. If you want to do something, hurt someone, concentrate your efforts on Pettigrew.”

Sirius swallowed thickly, he meant it, he honestly, truly meant it. “Where’s Harry?” asked Sirius changing the subject nervously.

“Minerva is tutoring him,” said Severus eyeing Black suspiciously was he up to something? He hoped not because he would do as promised. He wouldn’t allow all their hard work to go down the drain. Dumbledore would suffer the tortures of the damned, he would ensure he did.

“What happens when she goes back to Hogwarts?” asked Sirius, tutoring was the most important milestone in a wizard’s life, he for once actually agreed with his parents on that.

“An alternative will be found, at least by summers end he will be caught up with all children in development.” said Severus automatically. “Minerva suggested Lupin; I don’t think I can stand more than one Marauder under my roof even for a night.”
“Remus,” croaked Sirius, remembering his old friend. He hadn’t been at the trial; did he even know that he was innocent? Had he read the newspapers? Where was he staying? Did he even get the Daily Prophet? How would he get by without James and him? Merlin he hoped he wasn’t homeless, everyone had suffered so much because of Pettigrew’s betrayal and the rat would die by his hand. “Does he know?”

“Yes, I met him for a drink yesterday,” said Severus sardonically, “Of course I don’t know! I just told you I can’t stand you never mind Lupin here.”

“If both of you are quiet finished…Harry is in the living room.” said Minerva scaring the crap out of Sirius.
“Did he…?” asked Severus feeling very foolish.

“No,” she said quickly, not letting him finish. “I threw up a silencing spell around him; now that you’ve got it out perhaps we can work towards a common goal? Keeping Harry safe and happy.”

“Indeed,” said Severus as if he hadn’t started it and was completely blameless.

“I sent a copy of the newspaper to Remus, I know he probably doesn’t have the money to spare for such trivialities.” added Minerva, “I have no doubt you will be hearing from him soon.”

“Did you add anything else?” asked Severus suspiciously.

“No, as I said, you are his father now, Severus. The decision on who tutors him is entirely your own.” said Minerva firmly.

Sirius grimaced, oh yes; going to take a lot of getting used too…he wondered what Remus would think. At least he wasn’t going to be the only one with their mind reeling over what had happened. He had a lot of apologising to do; he had suspected Remus of being the spy and kept him out of the loop on a lot of things. Such a fucking idiot he had been, Remus had always been true.

“Good.” said Severus, although it looked as though he would have to use him, he was drawing blank on anyone else to use other than Draco’s tutor of course. “How did he do today?” he asked as he walked towards her, and joined her going down the stairs, Harry had been left alone far too long. He needed have worried of course, since Flippy was there playing with him handing him crayons as he coloured in with his tongue peeking out between his lips…in the exact same manner Lily did when she was concentrating. It took him everything to stop himself smiling at the scene before him.

“Very well, we have covered quite a lot in a short space of time. Helped of course by the books you’ve been reading him. Now we are beginning our numbers and letters, not with a quill, he kept snapping them poor lad.” said Minerva, her lips twitching showing her amusement.

“That can come later,” said Severus flippantly, he didn’t care about that right now.

“Lunch is ready, Master Snape, I will be getting it now.” said Flippy standing up when he realized they had returned.

“Thank you, Flippy.” said Severus respectfully as the Elf disappeared.
Chapter 31

The Vow And Its Consequences

Chapter 31

Remus Lupin - another marauder at Prince Hall

Sirius stalked back and forth across the grand entrance hall, uncaring that he was exhausting himself. His body hadn’t fully recuperated from the four years of Azkaban, even with Severus’ Potions. He had been writing to Remus yesterday afternoon. They’d planned a meet today, Severus had, with great reluctance, given a Portkey over set for a specific time. He had avoided discussing much in the letter, just in case it was intercepted, or if Dumbledore was there. If he was by any chance, he would find himself surprised. The wards wouldn’t allow more than one person entrance, in other words Dumbledore would be dumped miles from the manor. Sirius wouldn’t help but vindictively hope it happened, he wanted to do much worse actually. He needed Remus more than he had realized, until he began writing to him.

Feeling magic twirling around at his back, he spun around as Remus materialised with the Portkey clutched in his hand. They stood there awkwardly, amber eyes meeting blue, then like long lost brothers they embraced as if it had merely been a long vacation - not four years since they’d seen each other last.

“I’m so sorry, Remus.” choked Sirius sounding devastated.

“As you should be,” replied Remus mildly, without any bite in his tone. Sirius had paid a hefty price for believing him to be the spy, so saying anything was moot. Although it might be because the full moon had just come and gone, he didn’t have enough energy to do much - never mind wasting what he did have on yelling at Sirius.

“I just…we….I’m sorry,” murmured Sirius his face buried in Remus’ shoulder, trying to convey the sincerity of his apology and explain why - yet not able to do so. They’d been scared that Remus’ condition had made him a perfect picking for Voldemort. They should never have thought it, they just couldn’t suspect their weak willed friend Peter could possibly do anything to them let alone spy for the Dark side.

“I know,” said Remus quietly, patting at his back in comfort, just glad that Sirius was innocent. For years he’d thought every single one of his pack was gone. His wolf had been very lonely; in turn it made him more vicious and feral during the full moon. It took longer for him to heal and then the depression had settled in. “Merlin, Siri I can feel your spine through your clothes.”

“Yeah, but don’t worry, I’m fine.” Sirius reassured him as he finally let go, leaving them standing face to face.

“So…where are we? Is this a Black property?” asked Remus looking around in awe, seeing it properly for the first time.

“No,” answered Sirius shaking his head almost numbly.

“Well where are we?” queried Remus, cocking his head to the side, gazing at Sirius curiously. Wondering why his friend was being evasive.

“Prince Hall,” admitted Sirius, turning and going up the stairs, Remus followed behind him still
wanting answers.

“Prince?” called Remus, almost stumbling on one of the steps when it penetrated his mind. “As in Prince? Prince? Snape’s home…err manor?” very aware of the fact that Severus Snape was in fact the last Prince descendant.

“Yeah,” replied Sirius sounding bemused at Remus’ shock. He’d gotten over his own shock so it wasn’t so bad anymore.

A shrieking laughter reached both wizards ears, Sirius looked down at the same time as Remus looking pained. Remus’ amber eyes widened in disbelief, he could smell Lily and James on Harry but also another additional smell that shouldn’t have been there. He knew that scent, even though it had been years since he had been around it - Snape. Harry had been magically adopted? Staring at Harry in awe, he looked so big and beautiful more importantly happy. Did Sirius know about his adoption? A frown fell on his face, why did Sirius look so hurt?

“Sirius?” questioned Remus thoughtfully.

Shaking off his thoughts he turned to his best friend, “Yeah?”

“What’s wrong?” asked Remus, turning to look for Harry only to find him absent, he hadn’t even heard him leaving.

“It was supposed to be me,” muttered Sirius bitterly, before moving away again, walking towards his room without saying another word.

“What is?” wondered Remus as he stepped into what was obviously the guest room Sirius was using at the moment. Did Sirius know about the magical adoption? He didn’t want to bring it up unless he did. It really wasn’t up to him, although if he didn’t…he should - Harry had Prince Features on his face. He looked like a blend of Lily, James and Snape. Oddly enough it fitted him, gave him a very angelic look. If he remained that way, he would be a heartbreaker when he was older.

“Harry’s supposed to be mine; he cannot even look at me, Remus.” Sirius couldn’t keep the whine out of his voice if he tried. “He’s terrified of me, and no matter what I do he cannot stand the sight of me.”


“Oh, Remy,” whispered Sirius, his blue eyes gazing at amber tortured.

“What’s wrong?” Remus rasped out becoming increasingly concerned, “What did you do?”

“It’s nothing I did!” cried Sirius indignantly, his blue eyes blazing.

“Then what?” asked Remus, sitting himself down on the small couch feeling his energy flagging.

“I’ll get to that,” sighed Sirius, running his fingers through his hair as he sat down on a chair opposite Remus, liking the idea of occupying his backside. “First things first, have you been in contact with Dumbledore at all in the past four years?”

“Since when do you call Albus, Dumbledore?” questioned Remus something was obviously going on that he didn’t know about.

“Just answer the question,” stated Sirius irritated.
“Um, I saw him three times…once the morning after they died,” choked Remus, still emotional about it. “Their funeral and then at Alice and Frank’s funeral. I tried to get the address where Harry stayed because I wanted to see him - but Dumbledore said he had to remain hidden. He pointed out what had happened to the Longbottoms and I realized he was right…I couldn’t put Harry in danger just because I wanted to see him.”

“You should have insisted more!” snarled Sirius, standing up unable to face Remus, blaming him, and blaming himself for what had happened to Harry. Remus should have cared more, should have looked for Harry like James would have done for him. He should never have given in to Hagrid’s demands, should have gone willingly to the Ministry - perhaps then he might have gotten a fair trial. Oh he was beginning to understand what Snape meant by focusing his anger on one thing, it actually helped. Although he hadn’t planned for that anger to be partly placed on Remus’ shoulders. “James would have moved heaven and hell to look after your kid!”

Sirius couldn’t stay in his room; he knew he was close to loosing it completely. Yanking open the door he stepped out breathing heavily as he paced along the landing. He didn’t understand why he was suddenly blaming Remus, but damn it felt better than just sitting sulking. Guilt settled in almost immediately, Remus was going through enough without him adding to it. It didn’t help that Remus couldn’t understand why he was so angry.

“What is going on here?” demanded Severus, his voice low and dangerous. His black eyes glaring holes in Sirius’ back.

“Did Harry hear?” asked Sirius, his face shadowed with worry.

“What do you think, Black?” sneered Severus, of course Harry had heard! Otherwise he wouldn’t be standing here right now.

“Sorry,” murmured Sirius guilty.

“Do you require a calming draught?” Severus asked blankly, before adding. “You’ll need to take it for a few months, you aren’t used to emotions anymore Black. The Dementors took it all out, leaving you feeling depressed and practically comatose. You need to get used to feeling everything, and keeping control of it. For the first three months, however, you should use the calming draughts when you become agitated.”

“How do you know?” enquired Sirius, surprised. All the while nodding his head, knowing Snape made sense.

“It’s nothing more than common sense.” stated Severus sardonically. “Accio Calming Draught.” keeping his arm out until the vial zoomed into his hand. Arching an eyebrow he handed it over without a word, but his eyes practically screamed ‘take it now’. He didn’t want Harry feeling worried in his own home, which he was. Harry didn’t like strangers, there would come a time when he wouldn’t be so terrified, until that time he would ensure the disturbances were to a minimum.

Sirius didn’t argue for once, not only was Snape’s advice sound, but he didn’t want to scare Harry anymore than he already had. It was difficult enough for the child to look at him; he honestly didn’t know what to do. He was getting to the extent he actually wanted to ask Snape’s advice. Now wasn’t that odd? He wouldn’t have thought he’d see the day where he wanted anything never mind advice from Snape. Dunking the potion back, grimacing at the taste, before sliding the used vial in his cloak pocket. Almost immediately calmness evaded Sirius, leaving him free of the chaotic emotions running him ragged.
“What is going on?” asked Remus, revealing his presence. He’d seen the entire confrontation, agog at the fact Sirius and Severus could stay in the same house without fighting like cats and dogs. He’d trusted Severus enough to take a potion from him. It was little wonder he was beginning to feel as if the world had tipped on its axis. “Why are you bringing up Harry and Dumbledore? Why so angry about me not visiting Harry?”

“You want to know why?” demanded Severus his lip curling as he observed the cowardly werewolf. You would think having such a…infliction would toughen someone up - not make them weaker.

“I…I did ask…” Remus trailed off cagily, the look on Snape’s face was actually frightening. Wondering if he actually did want to know. Turning to face Sirius, alarmed by the defeated look on his face. What did they know? Why all the mystery he didn’t get it?

“Follow me.” snapped Severus, turning around and swiftly making his way down the stairs until he got to his office. His office was one place Harry couldn’t get into. It also had silencing spells woven in, so any conversation inside of it couldn’t be heard by those on the other side of the door. Oh he would show Lupin just what he had seen, let him really see what his inactions had caused. Although if Lupin had visited Harry, he wouldn’t be his son or in his custody right now.

“Sirius?” asked Remus cautiously.

“Go,” said Sirius sighing sadly, he had seen what Remus was about to be shown. It had broken his heart to see the memory’s but Sirius knew he’d needed it. He had to see why Harry was so scared and wary of him. It was easy to see the child as he was now, Harry looked so healthy and happy - especially when he wasn’t around. The memories would be a constant reminder of what had happened.

Remus walked down after Severus, Sirius following closely behind him giving him support. Support he hadn’t had, when he was told what had happened and when he’d viewed the memory’s. “Minerva?” called Remus, rather shocked to see the Transfiguration teacher here. She was with Harry, who was eyeing him with deep penetrating cautiousness. Why would Harry be like that? Did Snape tell Harry what he was? He hoped not, he didn’t want to be judged by what he was during the full moon.

“Go,” said Sirius giving him a nudge in the direction of Snape’s office.

“Does Harry know what I am?” asked Remus a tremble in his voice.

“No, he doesn’t even know who you are, Remy.” admitted Sirius, “He didn’t know who I was.”

“Oh,” muttered Remus bewildered, shaking his head as he stepped through the office. It was very messy; it went against Severus’ personality. Books, maps, parchment littered the entire room, even on the floor; the desk couldn’t be seen for it all.

Severus flicked his wand clearing an area on the hidden desk, a small one with just enough room for the pensive to be placed on it. Which was exactly what Severus did, with delicacy, treating it with reverence like that of a once in a lifetime potion ingredient. The memories were still within it; it had only been yesterday that Black had seen what he did. Which was why hopefully when he saw Lucius he wouldn’t get defensive.

“This will tell you everything you want to know.” said Severus, stepping back; he had no desire to watch his own memories.
“I’m not going to like this am I?” murmured Remus, removing his wand.

“No.” stated Severus honestly, he didn’t lie - well unless it was to Voldemort but he could hardly tell the truth now could he? Whether people liked it or not, Severus Snape told the blunt uncensored truth. He couldn’t contemplate even thinking about their feelings, after all nobody thought about his so why should he?

Remus almost asked Sirius to come in with him; he was terrified of facing this alone. Squaring his shoulders, he took a deep breath, his wand and arm reaching out towards what looked like a bowl of water. As soon as the top of his wand was immersed, Remus was pulled under and left to struggle through the memories.

Seeing a little boy being beaten up by stronger boys, flinching and running away from Severus.

Seeing Harry taken from Cokeworth hotel (after watching Severus Snape slap Petunia) Severus had never hit a woman so he knew just how pissed the wizard was. He was too, he wanted to do more than just slap the stupid Muggle - he wanted to kill her.

The muddy waters cleared and he was looking around the most beautiful garden and manor he’d ever seen. It was a pureblood, he could tell by the peacocks, those ones were rare, delicious supposedly and a sign of being very well connected. He already had a feeling he knew who it was before he caught a glimpse of them. Narcissa Malfoy, she hadn’t changed a single bit. She didn’t even look older, it helped that she’d probably never had to lift a finger her entire life or worry about a single thing.

He was standing in a room, with Harry lying on a bed, looking oh, so small. Listening to the healer, horrified to his core. Barely able to process it, worst case of abuse he’d seen, something strange in Harry’s body, dark magic. His magic being bound and their conclusion that Dumbledore did it. That he didn’t want to believe, not now not ever.

Saw Lucius’ and Severus’ conversation on how to best protect Harry, Severus’ doubts about being able to raise him and their realisation that they couldn’t trust anyone to do it.

Lucius’ conversation about Harry's living situation...his anger at the fact a wizard had been kept in a cupboard and provided with nothing his entire life.

Then he saw an old building, two women being interviewed by Lucius, Minerva and Severus - dragged into the memory that Severus was seeing - Dumbledore was responsible for Harry’s state. He had made sure Harry stayed at the Dursley’s though bribery and potions to ensure nothing was reported. It was now easier to believe Dumbledore had bound seventy-five percent of Harry’s magic.

He saw Gringotts, the Horcrux...the information and clips of the others being destroyed.

Then he saw to his astonishment, Harry turning into a cat, after just once, seeing Minerva changed into her Animagus form. He couldn’t believe it; it took years to accomplish that! Harry was so powerful, although it might have something to do with his magical core being a bit bigger right now.

Remus closed his eyes, trying to get used to gravity again. As he was ejected from the pensive, the exit was always kind of weird. It didn’t matter how often you actually used one, it remained the same, a bit like having Legilimens cast at you. It didn’t get any easier. “I think I’m going to be sick.” he muttered as everything began to pile up on him.

Grunting in surprise, his eyes opening to find Severus pressing an empty bucket into his ribs - a bit too firmly. Or it might have something to do with them being so tender after all - it had just been a full moon.
“Why?” asked Remus as if he didn’t understand, couldn’t contemplate the need to do such an evil deed. It was a sickeningly Gryffindor question to ask.

“Because he could,” answered Severus sardonically, his eyes though were flashing in his anger. Severus’ eyes shifted slightly, before staring at the fireplace. A second later it flared to life, spitting out a figure who stepped out of the fire gratefully.

“Severus,” said Lucius before turning to the others, “Black, Lupin.” his voice not so warm for them.

“I have the rest of the information you required.” said Lucius smoothly, handing over the rolled up parchment.

“Thank you,” replied Severus gratefully, placing it in his desk drawer, not wanting it to be lost in the paperwork he had already been through a dozen times. They were trying to figure out where the Horcruxes were, they weren’t sure how many there were but they’d do what they had to.

“No problem,” Lucius answered wryly, curious about what had happened before he came in. “Oh, Olivia Halliwell has been arrested and charged with child endangerment, child neglect…and many counts of voluntary Manslaughter.”

“Manslaughter?” repeated Severusdarkly, realizing immediately why his friend would be saying that.

“What’s Manslaughter?” asked Sirius confused.

“Are you sure he was an Auror?” asked Lucius arching a white eyebrow in derision. Obviously thinking Sirius Black was an utter moron - and he might not be wrong.

“He’s never been in the Muggle world,” said Remus defending his friend. “Voluntary Manslaughter means she allowed people to die though omitting information. She was a social worker, she had a duty to help children, instead she took bribes and allowed the abuse to continue thus if and when they died…she was voluntary allowing murder or as they call it Manslaughter.”

“How many?” asked Severus disgusted.

“So far they reckon around twenty, he started digging into her work history, job history and the list is endless…how she managed to stay under the radar so long is…well extremely alarming.” said Lucius grimly, he didn’t care much for Muggles, but it didn’t mean he condoned abuse on any form - whether Muggle or Magical. He was no reason to make anything up.” sighed Lucius just as horror-struck as Severus.

“Is this including Harry?” questioned Severus.

“No, its not. But she will be in prison for life for what they’ve got on her. My informant said he wished for the first time that they hadn’t gotten rid of the capitol punishment whatever that is.” replied Lucius, not naming names - he didn’t trust Lupin or Black.

“Hanging was the ‘capitol punishment’ back in the day, the last one took place in 1964 I believe.” stated Severus sounding slightly smug that he had remembered it.

“Hanging?” asked Sirius looking queasy at the thought.

Severus merely rolled his eyes.
“Are you free this evening?” asked Lucius, causing Lupin and Black to glance between them in speculation.

“Harry will be asleep by nine.” said Severus, “If it’s any earlier I’ll Floo over.”

“Good, we are visiting the Gaunt shack.” stated Lucius, “It’s the next one on the list.” he added purely as afterthought.

“Gaunt shack?” enquired Remus, realizing they were talking about the Horcruxes; it was the only thing that made sense.

“His mother’s maiden name. The Slytherin descendants.” answered Lucius. He was still searching high and low for the pendant but no such luck yet.

“May I join you?” asked Remus, “I may be able to smell or sense something both of you may otherwise miss?” he needed to do something, anything. He felt guilt crushing his shoulders, if he had insisted more… Harry might not have been so badly hurt. Sirius was right to blame him, he may as well have stood back and let this happen. Damn Dumbledore, he was going to hunt him down during the full moon and bite him. For once both him and his wolf was in agreement on that statement. Nobody hurt his cub and got away with it.

“Very well,” said Lucius grudgingly after having a silent conversation with Severus. Making sure he would be alright with the werewolf coming with them.

Sirius remained quiet, still unable to comprehend the fact that Voldemort wasn't dead - and his godson was in danger the longer those disgusting things were out there.
Chapter 32

The Vow and its Consequences

Chapter 32

Coming Together

“How’s Harry doing?” asked Lucius as they began walking from Little Hangleton where they had Apparated to the Gaunt Shack. Which was quite a bit downhill, when compared to the Riddle Mansion it looked even worse than ramshackle, there was just not a word to describe it. He had been telling Draco about Harry, making sure his son didn’t get jealous of the shared attention, but it seemed Draco was excited to have a friend. Even if he would be scared at first, since he doubted Harry had ever had a friend in his life. Draco had promised to be nice, that he would share his toys and make Harry ‘all better’ such a child thing to say. Fortunately Draco would never be able to truly understand what Harry went through, if anyone had hurt his son the way Harry had been… there would have been nothing left of them to find. If they’d thought he was a Death Eaters before…by the time he was finished they would have though the devil himself had descended upon them. If anyone dared harm Harry again, the same rules applied, the child had wormed his way into his heart. Anyone that knew him would know just how impossible that was. He had very few people he genuinely cared about, the list was very short, Narcissa, his son, Severus and of course Harry now. He took his duties as Godfather very seriously; Harry would come first, just like his son.

“He’s still extremely leery of strangers, but he didn’t show it so much today, I think he’s beginning to learn to trust that I can keep him safe.” said Severus, his tone thoughtful.

“We aren’t strangers,” Remus couldn’t help but point out.

“You are to him,” stated both Lucius and Severus together.

“Is there a good way to approach him?” asked Remus softly, cursing inwardly when he nearly tripped up due to a hole in the grass that seemed to eat his foot. Wincing in pain, his bones already felt tender was it was he looked around making sure there were no more surprises waiting on him.

“Not that we’ve learnt, but remain still as possible, spend quite time with him and don’t expect too much.” replied Lucius honestly. “He is only just getting used to me.”

“You thought bribing him would work,” smirked Severus, chuckling wickedly.

“I did not,” replied Lucius in mock upset, “He needs toys and gifts, it will show him that we care, and at some point it will penetrate Harry’s mind that he’s safe and cherished. You didn’t see where he slept Sev, and what he had. Some old clothes, broken crayons actually broken everything. Hidden away so his relatives didn’t find them, and no doubt take them away. If there is a child in this world that deserves a bit of spoiling from their godfather its him.” it was just different seeing it in a pensive, so much more different. It was missing the feelings; the misery magic had imbued into the walls - Harry's misery.

“Godfather?” muttered Remus, eyes wide, he didn’t know why he was surprised really. Despite the fact there was six years between them, they were good friends. Of course Lucius as far as he knew, hadn’t given Severus the time of day at Hogwarts, other than his Head Boy duties. Then again no
seventeen year old would want to be over friendly with a first year, they were barely paid attention. Although he didn’t know if it was true, since he of course, didn’t know what went on in Slytherin common room.

“He was the one that ensured Harry received the best treatment possible, so yes, it’s the kind of godfather I would like for my son. He also has political pull and clout which would mean if anything happened to me I will know Harry is completely safe. Never again will Dumbledore have the chance to mess with Harry’s life.” Severus told him harshly, his possessiveness showing through.

“I meant nothing by it,” lied Remus, feeling decidedly uncomfortable. He felt like defending Sirius, on the other hand it was true; Lucius Malfoy was one of the most influential wizards in the magical world at the moment. He could outmanoeuvre Dumbledore and come out the winner, if there was someone he wanted on his side, it would be him. His only problem was he knew the wizard was a Death Eater, and would go crawling back if Voldemort came back. A niggling feeling bothered him…would Severus do the same thing? NO they were both trying to prevent his return, denying and defying Voldemort every time they destroyed a piece of his soul…he would just have to trust him. He would be a part of Harry’s life always, and if he wanted to have a part as well as Sirius they’d just have to swallow their pride and go along for the ride.

Lucius and Severus shared a look, they could sense Lupin wasn’t being entirely truthful about ‘not meaning anything by it’ and if it continued much longer they wouldn’t allow him near Harry. They couldn’t risk Lupin going to Dumbledore out of distrust; just because he couldn’t break the vow it didn’t mean there wasn’t ways to betray someone within the bounds of the vow. Nodding grimy, Severus let Lucius know he would keep an eye on the situation.

“Is it even safe to go in there?” asked Remus, gazing at the unsafe structure, “Did you notice all the snakes? Someone obviously had a fascination with them.”

“Slytherin descendants,” said Lucius, opening the gate, approaching the ramshackle building, if it could be called a building. Crossing over the wards that prevented Muggles from coming nearby, thankfully whoever built Hogwarts was much better than this since they were feeble at best. A stubborn Muggle might actually have a chance of walking through them; they were so weak and fragmented. He was right though; there were snake carvings, drawings, ornaments, knockers all decorated with them. A long time ago they may have been considered awe-inspiring but not anymore, they were black, disgusting and filthy. Worn down by age and the weather, why they bothered keeping such a filthy place standing he didn’t know. The Gaunt family were dead; they should demolish it and build something better, grander in its place. Perhaps it was time for the wizarding society to have its own social services and orphanages, although he didn’t like the term ‘orphanage’ not all children that ended up in care were actually orphans. Children’s home sounded much more appealing, perhaps it was time he put forth a suggestion to the Wizengamot. It wouldn’t be hard to make it sound as though he was doing it for selfish or perhaps selfless reasons. Narcissa hadn’t been able to have another child, and she desperately wanted a little girl, with their own community they would be able to adopt a magical child.

“Lucius?” stated Severus standing in the open doorway, giving his friend a deep penetrating look, it wasn’t often he became so lost in thought.

“My apologies,” replied Lucius smoothly, stepping into the house, avoiding his friends probing look.

“What are you up to Lucius?” asked Severus, cautiously; normally such a look was never good for anyone involved.
Lucius smirked as he answered the Potions Master, “Nothing that concerns you, Severus, do not worry.”

Severus merely made a disgruntled sound before his face became serious; they were in a property owned by Slytherins, quite literally not just a house at Hogwarts. They would need to be on their guard here, both of them had their wands out, Lupin however seemed perfectly content to walk around without caution. Much to their surprise, as they felt around the rooms, casting spells to detect anything they didn’t find a single spell.

“Either there’s something here that he doesn’t want anyone becoming suspicious about to put unnecessary wards on the…shack,” said Severus, settling on the one thing that could really describe the property. “Or we have been unlucky this time around.” he doubted that was true, but doubt or not it was a possibility.

“There’s something here, something dark and dangerous,” Remus said, they hadn’t been unlucky at all. If anything those two wizards would know best of all, at the end of the day they had been Death Eaters, close to Voldemort. Close enough to make a good guess on what he would and could do. “I can sense it.”

“That’s the problem, I expected more they’re Slytherins after all.” said Severus, cautious and suspicious.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if the Aurors took everything out when they arrested both Gaunts, it’s my understanding that the Dark Lord’s mother had long ago abandoned them for better pastures.” commented Lucius.

“True,” conceded Severus, “Evidently they have missed something…”

“Or it was put there afterwards.” finished Lucius.

Remus just watched them feeling extremely odd, seeing Lucius Malfoy so open and acting…well friendly wasn’t something he thought he’d ever see. Not that he’d been around many Wizards or Witches come to that, he’d been secluded, depressed and hurting even four years on since it happened. He’d been barely able to get through their funeral, and avoided the pity that everyone displayed as much as possible. It had been better that way; Remus’ wolf had been quite vicious which meant his temper wasn’t exactly controllable. Now he was having to pay for his cowardice, the memories were too much for him…how could he face each day knowing what Harry had been through and that he could have stopped it? All he would have had to do was see him, he would have sensed the blood, would have taken him straight to the ministry to tell them. Even if it did mean revealing his fury little problem, he wouldn’t have cared a sod other than keeping Harry safe.

“There’s also the option that the thing is in the Ministry archives where it would be stored with all other ‘dark arts’ right?” suggested Remus.

“Possible but not probable.” mused Severus.

“He was sixteen I think when he first came here, killed his grandparents and father, or rather Riddle Mansion first then cursed his Uncle into believing he had done it.” said Lucius, “I would like to think he started off with the diary, and that’s been destroyed already. So he would have had to be older but this is all speculation, everything thing.”

“How do you know he cursed his Uncle?” asked Remus, interestedly.

“Auror reports, when he was brought in he was groggy, confused but confessing to killing the
Riddles. If the wizard hadn’t already previously had a run in with the Riddles they would have looked deeper into the confusion but they didn’t,” replied Lucius coolly.

“If they had, Voldemort would have been stopped a long time ago,” snapped Remus bitterly. He didn’t like the Ministry, how could he after all they wanted him and his kind placed on a registry as if they weren’t human.

“I doubt it, I don’t know if you’ve noticed but he doesn’t care much for the law even with the entire law enforcement after him.” Lucius said dryly, finding Lupin’s statement amusing. As if he would have ever been found, he’d have just gone underground and then come out as the Dark Lord. “Do you think it was different when he was younger? If anything he was more dangerous.” Remus had no reply to that.

Seeing as the conversation had run dry, they began to search each room, it was a painstakingly slow process, especially since they didn’t want to miss anything. That and they had to wade through disgusting rusty what could only be pots, pans cauldrons and cutlery. Mouldy remains of food piled high with mould so much that the food was unrecognizable. They didn’t dare touch the fridge, it was truly disgusting.

“I thought you said he had two kids?” asked Remus as they went back into the hallway. There were only two rooms, if you could call them rooms, even his little flat was better than this place - everywhere was, actually.

“He did,” replied Lucius, his lip curled in repugnance this place wasn’t fit to remain standing.

“Not everyone can afford decent properties with significant room,” stated Severus sharply, he understood what it was like to live in poverty. His clothes had been second hand, but he at least had a stable roof over his head, a clean house and food to eat. It didn’t look like the Gaunts had, who knows how many generations of Gaunts had lived in poverty? In his opinion though, they shouldn’t have had children, if you couldn’t pay your way for them, then it should never be considered. Look at the Weasley’s, it was a disgrace. They couldn’t afford two children never mind the seven they had, Arthur Weasley had been irresponsible allowing it. Lucius and Lupin would never understand it, they came from pureblood lines, and admittedly the Malfoy’s had more money than Lupin.

“I know,” said Remus, backing down realizing he’d hit a nerve. He knew all too well, his father and spent the entire Lupin fortune trying to come up with a ‘cure’ for his Lycanthrope, that and moving constantly to avoid suspicion. He had only realized when his mother died just how much of it he used, there had only been enough for him to get a secluded flat in the Muggle world and necessities he’d need to live at least marginally comfortable. He didn’t have the resources to build it back up by taking on investments, every Galleon, Sickle or Knut he made went on food, warmth and clothes.

“We were obviously wrong,” said Lucius, changing the subject, he knew how agitated Severus got when people got nasty with those that couldn’t help their living situations…living in poverty. He made sure never to do it within his hearing ranges; the spells he used to get back at him were truly humiliating and annoying. “I was so sure we would find something here, but maybe it was just too obvious.”

“Too obvious is the best place to put it, nobody would be expecting it.” said Severus, forgetting earlier as he focused on the Horcruxes. They could only see thanks to the light from their wands, the area was completely blacked out. Even if it had been nearer light, none would have gotten in due to the trees surrounding the shack at all angles, making it impossible even in daylight.
“Accio Horcrux,” chanted Lucius, unsurprised when nothing came at him, he could hope though.

“Check under the floorboards,” said Severus suddenly, causing amber and silver eyes to gaze at him in confused curiosity.

“It is what I done as a child, anything I didn’t want my father finding…I would put under a loose floorboard in my room…in an orphanage I would imagine the same applies…perhaps it stayed with him. He may have perhaps thought nobody would think to look under, if I’m wrong at least we checked all angles.” Severus stated calmly, as if he hadn’t just revealed a piece of his past - which Severus never did. Lucius knew a lot, but Lupin…had never heard anything of the sort so Lucius was surprised to hear him talk about it with the Marauder there. Lucius gave Lupin an icy glare, warning him if he said anything, it would be the last thing he did. He wasn’t about to let them hurt Severus, never again.

Once again they split up; Remus refused to take the kitchen so began to remove the floorboards one at a time in the bedroom. The smell in here was rancid, it was worse than that it…there wasn’t a name for it in all honesty. With the full moon just gone, his nose was doubly sensitive. The kitchen was the worst, and as far as he was concerned the others could do it.

Remus was half way through his floorboards on the second bedroom when he heard Severus speak. “Found it.” he stated in his normal calm composed voice. He couldn’t have got up quick enough, returned the boards to their normal position, infinity glad he hadn’t seen any sign of…rodents.

“That’s a first, I would be extremely cautious,” warned Lucius, seeing the box that looked very out of place in this shack. Now that the floorboard was up he could feel the darkness emanating from it, no doubt Severus was feeling it worse. Sev had a curious infinity for sensing dark magic, much easier and better than him.

Severus nodded from where he was kneeling, not liking the fact he was vulnerable in front of two wizards kneeling on the floor. Quickly casting a spell to detect anything over the box and found it was clean, picking it up he gratefully stood up. Carefully he opened the box, and found inside the most abhorrent ring he’d ever seen in his life.

“There’s something familiar about that design.” said Remus thoughtfully, peering into the box the light gleaming off the murky looking stone.

“It should be its Grindelwald’s sign.” stated Lucius sharply.

Remus nodded remembering it now, thankfully the war with Grindelwald had been mostly abroad. Although the same couldn’t be said for Voldemort, which was a pity, but even he wasn’t callous enough to wish what happened here to somewhere else.

Severus would have loved nothing more than to just go home and deal with it there, instead of this place - it was falling apart and dangerous. He wasn’t about to let anything like this in his home where Harry was sleeping, the dark magic he could feel wasn’t the Horcrux - it was a curse and a quick spell confirmed it. The fact a tile from the roof chose that moment to fall but a few feet from him prompted him to actually leave the shack; the others followed him, confused when Severus picked up a stone - which wasn’t in short supply here right now.

“Nice,” commented Lucius smoothly, as he inspected the table transfigured from the stone. Which the box was placed upon. It reminded him of his work desk in the manor, tastefully done, and then again was there anything Severus didn’t do that wasn’t perfect? He was practically a prodigy, fantastic Potions Master, awesome and scary dueller, spell crafter/inventor yes his abilities did
seem endless. It didn’t stop him from making stupid mistakes like the rest of them, and becoming a Death Eater. Although there were many Death Eaters out there that didn’t regret it, even after becoming fathers. He had often wondered what would have become of Bellatrix if she’d had a child, could it have changed her for the better. Who knew? There really wasn’t any point to Ifs and buts. Narcissa had loved her sister, whether she was completely crazy or not, and he had to endure the endless conversation of what ifs and buts as well…she was obviously rubbing off on him.

“Well he made sure that any fool who found this wouldn’t have survived long after putting it on.” stated Severus, realizing exactly what spell the Dark Lord had put on it after inspecting it.

“What spell?” asked Lucius curiously.

“One that will kill you painfully and swiftly.” said Severus, before he began to mutter the counter curse, aware that Lucius would know what it was upon hearing him. When he heard a muted gasp he knew the wizard had figured it out, there is no counter curse once the spell takes hold, you could stop it for a while or as he liked to call it ‘put a stopper in death’ but it only delayed the inevitable.

“Wha-” started Remus but he was quickly silenced by the look of steel in Lucius’ eyes. Simply said to shut the fucking hell up or he would kill him.

Remus pursed his lips, he didn’t recognize the spell or the counter, and considering he’d read a lot he was undeniably curious about why they acted so…tensely he settled on, not able to think of another word that could be used.

“It is done,” said Severus, “So shall we do the world a favour and get rid of this eyesore and the ring?” he asked Lucius smirking deviously.

“Why, Severus, it’s the best suggestion anyone offered this monstrosity.” drawled Lucius, his silver eyes glimmering dangerously.

“What was the spell?” asked Remus, the Ravenclaw in him an answer.

“One that’s illegal, highly illegal at that, the Ministry has banned all books on the subject.” said Lucius, all of his books were in the family vault, at least the ones deemed ‘illegal’ by the Ministry of magic. After all he threw parties and such, it would just take one person to see one of the books and he would be getting raided for ‘dangerous artefacts’ he valued his freedom too much to be stupid about it. “I highly doubt you’d recognize the name even if we told you.”

“Fiendfyre!” muttered Severus, watching as the box as well as ring was consumed in the fiery spell.

The screaming started up, alerting them to the fact that yet another Horcrux had bit the dust.

“Wingardium Leviosa!” chanted Lucius once the ring stopped screeching, propelling it into the shack, which quite quickly began to catch on flames as well. There was absolutely nothing worthy of value in there, to even be concerned about. They all did take a step back when the side of the house abruptly crumbled, and with it the roof which obviously had no support left whatsoever.

Severus’ wand rose automatically shielding them both of the smoke and any debris that could potentially fly their way. The smoke and ash disappeared with another wave of his wand before they began to put the fire out by starving it of oxygen. They had found over the years that it worked better than trying to put the flames out with water, since fire spread so much more rapidly than water could land.

“It looks worse now,” said Remus offhandedly.
“It always looks worse before it gets better,” replied Severus, rolling his eyes and everything disappeared leaving just a foundation and very, very burnt grass that would grow again at some point.

“I have the perfect thing in mind,” said Lucius smugly, double middle finger to the Dark Lord so to speak.

“I knew you were up to something, what are you going to do?” Severus said in amusement.

“You’ll find out, sooner or later.” commented Lucius, he didn’t give up his plans until they come to completion. That way nobody could say he failed at anything, and Malfoy’s didn’t like to fail or lose when it mattered. A few exceptions were made, but not many.

“Will it piss off Dumbledore?” asked Remus vindictively.

“Actually…I have no idea,” mused Lucius, “But he’s distracted enough at the moment, he will be brought to trial soon I’m told. For pretty much the same reason as the woman from social services was, neglect, child endangerment, negligence of magical information, attempted murder, tampering with the magic of a minor, kidnap as he had no legal hold over Harry.”

“Attempted Murder?” screeched Remus, his face red as he panted in fury.

“He left Harry outside in the freezing cold November after midnight on a doorstep without a word to anyone in the house. He also left a letter about the magical world, what happened to Lily and James Potter. You do understand in the wrong hands the entire magical world could have been revealed? He left it in a basket along with Harry, and that was it unless he woke up crying he was there until the Muggles woke up.” his words were cold, unattached, but his eyes showed vengeance was in store.

“Remind me to send a bottle of the finest whiskey from Prince Cellar to your lawyer, Lucius.” said Severus deeply amused and impressed. It looked as if he was going above and beyond the call of duty, trying to get everything on Dumbledore that he could.

“That’s the only ones I’ve been told about, he’s trying to see if there are more, and believe me he will find it.” said Lucius wryly. “Heading back? I promised Draco I would read him ‘the Dragon’ series again,”

Severus snorted, “He should be able to read them himself now, the amount of times he’d had those books read to him.”

“I know, the years have gone by so fast, Severus, you better watch you will feel it too.” said Lucius, a bittersweet smile on his face. He so wanted to give Narcissa the little girl she longed for, the thought of a child that looked like him and Narcissa…if he thought he’d be protective of Draco well he would imagine it would be ten times worse for any girl he had. The Malfoy’s didn’t seem to have girls, there hadn’t been one in five generations, and that female had been a squib, she had remained on the family estate, hardly anyone knew about her existence. She had married into a noble Muggle family, very rich, a lifestyle she’d been used to. As far as he knew she hadn’t had any children, but he didn’t know the whole story, it got distorted as it passed down the family.

“Lucius I told you what to do, if you do it, it will work.” said Severus softly.

“Narcissa is too proud for that, Severus, plus she or I for that matter have never been in the Muggle world long…never mind for them to butcher us.” said Lucius shuddering.

“They aren’t butchers, they just don’t have the ability to heal wounds like we do,” said Severus
Remus had to suppress his merriment at their conversation, it was so very refreshing—being able to have a proper adult conversation. Even after Hogwarts James and Sirius hadn’t been interested in growing up, Sirius though seemed to have sobered, but four years of Azkaban would do that to anyone. He was still whining though, and he hoped with the calming draughts Severus suggested and had given him to take, would do the rest in helping him grow.

“Let’s go.” said Lucius, not wanting to discuss it further. He didn’t want his wife to feel the heartache that she couldn’t carry a child to term, while some Muggle out there could. It would be the ultimate humiliation and he couldn’t bear that for her. He would quite frankly prefer to adopt a Muggle child than put his wife through heartache, and it said a lot about how much he loved her. Three loud pops were heard, that sounded like backfiring cars but nobody was there, not even vermin or birds dared to venture here.

“I take it from the smell of you that you succeeded?” smiled Minerva, as the three men appeared before her.

“Did Harry wake up?” asked Severus, as always his care was first and foremost on his mind, its what made him the perfect father for Harry.

“No, all has been quiet,” answered Minerva still smiling.

“That’s another one gone, I think that’s the last of the places I can think of,” said Lucius, “Nothing else worthy of note is jumping out in all the information we have on the Dark Lord.”

“I still think its worth investigating at Hogwarts, it will take years maybe but definitely worth looking into.” said Severus.

“I have already begun the process, there have been a few items brought to my attention but no Horcruxes yet.” stated Minerva. “Although the Grey Lady did seem particularly agitated when I asked for her aid it’s very peculiar she’s always a quiet well spoken ghost.”

“Perhaps you should speak to her again, be frank with her, she might know something.” persuaded Severus, trusting Minerva’s instincts.

“If we do that, we risk Dumbledore finding out.” said Minerva.

“He won’t be a problem as of tomorrow; you will be called in to be temporary Headmistress until after trial permanent afterwards. He shouldn’t be able to weasel himself out of it, Merlin help us if he does.” admitted Lucius.

“Then tomorrow I’ll speak to her again,” agreed Minerva, “I shall return to Hogwarts tonight or very early tomorrow morning.”

“You just want to be there to see him arrested,” snorted Severus in sardonic amusement.

“I do,” Minerva, said haughtily her eyes narrowed, if she had been in her Animagus form, her claws would have been out fully.

“Is there anything I can do that will help take him down?” asked Remus.

“Unless you want him to get also arrested for letting a werewolf attend school where you could
have mauled hundreds of students…not really.” said Severus, raising his hands at Remus’ oncoming objections. “I am only saying you could have.”

“I really don’t want anyone knowing,” Remus told him bitterly, he hated his condition.

“Then no,” said Severus calmly.

“There is more than enough to see him in Azkaban,” said Lucius. “It’s his popularity and connections that concern me, but with it being Harry Potter I am sure that even his connections wouldn’t want to even go near for fear of them being implicated as well. We all know when Harry is older, he will have a lot of influence, more than I and Dumbledore could even dream off.”

Severus grimaced at the thought of all the sheep that would flock around, but he would raise Harry properly (hopefully) and he would know to make his own mind up. He wouldn’t allow anyone, not even himself to influence Harry. Although any time he wanted advice, Severus would gladly give it. He planned to raise Harry to be an independent young man, and he prayed he succeeded, failure wasn’t an option. He would do what Dumbledore had been so scared Harry would turn out to be, uncontrollable, un-mouldable, and unmovable, magically powerful and quite frankly…a force to be reckoned with.

“It’s a scary thought isn’t it? That the wee one sleeping up there will have enough political clout to do anything he wants.” said Minerva.

“It is,” said Severus.

“Yeah,” replied Remus.

“Raise them right and they will take the world by storm, a storm we probably need to bring us into a new age.” Lucius said, “Now if you’ll excuse me…I must get home to my son, who has demanded I read to him tonight…”

A scream had them all jumping out their seats, Severus bolted for the stairs, taking them two at a time to get to Harry.
Chapter 33

The Vow and its Consequences

Chapter 33

Curious Questions

Severus skidded to a halt outside Harry’s door before opening it, without too much force not wanting to scare Harry especially if he’d just been roused by a nightmare. He had been expecting this and worse for some time now, he was surprised it had taken so long if he was honest. He’d expected nightmares from the moment he was rescued, but Harry seemed quite a deep settled sleeper. Regaining his bearings, his face impassive, so not to scare Harry, he walked into the room. Harry was sitting up his entire body shaking as if he had the chills. Sitting himself next to Harry on the bed, facing him, he pressed his hand against that flushed skin, finding it not just sleep warm but abnormally warm. He had a fever, how could it have gotten so bad so quickly?

“Do you feel sick little one?” asked Severus, as Harry leaned in against his cold hands, he’d barely just gotten back before Harry had screamed. He was relieved he’d been here, Harry was getting used to Minerva, but enough to want her when he was sick.

“M’sorry,” slurred Harry, his green eyes glinting with fear.

Severus frowned again, how long had Harry been sick? This was too advanced for him just to have gotten this way in a few hours. Which meant Harry had been hiding it, he would have to come up with some suitable words for the child, make sure he understood it was wrong to hide his illnesses or sickness. He would get there with him, it would take time and that was all he had these days. He could only imagine why Harry was apologizing, no doubt the Dursley’s would have locked him away if he was sick.

“Sirius do not go in there.” Severus heard Minerva say, in a rare possessive move, she sounded sterner than he’d ever heard her before.

“How is he?” asked Sirius, entering the room, ignoring Minerva’s words altogether. The scream had made all the memories of the first few days in Azkaban come flashing back. Before his own had begun to mix in with everyone else’s.

Harry whimpered, his shaking becoming even more pronounced as he tried to get to the other side of the bed. Severus wouldn’t let him, he was sick enough without ending up falling on the cold floor. He was extremely irritated, why could the bloody man never do a single thing he was told. Harry didn’t like or trust him yet, so why must he continuously push the boundaries?

“Leave, and if I have to tell you again it will not be just out of the room.” threatened Severus, his voice deceptively soft, he did not want to scare Harry. Removing the covers causing Harry to begin shivering even more violently, he picked him up, placing a warming charm on his cloak he wrapped it around the sweat soaked child. He swiftly left the child’s room and took Harry to his bedroom, and through the bathroom.

“Can I get you anything, Severus?” enquired Minerva, her voice uncommonly soft, as it always was when near her godson.

“Ask the House-Elves to get the junior potions bag, and will you retrieve one of Harry’s onesies? His favourite is the bear one you got him and his purple dragon. Place everything on the bed I’ll be
back as soon as I have him cleaned up and settled.” said Severus, glad that he had brewed potions for children specifically. Harry loved that purple dragon, Lucius knew that and was smug about that little fact. Then again what child didn’t like dragons? Draco was absolutely fascinated by them, he had been named well…or perhaps it was because he was named after them that he was so spellbound.

“Of course,” said Minerva, moving at once to do as Severus asked. Once she was in Harry’s room she called for a House-Elf kindly asking them to retrieve their Master’s junior Potions kit. Thank Merlin Severus was such a meticulous man, since there would be no delay in getting Harry well again. Opening drawers at random, trying to find his nightwear, but thankfully there wasn’t many drawers and it didn’t take long to find his pyjamas. She noticed Severus must have bought more onesies, since there was more than just the ones she had bought. Her lips twitched, a panda, a tiger, a cow designed perhaps she should get someone magical to make a few. Perhaps a dragon one, since Harry seemed to adore them so much. She had connections to both the magical and Muggle clothing industry, well tartan industry, through her family. She doubted Harry would care for tartan so perhaps something new was in order to expand the business.

“Lady Minerva, here is the potions kit.” said the House-Elf handing it over, feeling bad for interrupting her thoughts but with little Master being ill he didn’t want to delay. The news always spread quickly amongst the House-Elves, since nobody paid much attention to them it was quite easy to be overlooked.

“Thank you, Flippy,” said Minerva taking the bag, the bear onesie clutched in her hand. She left Harry’s bedroom, before backtracking and plucked the soft cuddly dragon from the bed. She wasn’t surprised when she entered Severus’ bedroom that they were still in the bathroom, steam would open up Harry’s passages, if he was congested but she had no idea what was wrong, she would soon enough she imagined. Placing the requested items on the bed, she quietly left the room, and made her way back down the stairs and into the living room.

“Nightmare?” asked Lucius, the scream had brought back a lot of unpleasant memories from his youth, ones he didn’t like dwelling on at all.

“Brought on by a fever, he’s quite sick,” said Minerva, continuing her conversation despite the fact Sirius and Remus had came back in.

“He was perfectly fine earlier wasn’t he?” said Lucius genuinely surprised, Severus wouldn’t have come out if Harry had been sick. Even if it was something as simple as a cold. Not even if it was something as important as the Horcruxes, he knew that, he had known Severus for a very long time. Sometimes he knew Severus better than the wizard knew himself. Just like he knew that Severus was the perfect candidate to raise Harry without him being shadowed in the whole ‘Boy-Who-Lived’ business. Yes it was part of who Harry was, but it wasn’t all of him, and he shouldn’t be raised as a hero, but a normal young boy. To think Severus had worried he wouldn’t see Harry for looking at the ghost of his father? Perhaps if he’d been older, cheekier, but no, this was just a little boy, and nobody could possibly hate him.

“He seemed to be, I didn’t notice anything.” said Minerva, quite disappointed in herself, how could she have failed to notice Harry was sick? Unless it had come on very sudden, she found she would prefer it that way, than the thought she was failing as a godmother.

“He was fine, I didn’t sense any fever.” said Remus, sitting down putting his own two Knuts into the conversation.

“I have a question,” said Sirius, out of the blue, and much more intensely than he expected.
Three sets of eyes landed on him, making Sirius fidget slightly, after so long in Azkaban he was still getting used to talking and being taken seriously.

“Well? Contrary to popular belief, it’s impossible to read minds when one refuses to look at you.” sneered Lucius, unable to curb his natural habit when someone was wasting his time. “So why don’t you ask the question that’s so obviously plaguing your mind?”

“It’s about the Horcruxes, how will you know when they are all gone? I mean there’s no real way to stop him coming back is there?” said Sirius, his blue eyes showing his fears and worries.

“Actually we will know,” said Lucius arching an eyebrow unimpressed, this was supposed to be an Auror? He evidently didn’t use his brain often enough.

“How?” asked Sirius baffled, sitting forward as if to better hear what the blonde had to say.

“The mark,” admitted Lucius tersely. “When all the Horcruxes are destroyed, there will be nothing holding his ‘spirit’ to the earth, it will perish along with the last Horcrux leaving us free for good this time.”

“Are you sure about that?” asked Sirius thoughtfully.

“As sure as we can be about them, Black, since nobody has ever created so many of them.” replied Lucius, they were all in uncharted waters, all hoping for the best. Since Severus and himself had gone over every possible angle, and read all the books they could on the subject, which admittedly wasn’t much. They had come to this conclusion, and it was more than likely how it would go down. As soon as the final Horcrux was destroyed the Dark Lord’s soul would likely wither up and die, taking with him the Dark Marks adorning their pale flesh. Without the Horcruxes he would no longer be immortal, nothing anchoring the remains of his soul to earth.

“How many do you think there are?” asked Sirius.

“Honestly? I don’t know.” Lucius added bitterly.

Severus sat Harry in the warm water, his body was floppy and lethargic, and he wondered briefly what on earth was wrong. At least he was healed completely from what the Dursley’s had done, and his magical core patched up, so whatever he had, would clear up without a problem. A few months ago he wouldn’t have survived if he had ended up sick. He couldn’t believe Harry was apologizing for being sick, children normally complained and whined when they were ill. Easing his body down, Severus efficiently washed Harry’s hair, once the shampoo was rinsed out he lifted Harry from the bathwater and carried him through to his bedroom. Laying him out, he spelled Harry’s hair and skin dry, and getting him into his onesie.

Non-verbally he spelled back his covers, and placed Harry in the middle of the bed. Moving to the side, he grabbed the small blue bag, and opened it up. The vials were smaller than the usual ones; filled with potions for children, measured to the exact amount they were allowed. If he didn’t get better in a few days, he would ask Lucius to send his healer over; just to be sure it was nothing serious. Easing his hand around Harry’s small neck, he poured a Fever reducer and a dreamless sleeping draught down his throat. Harry was, it seemed, to be at least marginally aware enough to swallow them. Not that he remained so for long, as the sleeping draught had him drifting off into Morpheus’ arms.

Plucking the dragon from the end of his bed, he tucked it into Harry’s arms before throwing the covers over him. Tucking him tightly in, so he remained warm. The shivering had stopped, he
seemed very much at peace right now, and that could only be a good sign. Sighing softly in relief, he placed the potion kit in the desk drawer before reluctantly getting up and leaving the room. He couldn’t prevent his worry even if he tried, yet he knew he would be well again in a few days.

Severus stalked down the stairs, aware that the others were probably worried about Harry. His ears picked up on the talk of the Horcruxes, as he entered the sitting room, all talk ceased. “How is he?” asked Lucius, concerned.

“He’ll be fine, I’ve given him a fever reducing draught as well as something to help him sleep, hopefully that will take care of it.” stated Severus sitting down, “What got you talking about Horcruxes?” he enquired further.

“You heard?” asked Minerva completely surprised.

Severus threw her a smug smirk, of course he heard as a spy he’d learned to eavesdrop and listen when he could. It was a trait that had served him well, made sure his position had remained uncompromised especially for compartmentalised information he shouldn’t know about. It had also got him into trouble, he had overhead a prophecy, although he hadn’t exactly needed to listen since Trelawney’s voice had been hoarse and quite loud. It was something he wished he could take back with all of his being, unfortunately it wasn’t possible. He would just have to live with what he did, and he prayed Harry didn’t hate him when he was older for his actions that day. How was he supposed to know his report would cause the death of someone he held most dear? He hadn’t otherwise he wouldn’t have said a word; he would have Obliviated himself before allowing that to happen.

“Black wanted to know how we would be sure we had them all,” stated Lucius.

“Our speculation is that without immortality the Dark Lord wouldn’t be able to linger on the mortal plain.” said Severus immediately, “He would die and with it any magic he cast would die with him, most assuredly the Dark Mark at any rate. It all but faded when he was defeated, and it has steadily gotten thinner and lighter with each Horcrux that is destroyed.”

“Really?” Lucius muttered in surprised, his silver eyes wider than normal - that was news to him. Then again he didn’t like looking at it any more than he had to. It was a mistake he had regretted deeply, especially when he became a father, he didn’t think he could feel any different if his son was a squib. Draco was Draco, his son, his flesh and blood, although he was extremely happy that he was a wizard. Although he couldn’t quite say that for sure, since Draco was a wizard and not a squib. It was easier to say one thing than live it.

“Yes,” replied Severus wryly.

“Do you think Harry is ready to meet a child his own age?” enquired Lucius, from where he was perched on the chair.

“Bring Draco at the weekend, and we will find out.” said Severus. “If it doesn’t go well then we will leave it for another month at least.”

“Draco is extremely excited, he told me that he would help make ‘Harry all better’ it was rather amusing.” said Lucius, his lips twitching a fond look crossing his face. There could be no denying that Lucius Malfoy loved his son.

“How is Narcissa?” asked Sirius, she’d always been his second favourite cousin, his first definitely had to be Andromeda, even as children he hadn’t been able to stand Bellatrix. Well that was a lie, she had been alright then they were both three or four years old, it was only as they grew older did
they realize there was a screw missing somewhere in her head. The adults has as well, and kept her from the public, all the while drawing up contracts to have her married off to someone who could ‘control’ her as he’d overheard. They had chosen another respected pureblood, by their definition someone dark and appreciating of the Dark Arts. Thus that was how she’d came to be betrothed to Lestrange, Narcissa to Malfoy and Andy had refused a contract, and her parents had decided to let her choose. Not that they liked who she had chosen in the end, and stuck her from the family tree. His parents hadn’t set up prospective marriages, it was the only decent thing they’d done.

“She’s very well,” Lucius replied, “At a loose end now with Draco being tutored during the day.”

Severus smiled almost sadly, he put it all too well without revealing anything. Without someone to baby all day she was dwelling on the fact she couldn’t have another child more often. Unfortunately Lucius wouldn’t take his advice; the unknown was quite frankly terrifying for the proud purebloods. Muggle Doctors he was afraid was considered very unknown, they wouldn’t consider it despite the fact it would get them what they dearly wished for. Perhaps he should try and come up with a spell equivalent and try it out, see what happened or a potion - it wouldn’t be a quick one either. This project would take a great deal of time, since he didn’t have much it may take longer.

Sirius nodded, not sure what else to say, feeling extremely awkward now.

“How do you think Harry will react to another child?” wondered Minerva.

“Not very well I’d imagine, the only other children he was around seemed to think it was alright to beat him.” scowled Severus, just remembering the first time he’d glimpsed Harry. The poor child had been curled up in a ball, trying to fend off the blows, protect himself the best he was able with them being so much stronger than him. It would take a while for Harry to get used to Draco, that much he was positive about, he couldn’t keep Harry completely secluded. Otherwise it would make everything much harder for him, but he would be letting Harry know about Draco and that he wouldn’t hurt him.

“I just wished I had gone to see him, even just once to check on him.” confessed Minerva, filled with deep bone aching regret.

“Don’t we all?” muttered Severus darkly.

“What would Albus have done if the worst had happened?” Minerva spat bitterly. Merlin she hated the old fool, it took her every ounce of her composure to stop herself going after him. To make him feel even an ounce of what Harry had gone through for four years, and then let him see how if felt to live without his magic. “Do you think he wanted Harry to die there?”

“No, if he wanted Harry dead…he would have ensured he did that night it happened, blamed it on the Dark Lord insisting nobody had survived him.” replied Lucius.

“He couldn’t have even if he wanted to, I saw him right after the attack,” Sirius pointed out.

“At that point your fate was sealed.” snorted Severus, “He’s right, Dumbledore had no intentions of letting Harry die, the fact he did just means he miscalculated in his mind not mine.” he added solely for Minerva who had opened her mouth to protest heavily.

Sirius shuddered; he didn’t even want to listen to what they were saying.

“I think we can all safely say we are grateful to you,” said Remus, the words in the pensive ringing around his mind. Two weeks was how long Harry would have survived without intervention. If
Severus hadn’t come across him…Harry would already be dead, and that just left him feeling as though a ghost was continuously driven through him. To be honest, given the state Harry had been in, two weeks was probably not entirely accurate, it made him sick. Thank Merlin it was just a pensive memory, if he’d actually seen Harry that way…he definitely wouldn’t have been able to control his stomach. Or the contents that would have rapidly make a reappearance.

“I didn’t do it for you,” said Severus, not being cold about it but nonetheless truthful. Lucius let out a small huff of laughter, and Minerva had to quickly suppress the smile - it was nice to see some things just didn’t change.

Remus grinned bemused; he’d had a funny feeling the reply would be something like that.

“Speaking of sons, I really must depart, otherwise I will have a very unhappy son in the morning,” said Lucius dryly, and that’s exactly what Severus was a father, to a son.

“I’ll see you at the weekend then,” answered Severus, watching Lucius stand and make his way towards the fireplace.

“You most assuredly will,” replied Lucius. “I’ll Floo sometime tomorrow to see how he is.” Severus nodded grimly.

6 AM - The Wizengamot Meeting

Lucius sat stiffly in his chair, facing the crowd of Wizards and Witches, all Wizengamot members. Since there was no court in session, they didn’t have on those hideous plum robes. He Wizengamot was higher up than the Minister, all ideas went through these people and either agreed or disagreed with. Most of them were really old, with grandchildren or great-grandkids attending Hogwarts. He was probably by far the youngest one here. The fact Dumbledore was still there, told Lucius that the Department of Law enforcement hadn’t acted yet, and he wondered briefly if they were delaying it. He obviously hadn’t been told yet, otherwise he wouldn’t be at this meeting, and he would be making sure nothing could touch him. With so many connections, he was very surprised nobody had told him, but it was being kept very quiet.

“Are there any new motions anyone wishes to put forward…if not I suggest…” asked Albus Dumbledore, chief warlock of the Wizengamot. His eyes twinkling brightly, as he looked around at the seated members. His eyes bypassing certain members he did not like at all, those more inclined towards the Dark Arts, he wasn’t too obvious about it but letting the people know he thought they were insignificant at the same time.

“If I may, I do have a proposal I would very much like to see pushed forth.” interrupted Lucius silkily, after reading to his son he had stayed up for hours drawing up rough drafts to present to them. Not spending too much time on it, just in case they dismissed it entirely. If they did, he would wait a while, bribe a few pockets and put it forth again. He wasn’t a wizard who liked the word denied or no being thrown his way.

“All right, let’s hear it.”

“One of my proposals is to build a home for children who have lost their parents, or the parents have been found to be…lacking parental instincts.” suggested/demanded Lucius, his lip curling at the thought. “With it create a department in the Ministry that deals with it, all magical children should know about their world.”
orphanages and brought here. There are potions that would give them attributes of their adoptive parents; it will help the dying bloodlines as well. I know of several witches who cannot have children of their own and I think they would be willing to contribute to the endeavour along with my own input.”

“It looks like you’ve really thought this through,” said Cornelius looking through the pages that had been provided for them to read. Copied of course, and passed along the table, allowing fifty of the Wizengamot to read what Lucius had proposed.

“I did,” confirmed Lucius smoothly. “I am prepared to continue this venture turning it private if the Wizengamot and Ministry are unwilling,” which would mean more money donated elsewhere instead of at the Ministry, something they wouldn’t be able to conceive. He knew what to say to get them to agree to whatever he was doing.

“There is no need for that,” said Cornelius immediately, money signs flashing across his face. “I’m sure everyone here would like to look at the proposal properly and give an answer without being hasty.”

“I personally think the idea isn’t a very good one,” said Albus, speaking up. What was Lucius Malfoy up to? There had to be a reason for this, he didn’t do anything out of the goodness of his heart. Was he actually hoping Harry would end up in the orphanage so he could adopt him? Well he was in for a shock if he ever thought he would let that happen, never in a million years would he let Harry within touching distance of Lucius Malfoy. He refused to believe the boy was dead, not even for a second, he would show up sooner or later - he had a destiny to complete after all. “So many magical children in one area is a bad move, it would get the Muggles in the area suspicious. There is nowhere it could go in the magical districts.”

“The area I have in mind is perfectly secluded.” stated Lucius, arching an eyebrow. He had been unsure how Dumbledore would respond to his proposal. On one hand he thought perhaps he would be furious that it had been him to propose it, or be furious with the idea on a whole since it was mostly Muggle-Borns that seemed to adore the ground he walked on. If they were in the magical world for years before Hogwarts, there would be less fawning at the fact he was who he said he was. Not that Dumbledore would be around then of course, he would get the last laugh.
Chapter 34

The Vow and it’s Consequences

Chapter 34

Meetings Interrupted

“And where exactly is that?” asked Dumbledore, finding it very difficult to keep the consternation and sarcasm from his voice. Just what was Lucius Malfoy up to? What could he possibly get by opening up an orphanage? Could this really be all about getting his hands on Harry for the Master he probably hopes would be brought back to him? It seemed such an elaborate set up, even for him, with just a small possibility for success. The thought of Lucius feeling guilty and repenting for his crimes being the reason behind his sudden desire to build an orphanage was extremely hilarious. It almost had him laughing out loud in the middle of a serious Wizengamot meeting, something that would see him carted away to St. Mungo’s.

“The area I have suggested is on the last page, a map to be exact, it is a quite a big dense area just outside Little Hangleton. A few charms and the Muggles are none the wiser, and it’s a safe place for children to grow up with abundance of space in which to play.” said Lucius smoothly. The look on Dumbledore’s face was absolutely hilarious; he had paled so much he looked seconds from being sick.

“Where is this other place?” enquired Cornelius, noticing two circled areas, he did not have his glasses, which was too bad. He was genuinely curious about this new venture of Lucius’ and even more curious to know what had gotten into the wizard and why he wanted to do this. It wasn’t completely out of character for Lucius to suggest things, but an orphanage? It was definitely a new one.

“Hogsmeade, I thought perhaps we could tear down the so called Shrieking shack, which is just an eyesore, and have a property built there for a children’s home. They would be able to visit Hogsmeade it would prevent them being bored, they will be near Hogwarts as well an added bonus. This area would ensure their complete safety, but the area in Little Hangleton is more expansive.” replied Lucius. Dumbledore was still staring dumbly, unable to believe his eyes or ears.

“It would certainly bolster the place up a bit, Hogsmeade I mean,” said one the Wizengamot members, reading slowly through the paperwork Lucius had brought before them.

“It would,” agreed Lucius, “I will draw up all the plans myself, I would rather know if it has a chance to be approved before I put one hundred percent into the planning.”

“This place in Little Hangleton is it not already spoken for? Most areas of land belong to someone.” said Dumbledore, trying to regain his composure. What he hell? Why would Lucius plan to put an orphanage where the Gaunt Shack resided? It made no logical sense at all.

“It used to belong to the Gaunt family, but the family line has died, like many of us because we are too proud. I procured the land from Gringotts, they had been trying to sell it for a few years I believe.” said Lucius, suppressing the smirk at Dumbledore’s current wide eyed fear. He had bought the land from Gringotts, Tom Marvolo Riddle; the last descendant of the Gaunt line was dead.
“B-b-but the shack,” murmured Albus, agog, unable to believe this was happening; Lucius Malfoy was messing with his carefully laid plans without realizing it. Unless…he knew, had he removed the ring? Fear drowsed him in perspiration; it didn’t help the robes he wore were thick and bulky, hiding his skinny frame from view. If Lucius knew about the Horcruxes then he was a danger, one that had just proved to be too much trouble. He would need to see about getting one of his connections to find someone desperate enough for money to kill Lucius Malfoy in an open and shut case.

“Shack?” questioned Lucius, a confused look appearing on his face, “The land is empty of any huts or such, perfect prime condition to begin building before the weather gets too cold.” said Lucius brushing off in a manner someone would of something completely inconsequential.

“Albus are you alright?” called Amelia, feeling and seeing the shudders going through the elder wizard.

“I’ll be fine, Amelia, just a little nip in the air,” said Albus, smiling at her in thanks, none of the strain showing, he had been leading these people for years, pulling strings from he shadows - he knew how to play the game. Nothing would make his masks crack; he had perfected them before he was even at Hogwarts.

Amelia nodded in understanding, she herself found the room to be rather warm, thanks to the charms the others had cast. It was usually cold, hence the big cloaks they usually wore during court hours. If it was warm it gave the prisoners the wrong impression, so it was always cold and critical. She knew it wasn’t just a nip in the air, she wasn’t stupid, but she couldn’t act out, not before it happened.

“I think we can all agree that Lucius’ proposal so far would be doable,” said Cornelius, nodding firmly. “What say you all?”

“Agreed,” murmured the majority of the Wizards and Witches, having absolutely no reason not to agree.

“Then I will have a more laid out plan for your inspection next meeting.” said Lucius firmly, meeting Albus’ eyes before he allowed himself a small smirk. Oh the old fool had no idea, that after all these years; he’d finally got enough to arrest him. Nobody hurt his godson and got away with it, he might not be his godfather from birth, but he would be damned if that mattered. He honestly couldn’t wait until this weekend; he desperately wanted to see how Draco would take to Harry, and how Harry would take to Draco. Both were unknown factors, although Draco slightly more predictable than Harry was. They weren’t sure how Harry would react to having someone his own age in the manor. Thankfully Draco understood that Harry might not play with him the first time he visited, or the second, they would need to wait and see how he was.

The silence stretched uncomfortably, all of them giving Albus a sidelong glance.

“Albus?” said Cornelius; he was the one that concluded the meeting after all.

“Any other motions?” Albus said professionally, sighing in relief when it remained quiet he had enough to process without adding more useless patter. He had to go to Little Hangleton; he had to find out if Lucius was winding him up, or if something had gone painfully wrong with his best laid plans.

“Then I call this meeting to be adjourned!” said Dumbledore, without giving his customary tinkle of the little firework he liked to let out after each meeting. Something that the others inwardly rolled their eyes at; on the outside they indulged the eccentric old wizard. He had done a lot for the
magical world, and he was powerful — they’d hate to be on the wrong side of him. What they never
counted on, or ever thought about was him being on the wrong side of the law of all things.

“That it is,” said Head-Auror Scrimgeour, entering the room, his customary limp less prominent as
he walked slowly. He hand his wand out, gazing at Dumbledore in distaste. He hadn’t been able to
believe the results that had been handed in to him, when Lucius Malfoy’s lawyer had placed the
mountain of undeniable paperwork in front of him. He had double checked everything, interviewed
every witness, suspect to find it was truthful, every single bit of it. The only things he couldn’t
deny were the pensive testimonies/memories and the scans and letters from Gringotts. You
couldn’t fake Gringotts signature, it was literally impossible, no means on the earth could do it.
Gringotts had ensured that nothing could be faked, certainly not willing to risk their clients. He’d
had to swallow the bitter pill that a wizard who he admired, was one of the worst criminals he’d
ever heard of other than the Dark Wizard Voldemort. Then proceeded to turn to the only other
person he felt he could trust it was a good thing he did, since he would have had to form her. She
was the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and he needed her aid when it came
to this.

The fact she’d successfully sat next to Dumbledore for the past few hours at a meeting, without
letting on that something was up, or that she was disgusted by his mere presence. He had to hand it
to her for a job well done, he didn’t know in all honesty, if he could have done the same thing
without strangling the old man.

“Rufus,” said Albus, standing up,
taking charge as he always did, “What is going on?” had Lucius
Malfoy finally done something wrong and been seen doing it? No, Lucius was too smart for that,
but Rufus did look as though he was there on official business. Everyone else had stood up too,
tense, waiting, anticipating, salivating over a good show. Oh they would get one alright, one they
had never dreamt about in their wildest imagination. Well those that actually liked Dumbledore,
the ones drawn to the Dark Arts that Dumbledore so reviled would find the entire thing amusing.

“Albus Dumbledore, you are under arrest. You do not have to say anything but it may harm your
defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in eyes of the
Wizengamot. Anything you do say will be giving as evidence, do you understand?” said
Scrimgeour, aware of Amelia moving towards him, then standing at his side. He ignored the gasps
of dismay and the whispering that spread around like angry bees.

“Me?” cried Albus in surprise, Scrimgeour wasn’t even half way through his speech, and he merely
continued ignoring him as if he hadn’t spoken.

“Do you want someone to represent you?” asked Scrimgeour, such things as Lawyers and having
someone in with you when you face the Wizengamot was a new thing. Some of the older
generation of Pureblood’s didn’t like it, why should they be allowed representation when friends
and family before them had to face it alone? It kept up in that manner, continuously, getting them
nowhere. Now it was an option they were offered, the likes of Lucius Malfoy had a full time
lawyer to represent him. Not just on legal matters but ensured the expansion of the Malfoy fortune
(and incidentally their own).

“What are the charges?” demanded Albus, hyperly aware of each and every eye trained directly on
him; it made his skin prickle irritatingly. He paid no attention to the hushed whispering; they had
nothing on him so this was all speculation.

“Arrest him,” snapped Scrimgeour not allowing Albus to waste time and try to wiggle his way out.
It was why he’d waited until this meeting to draw the wizard out. He had less chance of escaping
custody if he was already in the Ministry of magic.
“Expelliarmus,” Lucius said smoothly, disarming the wizard and taking his wand, inhaling sharply as the wand accepted him, spitting out sparks as one normally did upon accepting a wizard. “Here,” he said to Scrimgeour.

“The wand has accepted you, we cannot take it,” said Madam Bones, “By rights of conquest.” It would no longer work for Albus Dumbledore, its allegiance had changed.

“NO! ITS MINE, I WON IT, I BET HIM FOR IT.” struggled Albus Dumbledore through the magical bindings, which Scrimgeour had placed on him before the third word was out of his mouth, trying desperately to reach for his wand. For all the good that it did him, all that happened was the bindings tightened against his chest painfully. “MINE!” growled Dumbledore, before it cut off abruptly as he was stunned.

“What just happened?” murmured Doge, stunned. “You can’t do this, what evidence do you have?”

“You know the rules of the law as well as we do, be assured we wouldn’t have arrested him if we didn’t have plenty of proof.” said Madam Bones, her tone professional and cold. Doge had always had his head stuck up Dumbledore’s backside, agreeing with every single little thing that came out of his mouth. No, they had all the proof they needed to send him straight to Azkaban but by law he was entitled to representation and a fair hearing. Something she would never deny anyone, innocent or guilty, she was fair and always would be.

Scrimgeour looked at Dumbledore’s unconscious form, wanting nothing more than to kill the old fool for his actions. Unfortunately society dictated that they treat criminals better than they treated their victims, not to stoop to their level, for once in his life he wished he wasn’t ‘civilised’ so he could just wash the magical world’s hands of Dumbledore and his actions. Which would sour the mouths of every single man, woman and child. When this got out, the world would rage for Dumbledore’s blood, he had harmed not only a child, a wizard, one of their own…but their hero, Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived. A child who had suffered loss so young, but had a mother whose willingness to die for him had brought the most evil Dark Lord they’d ever known down, brought them all peace. It had sickened him to the core the night and morning after it happened, the celebrations turned his stomach, fifteen people dead, twelve Muggles three magical people, and they were out partying.

“I will be Albus’ representation,” Doge told them, determined to help his old friend, who he was sure was being set up. Albus only wanted what was best for the wizarding world. He had faced Voldemort multiple times trying to make the world safe, setting up an organization to aid with it - no he was sure whatever it was it would blow over and they would see.

“Very well,” said Scrimgeour, barely concealing his disgust.

Amelia flicked her wand and conjured a stretcher; placing Dumbledore’s stunned form onto it and with that, the Head-Auror and the other Aurors who had come with him disappeared along with Amelia leaving behind a shocked courtroom.

“What do you think he did?” was whispered by many voices, before they shook their heads at a loss.

“It’s going to be an interesting trial…”

“True.”

Lucius stared down at the wand, it was an odd one, you didn’t find many wands like this, but there
was something wrong with the wand. It acted as though it had accepted him, but he didn’t feel the pull from his magical core. What was it trying to tell him? He wondered as he absent­ly left the courtroom, what he did know was this wand wasn’t meant for him. It didn’t feel special, he hadn’t felt the same pull he had when he chose his wand at Ollivander’s when he was eleven years old. Slipping it into his cloak pocket, perhaps Severus would know more than him. If that failed he could have a talk with Ollivander, if anyone knew, it had to be him after all he was the wand-crafter.

News of Dumbledore’s arrest was already spreading like wild fire around the Ministry, he realized as people were gossiping about it as he left. Which he did as soon as he hit the atrium and left using the Floo System, Minerva would be disappointed that she hadn’t got to see Dumbledore’s arrest after going to Hogwarts last night.

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Deputy Headmistress Minerva McGonagall, Transfiguration office, Hogwarts.

“Ah, Nick can you ask the Grey Lady to meet me in my office immediately?” asked Minerva, as she stalked through the halls of Hogwarts, heading straight for her office.

“I’ll see what I can do,” said Nearly Headless Nick, dipping his head before he flew through the ceiling, looking for the Grey Lady.

Entering her office, Minerva prayed that the ghost wouldn’t be stubborn. As a student the Grey Lady had seemed very timid to her, and never spoke to any of them. She only realized early in her career that she spoke to Filius and the Ravenclaw students, she didn’t care for the rest of the school. Rubbing her tired eyes, she refrained from Floo calling Severus and asking how Harry was, both of them were probably still asleep, it was very early. So early she’d had to go to the kitchens for a cup of coffee and some nibbles to eat. A House-Elf had kindly offered to bring it up for her, and it was here, sitting in the middle of her desk.

“You asked to see me?” asked Helena, watching Minerva jump and the cup to clatter loudly in her hand, as she’d just picked the cup and saucer up to take a drink.

“Yes, yes I do.” said Minerva, staring at the ghost curiously. Wondering if she should have a more…Severus/Slytherin approach to this, maybe mixed with some Gryffindor sensibility mixed in. “You care about the school don’t you? And the students with her? EVERY student isn’t that so?”

“Of course I do,” she protested at the thought. She had been one of the first students to ever grace her halls! The only place she’d ever lived longer than a few months after she’d ran away from these halls with her mother’s diadem. It was the reason she had come back, the unfinished business she had…holding her here, preventing her from seeing her mother and apologising for her…despicable actions. This was her penance for what she’d done.

“You would do anything for them?” enquired Minerva.

“Yes,” she said, gazing at Minerva suspiciously.

“This is a picture of my godson, he’s five years old, he lost his parents during the war, and with it their death brought peace to the magical world…there is something that threatens that peace. Harry was abused by his previous caretakers…he nearly died, and would have if it wasn’t for a professor at this school intervening. I will do anything, and I mean anything to prevent Harry’s safety from being endangered again.” said Minerva, showing a picture of Harry sleeping comfortably on the couch, in Prince Manor, looking very peaceful. “Voldemort is not dead; he created Horcruxes to
prevent himself dying. I know you know something and if you think that just because you are dead I cannot make your afterlife a living hell… you would be wrong. There is nowhere you can go that I will not find you, tell me what it is that you know.” she didn’t like being this way with the Grey Lady, but she was being honest, she would do anything for Harry after failing him so badly before.

“I don’t know anything,” shouted Helena angrily, she always got angry when she thought about how her mother’s precious diadem was ruined.

“Very well, I hope you remember this conversation when Hogwarts lies in ruins, and Voldemort is taking over. If you think for a second I will allow Harry to remain in this country while he lives, you have another thing coming. Here’s a piece of information that isn’t widely known, Harry was prophesied to be the only one that can defeat him. If we do not get rid of the Horcruxes before he is brought back, Harry leaves, lives his life in comfort and we forget about the magical world here. I doubt Voldemort will much care for the school, or its inhabitants. Remember that you and you alone are responsible for everything that happens from here on in.” snapped Minerva, infuriated that the ghost wasn’t just telling her what she needed to know. She wouldn’t have gotten so defensive and angry when she was questioning her the first time around if she didn’t know anything.

“How dare you?!” hissed Helena, her face scrunched up in a mask of disgust and anger.

“You aren’t the first one to covet the diadem. Generations of students have badgered me about it!” said Helena, her tone bitter. It was why she didn’t speak to anyone other than Ravenclaws and if they asked…she simply stopped speaking to them too.

“I am not interested in the legend about untold power, I want to defeat Voldemort - aren’t you the slightest bit interested in that?” stated Minerva grimly.

“You aren’t interested in the legend about untold power, I want to defeat Voldemort - aren’t you the slightest bit interested in that?” asked Minerva.

“I stole the Diadem from my mother,” snapped Helena.

Minerva blinked in surprise, but refrained from commenting, just wishing for the ghost to continue while she was feeling…talkative.

“I stole it in an attempt to make myself cleverer, more important than my mother. I ran away with it, my mother they say, never admitted that the diadem was gone, but pretended she still had it. She concealed her loss, my dreadful betrayal, even from the other founders of Hogwarts. Then my mother fell ill, gravely ill, in spite of my perfidy, she was desperate to see me one last time. She sent a man, who had always loved me, though I always turned down his advances, she wanted him to find me, knowing he would never relent until he did. He found me, but I would not return to Hogwarts, I hid the Diadem in the forest of Albania, where I was killed for spurning his advances for the last time.” Helena said her tone no longer angry but filled with sadness and desperation. As if she wanted someone to understand her plight and take pity on her.

“You told Tom Riddle about this, didn’t you?” enquired Minerva.

“I had no idea… he was very charming, persuasive and he seemed to understand…” Helena said remorsefully, as she continued to float in midair.
“Yes, I can understand that, he could be very charming when he wanted to be,” agreed Minerva, wholeheartedly. She had gone to school with Tom Riddle, smart, charming, devious, the epitome of a perfect Slytherin, but it wasn’t enough for him. He wanted absolute power, nothing less was enough.

“Will it need destroyed?” asked Helena, she didn’t want to see it destroyed but if it was the only way to get rid of the defilement of Dark Magic.

“There is no other way, it isn’t just the Diadem either…but Helga’s cup, Salazar’s locket… heirlooms that should have been with the families or in Hogwarts itself, such a horrific waste.” murmured Minerva, truly devastated by the fact priceless items had been destroyed because of one man’s greed. Although they hadn’t located Slytherin Locket yet but that time would come, they had no choice, they could not have Voldemort coming back from the dead and hurting Harry.

The horrified look on the Ravenclaw (in more ways than one) said she too was shocked to the core by the loss as well. She had grown up surrounded by Godric, Salazar and Helga, as well as her mother; she’d seen how proud they were of their heirlooms. Items they wanted to be handed down by the family so they remembered their birthright even if the name changed. Thank Merlin they weren’t around to see this, for they would have been inconsolable with loss. All these years they’d survived only to be destroyed because of one man’s quest for immortality.

“Where is it?” asked Minerva, drinking down her nearly cold cup of coffee, thankfully it wasn’t completely cold or she wouldn’t have been able to drink it. “In Albania still?”

“He brought it back here, when he tried to take up the position as Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, when he was told no, he cursed the position.” revealed Helena, surprising the Gryffindor Head of House, if the look of astonishment was anything to go by.

“Back here? So it is in Hogwarts!” said Minerva, “Do you have any idea of its exact location?”

“It’s in the come and go room, lost items.” said Helena, before she floated through the floor and away from Minerva, wishing for seclusion.

Minerva wasted no time in getting up from her seat, before hastily heading to the door and out into the corridor. In mid step she leapt into her Animagus form, since she would be much quicker and find it a lot easier to make her way up six flights of stairs. None of the staircases changed on her, for that she was eternally grateful. Turning left, she stopped in front of a tapestry and transformed back, adjusting her glasses as she grew accustomed to standing on two feet again.

 ‘I need to get into the room of lost items,’ she thought over and over again, as she, feeling slightly stupid, stalked up and down until a door appeared out of nowhere. Minerva stared at it, taking a deep breath, her hand hovering over the door handle. What if she couldn’t get into it? What if it was stuck in a room that nobody could get into? It would mean Voldemort would continue to come back over and over again. Summoning her Gryffindor courage, that had been developed over the years; she had been meant for Ravenclaw after all. Turning the door, holding her breath as she prayed she would find what she needed behind that door.

Pushing it open, she gazed around in awe, there was absolutely everything in that room, lost items indeed! There was Witch Weekly magazines stacked up in a pile, the dates made her realize they were older than her. Make up, unmatched shoes, clothes, the odd uniform, even an old fashioned cloak from Albus’ time. Diaries, newspapers, bedding, posters, money, chairs upon stacks of chairs, presumably for when they used them and tables in the Great Hall instead of benches. Her awe turned to disgruntlement, just how was she supposed to get the Diadem if she had to hunt her way through everything in this room?
The House-Elves, they would be able to help if she needed it…could she possibly summon it? In the school, watched by Dumbledore surely Tom wouldn’t have lingered? The time constraints would have been pressing, preventing him from putting as much security around it as he should. Knowing how arrogant the wizard also was and had been even then, she wouldn’t be surprised if Tom thought he had been the only one to know of its existence. Was it a chance she could take? She didn’t need to touch it though, just let it fall it wasn’t as if she could save the item.

“Accio Tom Marvolo Riddle’s Horcrux!” chanted Minerva, warily looking around the room, feeling extremely cautious, added by the fact she could feel her hair pricking at the nape of her neck. For one moment in time she felt disheartened, nothing was moving, so either it was protected greater than she thought…or it had been moved. She almost wanted it to be hidden in here, somewhere, just charmed so nobody could summon it. Even if it took her all day to look for it, since if it had been moved…they were truly out of options. Just as she thought this, a blue velvet box spun at her, she moved out of the way in the nick of time to stop it hitting her directly on the forehead. It clattered against the Hufflepuff chairs, and to the floor with a plop.

Slightly stunned, had it truly been that easy? She hadn’t really expected it to work; she’d just been desperate not to have to search through this gigantic room. Pointing her wand at it, kneeling down she began to chant under her breath, using every single detection spell she knew, for both light and dark magic. There was only one spell on it, very dark and dangerous, and she knew it to be the Horcrux itself - there were no other protections on it. This must have been one of his first; at least she was assuming so. Opening the box, she gasped at the beauty of the diadem. Such a beautiful item he had chosen to defile, it was horrific to think about destroying it, yet she had no choice. Flipping the lid back down, she placed it in her cloak pocket and left the room, having no need to be there anymore.

Her pace was slow as she leisurely made her way back to her office, silently thanking the Ravenclaw ghost for her help. She had no idea if the House-Elves even knew about the room, and she wouldn’t have thought to look there. She’d been in the room twice during her entire life at this castle. One time it was a library for her to study in during her seventh year, the second time oddly enough it was a place with a single bed with noises emitting now and again, running water, birds chirping, she had been stressed. It had been on her mind or Hogwarts herself had decided what she needed.

Pausing in mid-step on the ground floor, just making her way back to her office, when she felt the wards shifting subtly, it wasn’t Dumbledore or any of the teachers; she only ever got that feeling if it was guests entering the school - people who had no right being there. Sighing softly, she turned away from the corridor leading to her office and to the main entrance hall which wasn’t far from where she was.

“Auror Scrimgeour, how are you?” said Minerva, as she made her way down the remaining steps to get to the groups side.

“I’m here to search Albus Dumbledore’s office, we have a warrant to search it.” said Scrimgeour, not up for pleasantries. He showed her the piece of paper with the permission from Cornelius Fudge and of course Amelia Bones who was with them today.

“I assume you know the way? I’m afraid I cannot escort you all, I am needed elsewhere at the moment.” asked and explained Minerva.

“No problem, Minerva, do you have the password?” asked Amelia, her lips quirking in a small smile, as if to reassure Minerva.

“There is never a password during the summer, once you get close enough the gargoyle will move
allowing you all entrance.” explained Minerva.

“Then do not let us keep you,” said Amelia, quickly gesturing for everyone to follow her, Scrimgeour stayed at her side, not saying a word or thanks or goodbye. Amelia was hoping to find traces of the potion Dumbledore had given the Dursleys’ to aid them in keeping social services at bay. Traces or actual vials of the potion, letters, and whatever else they could use against him. They weren’t leaving until they’d scoured every inch of his office and quarters, it would be a long and gruelling process but that was her job and she would oversee it.

Unlike the rest of the magical world, Minerva had, had a large amount of time to get used to his betrayal. It still made her head spin though, and she would like answers, even though she knew she wouldn’t like what she would hear. How could he honestly explain himself and everything he had done? There was simply no conceiving a likely scenario that involved everyone understanding why he’d done such despicable acts.

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Prince Manor

Minerva stepped through at Prince Manor to find Lucius Malfoy just flicking his wand and removing the soot from his clothes. He had obviously just gotten there seconds before her. He looked extremely smug, she had no doubt that he had been there to see Dumbledore arrested, and damn she had wanted to see it.

“He went nuts, Severus, I mean really lost his cool, I’ve never seen anything like it before.” said Lucius, finishing his explanation. He removed the wand, wincing at how hot it suddenly became, it dropped from his hand as he pulled back.

“Minnie!” shrieked Harry, smiling sweetly at her as he barrelled up to her, but he didn’t hug her.

“Hello, Harry, I see you are feeling better today.” she said, smiling down at the child, he became more and more carefree the longer he was there.

“Daddy made me all better,” whispered Harry, “I was never allowed medicine before…it never got wasted on a freak like me.”

“You aren’t a freak,” said Minerva firmly, her eyes flashing possessively. “They are, for hurting you, and everyone knows it too.”

Harry just smiled even more sweetly before he moved off back to his seat, the book Minerva got him in his lap. The magical voice stating the colours and numbers started up again as Harry parroted them back. He really liked learning, his daddy was always curious to know what he learned and he said he was proud of him for it! He got a sweet for working hard! He loved it, and so he always made sure to learn as hard as he could.

The wand was still shaking violently, before it suddenly flew at Harry, who stared at it curiously, almost enthralled.

“Harry NO!” they said worriedly, but they were too late, Harry had already picked it up, magic poured out of both of them for two intense seconds before it settled.

“Is it too hot?” asked Severus, kneeling beside Harry, observing his son cautiously, the urge to take the wand from him was strong.

“No,” said Harry, shaking his head smiling serenely at his daddy.
“They said I had got it by rights of conquest, but I knew it didn’t feel right, despite the fact it sort of flashed for me. I was going to ask you about it, but if that didn’t pan out I had planned on speaking to Ollivander…why would Dumbledore’s wand change its allegiance to Harry? Could it have something to do with what his actions?” Lucius asked curiously.

Severus shook his head in bafflement, “No but it might explain how Harry survived.” said Severus.

“What do you mean?” asked Minerva sitting down, observing Severus curiously, his ideas usually was correct.

Severus stood up and sat down himself, flicking his wand around the three of them so Harry couldn’t hear. Harry wasn’t interested anyway, the wand was between his legs and he was once again immersed in the book. “His injuries, they were extremely bad, on more than one occasion he should have died. The amount of magic he had couldn’t have saved his life; I think magic poured out the binding to help him when he really needed it, when he was at his most desperate. Harry told me he popped from his cousin when he was chasing him one time, last year when he was really sick. He would never have been able to Apparate on that little amount of magic that was free. This wand was meant to be Harry’s before that Halloween night…it is the only explanation for why the binding wasn’t as strong as it should have been, and why he was able to leach more magic from the binding. If Dumbledore knew, he might have been intimidated that a toddler had more magic than him that the wand sensed that power and changed its allegiance? I really don’t know, but this is my guess.”

“They will find out,” said Minerva, “Amelia and Rufus are searching Albus’ office and quarters as we speak. It won’t matter whether they find anything or not, they have enough evidence to secure a conviction.”

“Here’s hoping his chicken doesn’t help him,” said Severus, curling his lip, he’d seen how often the old fool used that Phoenix to get him from place to place. He had great respect for phoenix’s but not Fawkes, he allowed himself to be used as a messenger by Dumbledore. Phoenix’s were proud creatures, but he didn’t see anything proud in Fawkes, and if Dumbledore had done all he had…why had he stayed?

“I also succeeded in getting through to the Grey Lady,” said Minerva, removing the blue velvet box from her cloak and passing it over. “It’s safe there is nothing on it.”

Severus opened it and both Lucius and he gaped in awe breathing out the words, “Ravenclaw’s Lost Diadem.”
Chapter 35

The Vow And Its Consequences

Chapter 35

Destroying The Diadem

Sirius scrambled to his feet when Severus and Lucius walked outside, through the back door - where he was sitting just thinking. Harry was still terrified of him, nothing he did helped any, and it wasn’t something he was used to. Harry had loved him as a child, but that couldn’t be said anymore. With the problem gone, he knew he wouldn’t be welcome in Prince Manor anymore. Snape hated his guts, and Harry couldn’t care less, he felt as though his heart was breaking, and nothing could possibility put it together again. He had lost nearly everyone he cared about, only Remus was left, he so wished he knew what to do when it came to Harry.

“Is everything alright?” he asked, staring at them, his blue eyes dull and lifeless.

“Back up,” said Lucius, as always not one for small talk, as he placed the Diadem on the grass, which had barely recovered from the last doubt of fire blazing that had burnt it - he Hufflepuff chalice. He didn’t remove it from the velvet box it was in just in case it was cursed. Swirling his wand in the correct directions he spat out “Fiendfyre!” at the offending object watching as it fled his wand, but Lucius cut it off quickly, watching as the small snake-like flame consume the Diadem, causing it to scream out in agony before it became a mangled mess of silver. Both Severus and Lucius hissed in pain in unison, only Lucius grasped his arm in agony, Severus was more composed or perhaps more used to pain than Lucius was.

“Was that…” questioned Sirius, wide eyed.

“It was.” stated Severus sharply.

“Oh,” squeaked Sirius surprised. “Aguamenti!” the sizzling sound of the flames dying out met their ears.

“It looks like we are getting close to having found them all,” said Severus grimly. Staring at Lucius’ arm as he rolled up his clothes to view the Dark Mark. It wasn’t gone completely, but it was faded greater than ever, never before had destroying a Horcrux caused them pain. Was it a backlash or had all the Death Eaters felt it? Were they twitching in anticipation thinking the Dark Lord was close to coming back? Or were they terrified since they hadn’t done a single thing to help? It brought them feral satisfaction at the thought of them all scared out of their wits.

“I wonder if he felt it,” said Lucius, hoping that he had, he hoped the Dark Lord was feeling everything and knowing his end was close at hand.

“He will have,” replied Severus surely.

“If only we knew how many others we have to find,” muttered Lucius as he turned around and walked back into the manor. It was rather chilly outside; he didn’t want Harry catching a cold. If they had to cancel this weekend, Draco would be inconsolable - he was so looking forward to meeting Harry even knowing that Harry might be a little timid to begin with or the entire time, they just didn’t know. He couldn’t blame Harry for any reaction he did have, the poor child had been beaten on by the children his own age. Hopefully with Draco being so thin like Harry would help and he wouldn’t see his son as a threat. “If we can find any, I mean this was our last suggestion…
there’s nothing else.”

“We still have Slytherins Locket to find,” Severus pointed out mildly, but he understood Lucius’ concern, since he was drawing blank himself at possible locations now.

“Yes but it could be anywhere in the UK, Sev.” said Lucius desperately. “If he knows someone is destroying them he might come back here desperate to come back and some fool might be stupid enough to find an answer.”

“True,” mused Severus, he hadn’t thought of that possibility.

“I had one, Bellatrix had one…and we both received special training…” mused Lucius as he entered the living room.

“As did I,” Severus pointed out, not really paying much attention to his rambling.

“The only other was Regulus Black…” said Lucius, giving Black a glance as if suspecting the wizard would start shouting and yelling but he didn’t. In fact Black didn’t react at all; it may as well have been as if he hadn’t spoken at all.

“Severus is it even safe if Harry keeps this wand? Shouldn’t we put it away until he’s older and understands the consequences of using magic?” asked Minerva.

“I know not to use magic without daddy,” pouted Harry, “I’m a big boy!”

“That you are, but magic is very dangerous sometimes,” explained Minerva, “Even for adults.”

Harry looked at the stick, no wand; they were calling it a wand. It felt light and funny in his hands, but it made his tummy feel happy. He could turn into a kitten without it, so scrambling to his feet, he handed the wand trustingly over to his daddy still smiling. “You keep it, daddy, I’ll be fine.” he said solemnly.

“Draco could learn a lot from you little one,” said Lucius crouching down in front of him, a very small smile on his face. Draco wanted a wand; in fact he had demanded one for the last year or so. He constantly tried to take his or Narcissa’s but their wands was too important to leave lying around so it wasn’t something his son found easy to take. “I am very proud of you. I am sure your father is as well.”

Sirius watched on his face contorted in agony just watching it. Harry even let Lucius Malfoy near him, he hated it, and his heart felt as though it was being ground up by a pestle in a mortar till it was naught but dust. He knew they weren’t doing it on purpose, even if a small childish part of him wished they were. Sirius made a feeble attempt at putting up a mask on his face as Minerva stared at him with an odd look in her eye.

Harry leaned in and gave Lucius (his new godfather) a quick hug before scampering off to the sofa again. Lucius stayed where he was stunned, before he stood back up. Harry didn’t like people touching him, and he certainly didn’t get very…hands on with people. With the obvious exception being Severus, he was clingy with him and obviously let Severus touch him. Even Minerva hadn’t received even a hug from Harry yet, and Lucius couldn’t help but feel inordinately pleased and smug neither of which played across his face. He was definitely getting better; he had a good feeling about the play date between Harry and his son now.

“I think it’s time to do some learning, don’t you Harry?” asked Minerva, making it sound like a suggestion.
Harry looked at his dad who gave him a nod, only then did he eagerly nod his own head, as he jumped from the couch leaving behind his favourite book. He was already in the office where they usually did ‘learning time’ as Harry liked to think of it.

“Shall I bring Remus in with me?” in her own way asking Severus for a decision on whether or not Remus should or could teach Harry. The child would need to get used to him, and of course Remus would need to know how she chose to interact with him so not to confuse him when he took over. She could try and teach him while at Hogwarts, since she was assumed she would be headmistress, it would leave her with a lot of free time.

“Very well,” conceded Severus grudgingly. There weren’t very many alternatives right now, with everything going on and he certainly didn’t trust a stranger in his home let alone with Harry. They were getting closer to putting an end to Voldemort before it got worse. In case Lucius’ thoughts were right, they had to be on the look out for any others that came their way.

“If Regulus was getting private training from HIM why would he get cold feet?” asked Sirius, restarting the earlier conversation he had not been part off.

“Where did you hear that?” asked Lucius, giving Black a strange look.

Sirius blinked, “It’s just my own thoughts, I think he got in too far, didn’t realize what the hell he was getting into. You should see my brother’s room, he has collages of newspaper clippings what Voldemort and the Death Eaters were doing, even after he joined he put stuff up…then all of a sudden it stopped and it was months upon months before he went missing. I know you might think he was all bad…but my brother did have morals you know…”

Severus and Lucius both gave him pointed looks, basically telling him to remember who he was speaking to. They had both been Death Eaters, both had regretted their decision. Unlike Regulus though, Lucius hadn’t done anything about it, just continued on hoping for the best. Severus however, had quickly put himself at the mercy of Dumbledore. A wrong decision, he should have gone straight to Lily…made her see, maybe then Pettigrew might not have been chosen - perhaps then they would have used him. Unfortunately there was nothing he could do about it now; he would just have to do his best by Harry for both their sakes.

“Did Regulus have any real friends?” enquired Lucius speculatively.

“Other than Death Eaters, no, and his cousins.” replied Sirius, surprised that his question was being thought about seriously.

“You don’t think…?” started Lucius.

“I honestly don’t know…there could be other explanations.” said Severus knowing what the wizard was thinking.

“He went missing in…”

“Yes, around that time.” stated Severus.

Sirius stared between them feeling as though he was intruding, they knew each other well enough to know the others thoughts. Even he and James or he and Remus had never had that, and he wasn’t sure how he felt about it.

“The prophecy, do you remember the reaction everyone had…” added Lucius.

“I can’t remember Black particularly at the meeting…”
“Oh, he was there, I remember it, Severus can I use your Pensive?” asked Lucius.

“Good idea, follow me,” said Severus standing up, “You too, Black.”

Sirius scrambled to his feet, his heart pounding, he wasn’t sure if he wanted to see his brother at one of those meetings. Knowing and seeing were two different things altogether, he had accepted or maybe just imagined that his brother was good in the end - he didn’t want this memory conflicting with the image he’d built up. He followed them to his office where Remus and he had both viewed the memories of Harry, which were no longer in the pensive he observed as it was brought out.

Lucius closed his eyes and thought very determinedly on the memory, it wasn’t a good one - he could remember his own terror. His wife had been pregnant at the time, also with a boy. He couldn’t have been more relieved when Narcissa went into labour on June fifth. Once he had the memory on the end of his wand, he placed it in the pensive, clearing his throat giving a small nod.

Severus, Lucius and Sirius placed their wands above the shimmering memory and were pulled into it. They were able to see it as though it was a 3D projection, and didn’t have to stay focused on one person they could freely move around. Sirius quickly found his brother, not even paying Voldemort the slightest bit of attention. Staring at him sadly, with tortured eyes.

“He looks…” began Sirius, not able to put it into words.

“Well?” barked Severus irate.

“Defeated,” whispered Sirius.

“So he was wavering by this?” stated Lucius.

“I…I think so,” said Sirius, not one hundred percent sure.

“Such a fool,” said Severus bitterly, staring at his younger self, who was unaware of his presence or what the future held in this memory. If only he could go back and do things differently, but life didn’t give second chances like that, no his redemption came in the hands of a child called Harry, his son.

Suddenly when Voldemort made his proclamation about going after a prophecy child, the reaction was immediate. Sirius finally understood their earlier words, he could see the shock, distaste and horror in most peoples faces. There was one person…no four, that didn’t seem unduly upset about it either - he knew them all and wasn’t surprised. The three Lestrange’s and of course Crouch - non more vocal than Bellatrix. She wished to do it for him, and that truly made Sirius sick. She was twenty years old, and she was willing to end the life of a baby, oh she was a wretched woman.

“He’s wavering but I can’t spot any sign of him making a decision to leave,” said Sirius, who was once again staring into his brother’s eyes. Thankfully they remained still during Death Eater meetings; otherwise he would have found the entire experience dizzying.

“So it wasn’t this one,” said Lucius thoughtfully. “I wonder if anyone else received something… perhaps I should pay a visit to the Carrows.” he mused.

“The Carrows?” cried Sirius, there had never been any suspicion on them - despite the fact they’d been Slytherins which was surprising.

“We may as well leave,” said Severus wryly, they weren’t going to get anything out of his memory.
They were just about to do that when Severus stopped suddenly, as Voldemort spoke once more. “Regulus stay behind.” hissed Voldemort.

“Quiet,” said Severus immediately, trying to pick up any sound that Lucius may not have consciously picked up as he left the meeting. He was just about to give up when he heard a few words before they were ejected.

“Did either of you hear anything after the Dark Lord demanded he stay behind?” questioned Severus immediately.

“Yes,” replied Sirius at the same time Lucius said “No.”

“In Azkaban you need to be able to listen for anything…feet thumping on the floor, things like that…since I spent so much of my time as Padfoot. He spoke about needing to borrow something…” explained and said Sirius.


“Kreacher?” said Sirius, confused. “He wouldn’t have let that happen, he loved that damn thing, he wouldn’t even let our parents shout at it.”

“You don’t say no to the Dark Lord.” Lucius told him sharply.

“Kreacher’s insane, I doubt he remembers anything about back then.” said Sirius, dismissing the idea of even calling Kreacher.

“How so?” enquired Lucius frowning, it wasn’t like House-Elves to go insane, they pined, yes, defied orders sometimes, yes, but insanity? No, at least not unless they were seriously tortured he couldn’t see it.

“A letter from my father before he died…while I was in Azkaban.” explained Sirius grimly; he didn’t like talking about his damn parents.

“Call him,” demanded Severus.

“I just told…” argued Sirius.

“Now.” barked Severus, “If there is a possibility of him knowing something we must use it. Obviously Regulus liked the little thing, perhaps he told him things he didn’t tell any other living soul. We may get the name of someone who has a Horcrux do you understand?” his patience totally worn.

“Alright,” said Sirius reluctantly, “But don’t say I didn’t warn you, he’s a vulgar little bugger and extremely prejudice.”

“Just like you then?” sneered Severus rolling his eyes.

Sirius swallowed thickly, well that statement was a little accurate, and he had been prejudice. Not anymore, he couldn’t be if he wanted to be in Harry’s life. Sighing softly, “I know I was a dick, and I am sorry about how I was…if I could change it I would.” he confessed.

“Seven years of putting up with you, I hardly think a simple sorry is going to cut it.” snapped Lucius, defending Severus.

“No, no I guess not,” said Sirius wearily.
“Forget about it, just call the House-Elf.” added Severus, closing the door to his office and putting up a silencing spell so whatever came their way - Harry wouldn’t hear it. Without the silencing spell there was a chance he actually might since he was only a few doors down the hall.

“Kreacher!” demanded Sirius, grimacing in distaste, he didn’t think he’d ever have to deal with the diminutive creature again but here he was.
Chapter 36

The Vow and its Consequences

Chapter 36

Lucius pursed his lips as the House-Elf made an appearance, not only was it filthy it had a mouth to match. He was calling Sirius Black all the names under the sun in a wheezing voice, that thing was useless, and it should have been put down a long time ago. It looked as though Black hadn't exactly been exaggerating when it came to the disgusting creature even one iota. Turning to face Severus, he noticed the stoic wizard was actually enjoying this. Of course he was Black was getting his ass handed to him by a House-Elf of all things.

"...disgusting blood traitor to the house of Black, broke his mothers heart he did," wheezed Kreacher.

"Enough," snapped Lucius, glaring at the House-Elf his back straight staring down at the elf with his mercury eyes swirling in disgust. "Such a display would have seen you de-headed and banished from my sight - such a filthy creature! You shame the house of Black with your words and ways." it was an hour to be placed on spikes with the other House-Elves who had served honourably. He personally didn't, in fact his wife had removed them all and made sure they at least received a burial of some kind by the House-Elves, she didn't want Draco seeing such sights and he understood that. They had scared the hell out of him when he was a child, not that he'd been able to confess that. Merlin what his father would have done...he dreaded to think in all honesty.

Kreacher stopped in mid diatribe, staring at Lucius Malfoy in shock, before shame began to creep up on the little creature. He hunched further upon himself, finally keeping quiet. Wringing his fingers together, evidently at a loss of what to do or say.

Sirius gaped at the sight, not sure what to make of Lucius Malfoy actually helping him.

"We do not have time to listen to his racket!" Lucius stated smoothly, still glaring at the creature.

Of course, when would Lucius Malfoy do anything for him? Why had he thought as such! He wanted to slap the back of his own head for his thoughts.

"Indeed, ask then," Severus demanded snidely to Black, his arms crossed as he looked broodingly over at Black.

"Answer any question asked truthfully, Kreacher," demanded Sirius, as Master he knew the House-Elf would have to do as he'd asked. He then waved his hand at them, letting them do the talking; he honestly didn't know what on earth to ask. They were nuts if they thought Kreacher knew or remembered anything. He was insane, and Regulus wouldn't have told him anything important… there was just too much risk that their parents would have asked for answers. Kreacher adored his mother, so it was definite.

Severus rolled his eyes, Black was utterly useless, this just proved it - how hard could it be to ask one little question?

"Did Regulus Black ever receive an item from the Dark Lord?" enquired Lucius seriously.
Severus narrowed his eyes further when he saw the House-Elf stiffen at the question; he gave Lucius a look but the wizard already realized as well by the satisfied look on his face.

"Answer him," snapped Sirius, he didn't like waiting.

"I is just a House-Elf, Master Regulus wouldn't have told me," replied Kreacher wringing his hands again.

"You were asked to help the Dark-Lord, what did you do?" demanded Severus, watching the creature's eyes widen in disbelief, he evidently hadn't expected them to know that piece of information.

"The truth this time," warned Sirius.

"Prove your worth, elf, and I will see you serving the House of Malfoy." Lucius told him, Black obviously didn't want the damn thing anyway.

"What?" hissed Sirius, irritated, it wasn't his decision.

"Like you actually care?" questioned Lucius bluntly.

"That's hardly the point," ground out Sirius, he just didn't want decisions made as if he wasn't in the bloody room or being asked.

"Do you want your godson to have a carefree life? Or would you prefer to be the annoying selfish idiot we all know you are instead?" hissed Severus, back eyes flashing furiously. He couldn't believe Black was being so selfish; he didn't want the damn Elf so why was he arguing and fighting over it?

"Fine, tell them the truth Kreacher, and you can go to the Malfoy's." Sirius immediately said, feeling like a total jerk, he's somehow forgotten the real reason they were here right now - his godson - sort of.

"Master Regulus asked Kreacher to go with the Dark Lord, he demanded that Kreacher come back, so Kreacher did." said the House-Elf, the thought of having a Master to serve…to not be alone in a big house well he would like that even if he would miss his Mistress.

"Why did he want you? What did he do?" enquired Lucius, well he was responding to them, slowly but surely that had to count for something. Even if it turned out to be a waste of time, they had at least tried.

"He fed Kreacher a potion, from a bowl in a cave then put his locket inside," explained Kreacher, "He left Kreacher to die, but Master Regulus had demanded I return so I went back."

"Locket? Slytherin's locket? Could it be?" wondered Lucius they had been lucky, too lucky in his opinion when it came to finding them.

"Only one way to find out," said Severus, and he prayed it was the final one. Unfortunately he suspected they would never know the Dark Lord's main spirit was still somewhere out there. As much as they wanted to avoid his return, they knew it was inevitable. At least when he returned he would be human…or as human as they could ever consider him…no perhaps mortal would be the best word to describe it. He would be killed and with a little luck they could ensure that Harry never had to face him.

"Do you remember the cave?" asked Lucius, "You will need to find out what Potion it is, neither of
us is touching it until you do." he didn't want to die thank you very much.

"At least we have a location," replied Severus, "I will have no problem identifying the potion." he added flippantly, he wasn't a potions master for nothing.

"I remember the cave, but it's not there," said Kreacher, where they looking for the locket? He couldn't lie to them, his Master (as reluctant as he was to admit him as such) had demanded he tell the truth and so he had no choice when asked a direct question. Yet he found himself explaining further than he needed to, Master Regulus had died, he didn't want anyone else to die…not even Sirius Black.

"Why not?" cried Sirius.

"Regulus made you take him there didn't he?" asked Severus, shrewdly.

"Yes, Sir, he forced Kreacher to feed him the potion and leave him there to die, to destroy the locket but Kreacher failed Master Regulus." said the House-Elf genuine sadness emanating from the creature. You could also tell that they were the first people he had told, he looked as if a weight was being lifted off him every word he spoke.

"He died to stop Him?" croaked Sirius, his stomach felt queasy; he didn't even want to think about what 'the potion' had done to him. His brother had completely turned from the dark…why hadn't he come to him? Closing his eyes, he knew why, he hadn't exactly been close to him for years even more it happened.

"You have the locket?" enquired Lucius, yes, too easy by far but he couldn't complain.

"Yes, Sir," agreed Kreacher, "Master Regulus wanted Kreacher to destroy it, but I failed him." he said yet again.

"Bring it to me," demanded Severus.

"You have not let Regulus down, you shall see it destroyed." stated Lucius, making sure the House-Elf would come back by enticing him with the fact he would be fulfilling Regulus Black's last wishes.

Without another word the House-Elf disappeared.

"Is it just me or is this…to easy?" enquired Lucius, his tone cautious.

"Not really, we wouldn't have known about it if your healer hadn't noticed it or if I hadn't taken Harry to Gringotts. If the Goblins hadn't known what they were…then we would still be in the dark. All of this is a culmination of all information we've gathered. If we hadn't been Death Eaters I doubt we would have gotten this far…I would summarize perhaps one or two would have been destroyed but that would have been all. The inside information has helped us greatly." Severus replied.

"Too bad it doesn't help deduce whether we've gotten them all," Lucius admitted bitterly.

"Considering that the last one caused us pain…I think we're getting there." Severus mused thoughtfully.

"But we will never know, Severus, not until its far too late…if he makes his way back and we kill him and it just makes him a spirit again we could start this loop all over again - it will be a nightmare." Lucius cried out exasperated.
"Well is there anyone Voldemort was close to?" asked Sirius.

"He's a Dark Lord, he isn't close to anyone," said Severus bluntly.

"He wasn't always the Dark Lord…I mean he was young at one point…any teachers?" asked Sirius.

Kreacher popped into the room, displaying the locket to them, the darkness was there they immediately felt it.

"Thank you Kreacher," said Severus snatching the piece of jewellery from the House-Elf.

"Outside?" suggested Lucius once again.

"Of course," replied Severus, he wasn't damaging Prince Hall for the sake of even a Horcrux. Fiendfyre was extremely unstable even with the most experienced of wizards, so it truly was better safe than sorry - playing with fire inside was just asking for trouble. He would never risk Harry's life by doing something so utterly stupid. With that he left the office, leaving the wards on knowing they'd probably discuss it while they could seen as Harry was busy at his lessons.

"Follow," Lucius ordered Kreacher, as he quickly caught up with Severus as they entered the living room and continued on past the kitchen and out the backdoor. The black patch that had been there when they destroyed the cup was gone, the House-Elves must have repaired it, and it was a good job, since Harry liked playing outside in the tree house - only if Severus was outside of course. The second Severus went inside Harry would follow, he didn't like being alone that much he'd summarised.

"You should add a few paddocks," suggested Lucius, running a critical eye around the area.

"What? And add peacocks?" Severus snorted in amusement.

"They are pure bred Congo peacocks and extremely rare," argued Lucius. They had come all the way from the African rainforest, or rather their ancestors had seen as this generation of Peafowl were roughly the five hundredth generation of Congo Peacock to breed on the Malfoy Estate.

"So I've been told," Severus told him smirking in amusement. "I can't stand the damn things,"

"Well get something that can be used as a potion ingredient?" suggested Lucius.

"No, when Harry finally spreads his wings I'd rather know he's safe thank you," he admitted dryly.

"I doubt that will happen any time soon," said Sirius, sounding slightly bitter. He hated how Harry clung to Snape, but he had so many emotions associated with it. He was glad Harry was getting better after seeing what he'd lived through, he so wished Harry wanted him enough to come closer than ten feet…hated that Snape was the one he wanted…and was just glad Harry knew the feeling of having a family. Lily would be happy for him; her and James had loved Harry more than their own lives.

"He has come a long way," Severus pointed out, having no sympathy for Black. Yes he'd been in Azkaban, but he was out now and that was the main thing. If it weren't for him finding Harry then Black would still be rotting away in Azkaban, he wondered if the idiot ever realized that. He would have loved to point it out but he had far more pressing things to do - especially since Harry would soon finish his lessons for the day.

Dropping the locket on the grass he stepped back, idly noticing that Lucius had followed suit.
Flicking his wand he took a deep breath, centred his emotions and magic before he muttered "Fiendfyre!" a blast of fire left his wand, and Severus struggled to maintain it as the Horcrux began to scream shrilly only once the mangled mess was melted did he stop the spell.

"Nothing," mused Lucius, rolling up his sleeve to see the mark - there was no change.

"It was definitely a Horcrux that cannot be refuted." stated Severus, staring at it thoughtfully, before banishing the mess.

"No, it cannot." said Lucius, "Right, it's time to go and get Draco, his tutor will have wrapped up his lessons by now." he hoped Harry got along with his son. He would keep a good eye on them the first few times just to make sure his son didn't do anything...silly like demand things from Harry.

"Perhaps we should have lunch out here?" suggested Severus, "It's a beautiful day and Harry hasn't been outside in the past few days."

"Is Narcissa coming?" asked Sirius, at least with her there he would have someone he could talk to...well a little bit at least.

"Why not?" agreed Lucius, "If she doesn't have anything to do."

"Good," said Sirius, slightly relieved.

"I shall let the House-Elves know," said Severus, "While you deal with this." he reminded both men of the promise they had made to the House-Elf, making it clear that they should live up to their word.

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Will Sirius bring up his earlier suggestion about Riddle being close to anyone? will they get their answer from Slughorn? will Voldemort return much earlier this time? will Pettigrew see Severus with Harry in Diagon alley when he's there with Percy Weasley and his parents? or will there be nothing to Voldemort until Harry attends Hogwarts for his first year? will Harry tell his dad and have them do what needs done? or is Harry truly destined to kill or be killed? R&R please!
Chapter 37

The Vow and its Consequences

Chapter 37

Lucius exited the Floo network, landing with a smooth step into his home, splendour and gleaming marble that he couldn’t help but admire each day was the first thing he saw. As he wandered up the grand staircase, he couldn’t help but muse, he was very proud of his home, he had been brought up to believe he was the best, that he would serve the Dark Lord like his father, return the old ways - as if it was something special. It might have been back then, important even, but the world had evolved passed needing it, something that the Dark Lord and his father weren’t able to understand. It had taken a long time for him to realize the truth, but he thought himself too set in his ways. That and he feared what would happen should he confess how he truly felt. Not that he was light, or god forbid care about Muggles or Muggle born he had the people he cared about, but other than that the world could go screw itself. He was technically a dark wizard and he was proud of that, there were some actions he wasn’t proud of though.

Stepping into the library, the room that his son and his tutor were using as a makeshift classroom for his lessons. There was no better place to be educated than in a library, surrounded by all the books you’d ever need. “Narcissa,” Lucius said, smiling a warm smile just for her, “Sirius Black has invited you to Prince Hall, he would like to see you. Personally I think he just wants someone familiar, one that he can say he’s had more than one kind word with.”

“I must say I am surprised, I didn’t think he would be willing to speak to me, we didn’t exactly end on the best of terms.” Narcissa admitted as she put Draco’s books in the drawer.

“He doesn’t seem to hold any animosity.” Lucius replied smoothly, stepping further in, Draco wasn’t there. “Where is Draco?” he asked, usually Narcissa barely let him out of her sight these days.

“He’s picking up a few things he’d like to take to meet Harry,” Narcissa said suppressing her worry, what if Harry wasn’t able to handle a child his own age after what his despicable cousin had done to him? Despite the fact she had warned Draco repeatedly, her son would still be hurt if Harry reacted badly.

“Harry is going to be just fine,” Lucius said softly, able to read her like a book, nobody else could he alone knew her best. “Draco understands Harry might not be comfortable at first. He’s come along way, he’s more used to people now.” just as long as Severus stayed in the room he hoped that Harry would be fine with company his own age.

“I hope so,” Narcissa said standing up straight, “It’s going to be the first time I’ve seen him since he left,” excitement replacing her worries. She wondered how much he had changed, physically at any rate. She had kept up on how he was coping with things mentally, and seemed to be doing a lot better in a stable environment and someone in his life who put him first - but that would happen to any child under the circumstances. “I should get changed.” she wasn’t suitably attired for company.

Lucius chuckled, “We are going to be amongst family, Narcissa, at a barbeque of all things,”

“A barbeque?” Narcissa looked bemused, such a thing wasn’t a dignified pureblood thing to do, so they did as they always do, keep it between immediate families and claim how ‘Muggle’ it was.
Two faced lies, deceit and useless talk was just the way things were done, not many truths were
told, they tended to keep their thoughts and heart closed to all. Draco would definitely like it, oh
she so hoped the boys got on well together.

“Indeed, you look remarkable in all you wear, and you look fantastic just as you are, now let’s see
what is keeping Draco,” Lucius added, turning around shaking his head, he knew already what was
happening - Draco was trying to fit the entire contents of his room into one little bag. Together both
he and Narcissa made their way up to their son’s room, ready to leave as soon as possible.

“Draco? Are you ready to leave now?” Narcissa asked, stepping into his room, gazing at her son in
adoration, he was a perfect blend to them both, more Lucius of course but the genes were always
stronger in the male purebloods than the females. Seeing her son nod, she looked around the room,
and was surprised to see his toys neatly packed in their usual space. He didn’t seem to have put
anything in his bag, but she couldn’t be sure of that. Draco had a lot of toys, at the very least he had
perhaps just put a few toys in.

“Let’s go! Let’s go!” Draco said, forgetting his manners as he grasped a hold of his parent’s hands,
urging them towards the stairs. He was so excited to meet Harry, he knew he had to be gentle and
quiet though, so he didn’t scare him. He was remembering all the rules his mum had said to him,
he really wanted to be friends with his Uncle/godfather’s son.

“Calm down,” Narcissa scolded him half heartedly.

“It would work better if you weren’t smiling,” Lucius drawled into his wife’s ear.

Narcissa muffled her amusement, keeping a tight grip of Draco’s hand as she led him down the
stairs. It was a constant fear for her, that Draco would get hurt on the stairs, it was marble, and you
could break bones falling on them. She’d put spells on the staircase as soon as Draco began
crawling, just to be on the safe side, but like all things magic could fade in potency.

“Remember, keep a tight hold of your mother,” Lucius said as they arrived back at the entrance,
standing right next to the fireplace.

“I know father,” Draco said, his tone solemn.

“Go ahead, I’ll meet you there,” Lucius said, grasping a handful of Floo powder and once his wife
and son was in the fireplace, he pressed it into her hand and stepped away, nodding at Narcissa.
She threw the powder in and the green flames burst around them, carting them away to their
intended destination which Narcissa had shouted ‘Prince Hall’.

Giving them a few minutes, to get out of the grate, absently grasping another handful of powder, he
stepped in too. Once he felt enough time had passed, he threw the power in yelling out his
destination. The lurching of his stomach was the first indication that he was travelling, the
sensation abruptly stopped once he’d gotten to Prince Hall. Stepping out of the flames, he noticed
that Harry wasn’t in the room.

“Did it not go well?” Lucius enquired, but he then noticed that neither Remus nor Minerva was
there - it was quite possible that they were still teaching him. He did have a lot to catch up on
before he was same level as Draco and all other children the same age as him.

“He will be through in a moment,” Severus stated calmly from behind Lucius causing the blonde
to tense for a moment.

“Ah,” he said in understanding.
“I don’t see why everyone’s so tense, he’ll be happy to have a friend,” Sirius said, he definitely had been.

“All his experience with children ended up with him being beaten, Black.” Severus hissed quietly, just in case Harry was out in the hall - that and he didn’t want Draco hearing - he already knew too much and it was wrong to heap it upon a child, such knowledge shouldn’t be known.

“Hello, Narcissa, thank you for helping Harry when you did,” Sirius said gratefully, knowing that without them calling their private healer…things could have turned drastically different. “He’s family, of course I helped him,” Narcissa brushed it off. Harry’s grandmother had been a Black, admittedly she had been disowned of course, but that was normal in the Black family - act out of turn and you were left to fend for yourself. There was only one exception she would make, that was the Weasley’s - she’d never help them despite the fact Arthur Weasley was a Black, through his mothers side also.

Sirius just nodded, conceding the point. They were always told family came first, which was a load of crock, act out and you were disowned, look at what happened to his cousin Andromeda. She had married for love, instead of marrying to further the ‘pureblood’ name. He hadn’t seen her in years, not just because of Azkaban; he hadn’t had much to do with any of his family not even his own brother. Which was quickly becoming his biggest regret, he had turned from the dark, chosen instead to do what was right not easy. He wished he had been there for him, if he had he might still be alive.

“Letter for Sirius Black,” Flippy said, “But the letter is glowing Master Severus,” Severus smirked viciously; this was going to be amusing. “Bring it to me,”

“Glowing?” Lucius asked, arching an eyebrow at Severus in silent query.

“It’s my magic preventing the tracking charm from working accurately, no doubt it was Dumbledore he will find himself wondering what is going on when he winds up in the wilderness in Ireland.” Severus told them vindictively.

“How do you know it’s Dumbledore?” Sirius asked, “It could be the Ministry.” Severus just stared drolly at the wizard wondering if he had honestly asked such a question. The Ministry wouldn’t dare try such a stunt, not against a free wizard and a pureblood to boot. They would be sued to hell and back, wizarding homes were Unplottable and kept secret for a reason. To expose them, well lets just say the Ministry would take a good few years to recover with the amount he’d most likely be awarded.

“Why Ireland?” Narcissa’s lips twitched imagining the look on the old fool’s face when he realized he’d been outwitted.

Harry ran into the room, his eyes automatically seeking out his fathers, after being away from him for so long. They lit up when he noticed where he was and barrelled head long into him, hugging him close.

“Did you have fun?” Severus enquired, staring down at the five year old.

Harry nodded eagerly; he loved learning now that he could. Narcissa gazed at the child, he had changed a lot since she last saw him, but it wasn’t hard to do he had been so thin and sick. So close to dying, he also had a glow around him now - probably due to his magical restriction being broken. Thank Merlin for the goblins; she dreaded to think what could have happened otherwise. It wasn’t just some changes, his looks had changed too, her eyes widened when she realized, of course, the adoption potion - he looked a little like Severus. She saw that Draco was looking down at him just as curious.

“We are having lunch outside, and we have some guests, I’d like you to meet Draco, my godson,” Severus said kneeling down speaking solely to Harry now, “He will not hurt you, he wants to be your friend.”

“Okay,” Harry said shyly, slightly worried but he trusted his dad - nobody would hurt him here. “The letter, Sir,” Flippy said, reappearing with it, handing it over to his Master.

“Thank you, Flippy,” Severus replied accepting it, “We are ready to go outside is lunch ready?”

“Yes Sir,” Flippy said nodding eagerly before leaving.
“Finite Incantatem!” Severus muttered under his breath, and the glow around the letter abruptly stopped. “Check it for further tampering, I wouldn’t be surprised if he did something else to it.” passing it over to Black, half tempted to see Dumbledore’s face for himself but he would be taken care of soon. Everyone else here meant more to him than Dumbledore, well with the obvious exception of Black and Lupin but nobody could blame him for that.

“Thanks,” Sirius said, glancing at the letter and ripping it open, just to see who it was by, and of course Severus was right - it was Dumbledore. He didn’t even want to see what he had to say, not right now, slipping it into his robes with a grimace.

“Let’s go,” Severus said as everyone piled out of the living room and kitchen to get to the backdoor and out into the large back garden that Prince Hall had to offer.

“Look! A tree house!” Draco said, excitedly, “Do you want to come Harry? Please say yes!” excitement was swirling in Draco’s blue eyes as he gave Harry a puppy dog look.

Harry glanced warily at Draco, he was small and thin like him, not at all like Dudley, and he was very hyper, glancing up at his dad who nodded encouragingly. “Can I have my dragon?” it was a source of great comfort to Harry who was being introduced to so many new things that something solid and familiar - just like his dad was what he needed.

“Accio, Harry’s Dragon!” Severus chanted, wand out aimed at the manor. Waiting patiently for the dragon to appear, he didn’t use his House-elves for every single little thing - he’d gone his whole life fetching things himself or with magic, using a House-elf in his eyes was just laziness they had enough to do without catering to his every whim. Less than a minute later it floated to his outstretched hand; grasping it he placed it in Harry’s hand. “Have fun, and remember no magic.”

“I have that dragon too; my daddy gave it to me.” Draco exclaimed as he and Harry began to scramble towards the tree house.

“He gave me one too,” Harry said quietly, gripping it tightly, scared that he might take it away from him.

“I brought mine with me, see,” Draco said grasping it out of his bag and showing it off, (it was the same colour as well) seeing that Harry was very unsure. He wasn’t used to friends like that, but he really wanted to be his friend so he tried his hardest to be nice and quiet like his mum suggested. Harry smiled slightly, he wasn’t loud and seemed nice, maybe his dad was right and he wouldn’t hurt him.

“Are you coming up?” Draco asked as he began to step up the ladder.

“Yes,” Harry said looking up himself, waiting until Draco was further up before stepping up himself. Once he was in the tree house, he looked down just to make sure his dad was still there. He was sitting on a chair with food and surrounded by friends of his own. Turning back around he sat down on the floor - finding a few toys he’d left in the tree house still there.

“How do you know how to play exploding snap?” Draco asked eagerly as he pulled out a large collection of cards.

Harry nodded, pointing towards his own set slightly hidden under the covers that were strewn beside his toys.

“Let’s play!” Draco said, scrambling forward and beginning to divide them out between them. Smiling slightly smug, he just knew they were going to be best of friends.

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“Well, that went better than I expected,” Lucius mused, staring at the tree listening to the small explosions and giggling.

“He deserves this,” Minerva said, it was honestly mesmerising to hear Harry laughing with such carefree abandon after all that had happened to him.

“He does,” Severus agreed, perhaps he should invite Draco around quite often so Harry got used to children his own age. “Perhaps a trip to Hogsmeade?”

“Are you kidding? Draco would scare Harry with his demands!” Narcissa admitted, he was quite spoiled. That and the way they were in public would scare Harry right off them. “It would be nice to let them have an ice cream through.” out in the sun not just in manors or gardens even, they didn’t do it often enough.
“What does Dumbledore want?” Lucius demanded of Sirius unable to keep silent any longer or keep his curiosity at bay.
“I don’t know, I didn’t read it,” Sirius admitted, removing it from his cloak pocket, “I think we can all agree on the most probable reason.” opening it up he began to read, Narcissa who was sitting next to him, began to read it despite how rude it was, but Sirius didn’t mind. He just continued to get redder in the face each sentence he read; he wanted to kill the old fool. “He’s trying to use your apparent disappearance to try and lure me to Hogwarts…is he just thick?” Sirius was staring at Remus as he spoke. Everyone that knew him would know the first thing he would do was go for Remus - well that and Harry (if he wasn’t supposedly thought dead but missing).
“You left with me, one of the first things he did would be to get Lupin, which we of course had already done, so he will have thought you didn’t have the time to go to Remus.” Minerva replied, her tone thoughtful. “He’s using your friend against you, he knows you will do anything, especially considering he’s the only one left.” they didn’t consider Pettigrew a friend obviously, and James was gone all they had now was each other.
“He’s desperate to get to Harry, to prove he’s alive to lessen the charges he’s facing, no doubt he will have an answer for everything else that happened.” Lucius guessed, “Using your desperation and Lupin to track him down, he could have potentially found him in less than a month.”
“He wouldn’t use Moony!” Sirius gaped, paling at the thought of Moony anywhere near his godson. Merlin he loved Remus, but he would never trust him as a wolf near Harry! It would be an easy meal; he’d be ripped to shreds.
“He would have.” Severus replied bitterly, “Fortunately for all concerned he wouldn’t be able to find the manor, it’s protected against creatures.”
“So I have to leave for the full moon?” Remus asked resigned. He was curious about what Dumbledore had actually written. He would need to ask Sirius to let him read it later.
“No, you already know where it is, you are already inside, the dungeons are free for your use, they’ll be completely locked off - I won’t take the chance of anything happening.” Severus replied. “I don’t want him having the same nightmares as I did for years.” not after promising him he was safe. By the time he was done it would be impossible to penetrate them, he would be stuck down there until it was over. The outer door was steel reinforced, as well as a variety of spells to ensure their safety.
“Why not have Harry come for a sleepover?” Narcissa suggested.
“I think that’s too soon, while he trusts us, I don’t think he’d be able to last the night without Severus,” Lucius said adamantly, “Watch Harry, he will look back just to make sure he’s there in the next few minutes, he’s been doing that since they went up there twenty minutes ago.”
“Oh,” Narcissa said, seeing it for herself, the poor child was still scared. “Then perhaps you can come yourself Severus?”
“For a sleepover?” Severus asked dryly. His tone giving his answer the thought was utterly ridiculous, but that’s because he’d never slept over anywhere, well unless you counted Hogwarts.
“I think perhaps we should allow Harry to get used to being here before having any kind of sleepover.”
“Shall we call them down to eat or send some food up?” Lucius suggested, they were getting on well, he was very pleased.
“Perhaps they should decide,” Severus mused thoughtfully, “Harry! Draco!” Severus called, he didn’t bark it, he’d rather Harry didn’t think he was in trouble. Yet as soon as his name was called, Harry was climbing down the ladder, and running over as if the devil himself was on his tail.
“Is it time for food?” Harry asked eagerly.
“Are you hungry?” Severus asked, shrewdly.
Harry nodded, “Yes dad,”
“Why did you not say something? I’ve always told you to come to me when you are hungry,” Severus pointed out feeling bad that Harry looked stricken but he wanted it to sink in.
“Sorry, I’ll try better,” Harry said quietly, quite frankly looking sorry for himself. Severus pressed his hand under Harry’s chin, making him look at him, “I don’t want to see you
hungry, little one, I want you to know you can come to me whenever and wherever to get something to eat. So you turn into a big strong boy, do you hear?”
“Yes, daddy,” Harry said, grinning sheepishly now.
“Good, do you want to eat in the tree house or down here?” Severus enquired; the others all remained quiet knowing better than to interrupt Severus when he was dealing with Harry since obviously he knew the child best and how to deal with everything that occurred.
“Can we go back after?” Harry asked he’d been having so much fun.
“Of course,” Severus said solemnly, “Sit down then boys and eat.”
“I’ll get it,” Narcissa said immediately standing up, plating a selection of food for the boys as everyone else dug in too. Lucius was holding two and filling them up, one for himself and of course for his wife.
Chapter 38

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 38

"Dumbledore's trial is today," Lucius commented the very second he stepped out of the fireplace in Prince Hall; Severus was just literally walking into the room. Judging by the dragon hide gloves, he had been brewing while Harry was at his lessons. Remus was still 'helping' Minerva, so Harry could get accustomed to Remus before Minerva returned to Hogwarts when the students returned. She wouldn't be able to teach him anymore, and considering how attached Harry was growing to his godmother, it wouldn't be easy for the child who was obviously desperate for love and a routine. If anything it had been the routine that had eased Harry's worries considerably.

"It wasn't meant to be for three more weeks," Severus insisted, frowning in confusion, "What happened?"

"I know how tense you've been, so I gave some galleons to the appropriate people and got the dates moved. The one in its place is just a misdemeanour anyway, so they were quite happy to change it." Lucius said smoothly, a smug smirk tugging at his lips. Severus might try to deny it, but the longer Dumbledore was walking amongst them the riskier it was. Harry was in effect thought dead to the world, not only by the fact it certainly seemed so with the rumours but his magical signature had died out when he was adopted, so to the idiots at the ministry it meant he was gone.

Nobody other than those closest to them would ever know Harrison 'Harry' Snape was in fact (or had ever been) Harry Potter. Even Harry himself was unaware of his real last name, and that was the way it would remain, they had to keep him safe and telling him something like that and expecting him to keep it a secret was a bit much for a five year old.

"Thank you, Lucius," Severus replied, unconsciously relaxing his shoulders proving Lucius' theory correct. "What time is it commencing?"

"Two," Lucius replied, "I am unsure if you are coming, I know you told him you were in Switzerland so perhaps its best if you are not there."

"I do want to be there actually," Severus replied, sighing softly, as he silently gestured for Lucius to seat as he took one himself. "Truthfully I hadn't thought about how it would look, but surely it couldn't be that suspicious it can just be stated that I get the UK Daily Prophet there, and obviously I would return for something as important as this. There is only one thing holding me back from deciding."

"I told you that you were best for him," Lucius drawled smugly, already knowing what he was talking about. "You put him first before all else, you are a great father Severus." his smug smirk lightened to a small smile seeing the pale red flush Severus currently supported - but he valued his own life enough not to comment on it. "Harry of course, agrees with me."

"Of course he would," Severus replied gaining control of himself, "He would say that to anyone who looks after him as he always should have been."
"When do his lessons end?" Lucius enquired had the lesson time gone further now Harry was comfortable? He had never thought to ask before.

"Three, he has three hours of lessons at the moment, it's enough, he's so desperate for approval that he's doing very well." Severus sighed, but he was going to encourage that as much as possible. He wanted Harry to do very well when it was time to him to attend Hogwarts - that's if Dumbledore wasn't there. He wasn't going to risk Harry at all, while nobody else would think much of 'the greasy git' having a son they hadn't heard about, Dumbledore would dig deeper and quite possibly find out the truth. He was hoping as Harry grew that he would look more like himself and even Lily, if he had too much of James Potter in him there was a risk of even the public finding out. Sons always ended up looking like he father, it was just how it was for some reason, and they believed it had something to do with the magic. Draco was Lucius' double, just as Lucius was Abraxas double and so on and so forth, although Lucius certainly wouldn't like hearing that. Lucius did not think much of his father hadn't for a long time. "I believe Minerva wishes to be there as well." they couldn't all go, that much was obvious.

"Black has to show his face, everyone knows how much he loved the Potters, now that he is proven innocent of course," Lucius sneered in disgust. "If he doesn't show up people will begin to talk and wonder. Especially if he suddenly becomes friends with you and befriends your son who happens to be called Harry."

"Which means Lupin as well," Severus grumbled his reluctant nod of agreement, it was true. "Perhaps I should just refrain from going, get a memory of it from you or one of the others." he wasn't happy that he wouldn't be there to see Dumbledore sentenced but he would never leave Harry home alone. Merlin he could only imagine the state he would be in when he returned. No he would just content himself with a memory of it.

"On another note, the foundation for the care home will begin today, it will take around five months to complete but it's a start." Lucius added knowing Severus would like to know about it.

"Once it's put in the papers you must be prepared, a lot of Muggle-born students will come forward with their own stories." Severus warned, "That department must be up and running especially before the end of the school year." Lucius frowned thoughtfully, "Just how many do you suspect may come forward?" the idea alarmed him more than he cared to admit. No magical child should be abused, he didn't care about their blood, or the person particularly but they shouldn't be abused for something beyond their control.

"Even such a calculation is beyond me, but a lot of Muggle-born's are so used to the treatment they probably haven't gone to a teacher. With such a safe heaven opening for them, they might be more willing to step forward about it. I would say anywhere between five to ten students…" Severus mused, seeing Lucius relaxing he added, "Per house."

"Ah, well, I should ensure there are a few others brought in then," Lucius said, forty students? He just hoped Severus was being cautious but he knew that it wasn't possible, he always gave the blunt uncensored truth whether people liked it or not. Though the students weren't his immediate concern, it was the young ones, under eleven stuck with possible abusive parents. The Accidental Magic Protection Squad now had more than just reversing magic done by inexperienced wizards and witches. They were now in charge of making sure the child was treated appropriately, given permission to spy on them for a few weeks or until they were sure all was well before leaving. It was the only way to ensure the health and wellbeing of all magic children. They were now part of the 'social services' department and would work cohesively together. Lucius had done his job well,
and was proud of himself for it. And most people had the audacity to say he didn't have a 'real job' because he had money. Well they wouldn't be saying that for now, when the news got out. It would be forgotten in a few months though and they'd be back to saying the same old stuff.

"Always better prepared than surprised," Severus stated, glancing at the time, one hour until Dumbledore's trial, oh how he wished he could see the look on the old fools face when he realized it had been put forward. Less time for him to wheedle his way out, and the fact he couldn't get his hands on Black, Lupin or Harry helped make him look guiltier, good.

"Yes, quite correct," Lucius summarised. Nothing in the blonde's body language told Severus he was looking forward to the oncoming trial, but Severus knew his old friend was. Lucius had always hated Dumbledore, half the influence of Abraxas but did indeed come to hate him on his own with a vengeance later in life.

"Perhaps without Dumbledore our world might come back into some semblance of a real world, instead of it sitting on their backside so sure in the fact the old fool is doing the best for them." Severus added, and the reality of it was that is exactly what they were doing. Trusting Dumbledore with things they had no right trusting him with. Thankfully he had been stripped of all his titles; they had even removed the Order of Merlin from him, not wishing to be embarrassed by having someone who had neglected their hero having such a prestigious award.

"It can't come soon enough," Lucius admitted, rubbing at his eyes, he hadn't been getting much sleep lately, all plans had to be drawn up and approved before the work could start, and he had been adding things and removing things from the care centre until he was sure it was perfect. Now he had to get the community involved and get everyone to donate items for when the children begin appearing. Now that wasn't going to be an easy task, but he wasn't a Slytherin for nothing, he knew just how to get the other pureblood's involved, plus it wasn't as if they were short of a few funds to aid in the betterment of their world.

"Well I think we should avoid the public for a while after the trial," Severus grimaced, "It's going to be revolting to see." everyone so betrayed and hurt pretending as though they had given a one iota of care and consideration. If he saw and observed it he wouldn't be able to hold back his scathing retorts, no if he was able to do that it would be a miracle. He wasn't known for holding back, so yes, it would be ideal to remain behind closed doors until the shock had tapered off.

Lucius smirked, "I actually enjoy seeing it," he said gleefully, oh the chaos, the next few days would be covered in it. The papers, the reactions, the people, yes, he got off on chaos. Seeing a big figure like Albus Dumbledore taken down, it would be mesmerising.

Severus snorted in amusement seeing his eyes light up.

"I should inform Minerva," Severus stated if she found out afterwards Minerva would find a way of getting him back, and he could do without a vindictive powerful witch on his tail so to speak. It wouldn't be anything…serious, but it would be uncomfortable, he knew from experience. She was always rather creative in her ways of getting back at people, the students themselves would die if they knew half the things Minerva had done - all they saw her as is a stern teacher.

"Of course," Lucius said in agreement, "I'll wait,"

Only then did Severus stand up, unlike the students at Hogwarts his generation had been taught manners. He quickly made his way to the room that had been turned into an office of sorts for Harry's schooling. The House-elves had done a very good job, made it bright and vibrant, so that Harry could see that learning could be fun. He knocked on the door, despite the fact that it was his own house before opening the door.
"DAD!" Harry exclaimed running over and hugging him close as if he hadn't seen him for days not just an hour. Nobody was surprised by his greeting any longer; Harry just needed the reassurance that he wasn't going to be abandoned again.

Severus wrapped his own arms around his son, caressing his hair, it was such an addictive thing to do, it was always soft and Harry loved any sort of affectionate touch. A small smile slipped onto his face when he leaned into it, he was also getting taller, which he took great delight in. But of course, his potions were perfect so he shouldn't have expected anything else. It could also be the Snape blood he had taken, since all Snape's were extremely tall, especially when they went through puberty. He had been taller than even Lily by the time they were fourteen. "The date has been changed," Severus informed them, giving Minerva a pointed look so she understood - but there was no need.

"When?" Minerva enquired, succeeding in keeping her voice from changing - she didn't want to scare Harry after all.

"Two, you must take Black and make sure he puts it on quite thick, you know how he is, so does everyone else…there can be no doubt in anyone's mind…is that understood?" Severus said his voice deceptively quiet, here he was mostly speaking to Lupin but Minerva of course would help too.

"I know," Remus murmured his agreement, his face pained; it was going to be a tough few hours keeping Sirius in line. He always acted first thought later, used to be though never though so progress was progress at least.

Severus nodded grimly.

"What does that mean daddy?" Harry asked, his green eyes with black swirling in now and again, peering up into Severus' having to arch his neck to see his face.

"Sirius has an appointment he has to keep, but he will be back later, in fact Remus and Minerva are going as well." Severus sombrely informed his son.

"But not you?" Harry asked, tightening his hold on his dad eyes beginning to fill with worry.

"No, I'm staying right here with you, in fact while they are away why don't we read a book? How does that sound?" Severus said soothingly, brushing away all of Harry's fears immediately.

Harry nodded eagerly, "Can we read a potions book? First year one?" his eyes unconsciously pleading with his dads.

"If that is what you'd like," Severus said, eyes gazing at his son with softness nobody else got to see. Popping his finger against his nose causing him to giggle and smile widely.

"Yes!" Harry crowed happily, unaware of the tension within the adults, but it wasn't due to Harry's inability to tell, because Harry was very good at reading body language, no, the others already knew this information and were containing it, quite successfully as well. Harry absolutely loved reading time with his dad; even his bed time stories were great.

"I should go and get ready," Remus replied, "I'll see you soon, Harry," he told him, messing his hair softly as he passed.

"Bye!" Harry said, he had no problem with the others leaving, it was just his dad he hated the thought of going away and leaving him on his own.
Minerva picked up Harry's workbook, pencil and self-inking quill and absently put them in what she saw as her desk, for the moment at any rate. She was going to miss teaching her godson. She would need to arrange with Severus to come at least once at the weekend, she never wanted Harry to think she was abandoning him. He had been hurt too much in the past as it was, she planned to be a very much in the picture godmother to Harry.

Harry would soon be safe, she would be installed as Headmistress and accept Severus' resignation so his contract would be null and void. Of course, that meant finding both a Transfiguration teacher, Head of Gryffindor as well as a Potions Master. Sinatra was already the Head of Slytherin house and taking care of them so that wasn't a concern. Filius would become Deputy Head due to being their longest second only to her of course. She was the dates had been moved, it gave her a little more time to get things sorted so when the students returned everything was as normal as it could get for them.

Hopefully he could see Hogwarts for himself at some point, but she would need to see if the protective daddy would go for it. She thought secretly to herself, he made such a good dad, she was honestly surprised. He had no patience for children, or so she thought, he was so calm and soft spoken to Harry, and it was beautiful to see.

"Is there anything you need while we are gone? Potion ingredients? Something from the Alley?" yes they could owl order, but that was more for school children who couldn't leave the school grounds. Not without ending up in serious trouble at any rate. Plus he had been very accommodating to let her live here, even if she wasn't anymore. So it was just the polite thing to do at the end of the day.

"No, thank you, Minerva," Severus replied honestly, his lips quirking just slightly to show his appreciation for her words.

"We will be back as soon as it's over." Minerva promised he deserved to know as soon as possible what was going on. She never thought this day would come, assumed she would need to act her part until Harry was eleven and gained his headship, which she had no doubt had been Severus' plan. Lucius she knew had implemented everything else and totally destroyed the Dursley's and Dumbledore in one fell swoop. It was quite ingenious really, how he had managed to do that without actually doing anything - legally at least. He had left that for everyone else to do, the Ministry really.

"Good," Severus stated, he hated to miss this but his son came first. "I must return to Lucius,"

"Can I come?" Harry asked peering up at his dad again, having been quiet while they spoke, the Dursley's had beaten him horribly for interrupting them, and he had learned to be quiet and when to be quiet. If Minnie and Remy were going away then he mustn't be having any more lessons so he didn't need to stay here - he could be with his daddy.

"Of course," Severus said, turning around and walking towards the sitting room, not even twitching when Harry's small hand slipped into his.

"How's my favourite godson?" Lucius asked, seeing Harry.

Harry beamed nodding his head that he was fine before walking over and giving him a small hug like he had taken to doing. Giggling at his long hair tickling his face, before he shuffled back beside his dad once more. Picking up his favourite dragon, that Lucius had given him during his first days at the manor.

"Do the public know?" Minerva asked Lucius as she joined the quiet trio.
"I wouldn't be surprised if they do now," Lucius drawled in amusement.

"Of course," Minerva replied her lips twitching; the Ministry couldn't keep anything quiet. "Then it will be packed, quite quickly, especially with reporters so we will have to ensure we get there soon."

"That was my intention, yes," Lucius told her honestly.

"Then I will see you there with Sirius and Remus," She informed him, they couldn't appear to go together, everyone would definitely start gossiping about them. The four couldn't be more different, and if you added Severus to the mix then very much so. "Good bye, Harry, Severus," she added, giving him a fond smile.

"Bye!" Harry said waving cheerfully.

"Very well," Lucius replied, inclining his head in agreement, before Minerva left the sitting room - presumably to get Remus and Sirius and Apparate to the Ministry. "I shall see you both later," and before Severus knew it he was alone in the manor with his son quite possibly for the first time since he had given Lupin and Black permission to stay until the threat that Albus Dumbledore was over.

And it would be very soon.

Which meant he could get rid of them as soon as humanly possible - regretfully not forever since they were part of Harry's life and he couldn't deny them that. Not if he wanted to keep it all quiet, Black when not getting his way was rather…vocal and idiotic and would end up saying something wrong.

"Accio First Grade Potions book!" Severus chanted causing Harry to squeak gleefully at the show of magic and the fact that reading time was coming. Severus merely chuckled as he caught the book in mid air, his son watching him in awe, he couldn't wait until he could do magic like that - although he did love turning into a cat - it was great fun.

Chapter End Notes

I know many of you want to see Harry grow up and if you would still like that then I can continue it after a year or so after this ends so Harry’s less skittish or perhaps two or three years if you want but it will be a sequel and it will need to be after this has been edited, not in the writing sense since it has been edited it just needs posted :) but rather to make sure I've not left anything out...make sure all loose ends are tied! will the potions professor be Slughorn or will we see Charlie Weasley coming back to teach them? since he wont be far into being a dragon handler yet will he? hmm would need to look that up! R&R please!
Chapter 39

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Vow And Its Consequences

Chapter 39

It felt like days to Severus as he waited for the others to return, an hour into reading the First Grade Potions text Harry had fallen asleep. He had continued reading it just to make sure Harry was properly asleep for ten minutes before putting it aside and summoning a book he was in the process of reading and that's what he did, read, that is until the others returned. He was extremely pleased to see them; waiting for word had been extremely long and excruciating even reading an interesting tome to take his mind off the matter at hand. None of their expressions gave away the results, if anything they just looked exhausted.

"How did it go?" Severus enquired, sitting up straighter as he placed the book aside on the table next to the one he'd read from earlier. "Sit down, do you wish for some refreshments?"

"Do you want the pensive memory or just the short version?" Lucius asked, taking a seat his lips quirking just slightly at the sight of Harry curled up over his dragon fast asleep. It was odd to think just a few months ago Harry had been so much smaller and shorter than Draco despite them both being the same age. He was catching up, as evidence by the fact when Draco had been there hadn't been too much of a noticeable difference in either of them.

"I wouldn't mind a cuppa, Severus," Minerva admitted, both Remus and Sirius nodded in silent agreement

"Both," Severus replied immediately. "Flippy? Bring up some refreshments for all of us," he said after a seconds pause until the House-elf showed up.

"Yes Sir!" Flippy chirped disappearing on the spot to do as asked.

"Good news is that he got a prison sentence," Lucius started off with that, it was good, he was glad the older wizard's reputation was ripped to shreds and he was going to Azkaban where he deserved. He was extremely vexed that it wasn't as long as he'd hoped, especially after sitting on a cold hard bench in the Ministry of magic for hours. Sure it had been fun watching the chaos to start with, but it had gotten boring quickly.

"And the bad news?" Severus demanded his tone low so he didn't wake Harry up, he didn't even blink when the platter of food and drink appeared on the table in the middle of the room. He was expecting them to tell him Dumbledore only got one or two years in Azkaban or something, judging by the statement Lucius gave.

"He only got thirteen years," Lucius ground out through gritted teeth, "If you hadn't actually found Harry...he would be responsible for his death, he placed him there and prevented him being taken by the Muggle authorities multiple times. Stopped him being saved by anyone that had his best interests at heart...and he's only going to suffer for thirteen years." oh, he was more than angry he was frothing at the mouth. If that had been his son...he would have wanted proper justice. The only reason it was so 'lenient' was because they couldn't find Harry's body, they had no solid proof
of his death and they feared they never would. Harry deserved a proper burial, as far as they were concerned, to be laid to rest beside his parents and given a proper send off.

Sirius paled at the words, vividly reminded by what he had seen in the pensive, he'd sat through the entire meeting being restrained by Remus furious beyond words, but he'd behaved himself - Harry's new life had relied on it. He hated the fact Harry hadn't warmed up to him, he'd loved him when he was young, used to squeal whenever he was around absolutely loved being with 'Padfoot'. He was trying to be patient though, trying to give Harry the time he needed to come around but it was the most difficult thing he'd ever had to endure. Hell Azkaban had been a cakewalk compared to seeing his own godson scared witless of him.

"Good," Severus replied relaxing somewhat.

"Wa…good?" Lucius' face morphed into one of shocked disbelief, so caught off guard that he'd actually stuttered for the first time in a very long time.

"Harry will have graduated from Hogwarts by then, legally an adult; there is absolutely nothing he can do, that is if he survives the hell in there. With all he's done, whether it's his greater good or not, the Dementors will feed from it and with some luck he will die after a few years locked up in there." Severus said vindictively.

"You are alright with this?" Minerva asked in surprise.

"Honestly? Yes, I was expecting a suspended sentence or forced house arrest I didn't think they'd really sentence him." Severus admitted his deepest fear. "As I said the sentence he'll serve will ensure Harry's an adult and safe from him. When and if he gets out there will be nothing he can do - even if he miraculously retains a support base."

"I suppose it is better than it could have turned out to be," Remus sighed, rubbing at his face. He couldn't believe how calm Snape was being over this; they'd all expected him to be furious over the verdict. Was he hiding his true feelings? No, he wasn't one to do that sort of thing - well unless Harry was around these days Remus silently supposed. Harry was asleep right now so maybe he actually was?

"Do you have a vial, Severus?" Lucius enquired, he had other things that needed his urgent attention so he couldn't remain for long today.

"Accio vial!" Severus whispered but no less determinedly, then whistling could be heard before the vial ran with a smack into Severus' open hand before his fingers closed around it keeping it secure in his hand. He absently added a stronger non-breaking charm to it before handing it over to Lucius.

Lucius removed the memory, using his wand to guide the misty floating fluid into the small vial before sealing it closed.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Minerva asked again cautiously, it just wasn't like Severus…unless Harry truly had changed him.

"I'm just glad its over," Severus stated, accepting the vial back, amused by their antics, it was as if they expected him to explode, Dumbledore was out of the way, Harry was safe from his manipulation way into adulthood and by then he would be well aware of Dumbledore's disreputable character and would know better than to believe anything the old fool said or did.

"Harry is safe that is the most important thing right now." he glanced over at the sleeping child. He'd loved Lily, unrequited the way he wished, and when she'd had that baby, he'd been so
envious; it could have been his if he had spoken up or actually shut up and not called her that foul loathsome name. Who would have thought that he’d adopt Harry? He certainly hadn’t seen it coming a mile away but having Harry in his life now, he was glad for that. The best thing of all there was no way anyone would suspect he would take Harry Potter in. The hatred he’d felt for James Potter was too well known in all circles. "Has he been sent straight to Azkaban or has he been given the opportunity of speaking to his brother before being transported?"

"Aberforth did not attend," Sirius admitted it was one of the things he’d allowed himself to be distracted about. "Now that Dumbledore is gone…we should focus on the last thing needed for Harry to be safe."

"Voldemort's main soul piece," Remus asked and Sirius nodded in confirmation.

"One thing at a time, lad," Minerva said, "At least let us feel a small sense of success."

"I trust you were made Headmistress?" Severus asked realizing he hadn't thought to enquire earlier. The Ministry might insist on interfering with Dumbledore out of the way. He sincerely hoped that wasn’t the case, even if it was he would be fired anyway, which was what he wanted, out of his contract.

"Yes," Minerva answered immediately giving a strict nod. "The first thing I'm going to do is get you out of your contract don’t worry. Although it's going to be difficult getting teachers especially so close to Hogwarts starting back up. Hopefully Filius will help with the interviews and we can come up with a few possible candidates."

"If you will, do not put advertisements in the Daily Prophet. Those worthy of the position of teaching children do not look for jobs in the pathetic selection that newspaper has to offer. Use the Transfiguration monthly and the Potioneer magazines it will ensure all those that apply are aptly qualified for the positions." Lucius said smoothly, giving up his advice on how best to get the best candidates.

"The only decent advertisement in the Daily Prophet are the ones for Ministry positions, even then half the idiots that show up aren't even slightly qualified. I remember I had half a dozen interviews for new recruits, most of them didn't even have the necessary N.E.W.T's to get accepted." Sirius agreed grudgingly more put out by the fact it was Malfoy giving sound advice than anything else.

"Both magazines are due out in two days, you have enough time to get a slot before the weekend," Severus pointed out, he knew both magazines but rarely bought Transfiguration monthly, now Potioneer was definitely something he bought.

"That's right, they do," Minerva nodded, her subscription was due in two days time, she had to get a letter to both magazines off tonight.

"I'm heading to the Auror office; I want to find out what kind of investigating they did on Voldemort after…what happened." Sirius stated he wasn't going to rest until Voldemort was dead; he wasn't going to let anything risk his godson whether Harry hated him or not didn't come into it.

"And you think you'll be able to get the files?" Severus asked sardonically.

"I still have friends in the department, one of them is family, and I'll get the information one way or another." Sirius told him with determination.

"Is it possible the Auror's actually got anywhere? Surely they wouldn't know something and continue the lie that Voldemort was dead if he wasn't!" Remus was aghast at the thought.
"Who knows? Any of the really decent Aurors ended up dead, retired, in Azkaban…or worse," Sirius' voice wobbled thinking of the Longbottoms. They had been very good people, they certainly hadn't deserved what had happened to them. "Moody might even know something." that was someone else he was surprised that hadn't shown up. Moody had been good friends with Dumbledore, he'd either been too paranoid to attend or he was too ashamed by his association of him? Hopefully he would be able to cough up some useful information.

"Then do it," Severus stated sharply, it looked as if he wasn't going to stop anyway, and he wanted to savour this small victory before worrying about a disembodied Dark Lord. That's not to say he wasn't worried, he was, twenty-four seven.

Sirius stared surprised by the words, "Alright," he retorted standing up; he knew when he wasn't wanted.

"I'll come," Remus added hastily, also standing. "We'll be by later."

"I must take my leave also, Severus, I have letters of advertisements to write, and a new deputy to appoint." Minerva admitted.

"I also," Lucius said bemused. "I'm sure you've got a pensive memory to view."

"I won't be going in while I'm on my own, I cannot risk Harry wakening up and thinking he's alone." Severus shook his head, standing up being a proper host. "I'll see you all soon."

"You will, I'll be back to see Harry soon," Minerva promised. She wasn't going to let her godson think for a second she was abandoning him.

"Draco is looking forward to their play date; I have a funny feeling he will be demanding them constantly soon enough." Lucius chuckled in dry amusement, and what his son wanted…he got. Well as long as it didn't interfere with his education that he wouldn't condone or allow.

"As long as Harry is fine with that then I see no problem with it," Severus smiled, he was very glad that his godson and son were getting on. It could be the beginnings of a beautiful friendship as long as Draco didn't get too demanding with Harry until he grew into his own and actually said no or whatever when they were playing and it wasn't something Harry wanted to do. If anything Draco might help Harry come further out of his shell.

"It did go well," Minerva admitted as they waited for Sirius and Remus to Floo away leaving the network open for Lucius. She never thought she'd see the day where she was actually on friendly terms with the Malfoy family; they were a motley bunch for damn sure.

"You'll let me know if they find anything?" Lucius asked, standing in the fireplace, still looking regal despite the fact he was squashed into a small enclosed dirty fireplace.

"You'll be the first," Severus told Lucius honestly.

"I better be the second," Minerva warned him, as the fireplace flared to life after both men had given nods goodbye.

"Of course," Severus agreed, "But the chances…" he trailed off not needing to say anything.

"I agree." Minerva nodded her agreement. The chances were pretty damn slim or the Auror's would have taken that chance of hunting him down while he was weakened beyond belief. They wouldn't wait until he was back and wreaking havoc on the magical world once more.
Unbeknown to them, they were in for a rude awakening by the information they would soon receive.

Chapter End Notes

There we go short I know for some reason i'm not getting out the chapters in the lengths i'm used to hopefully that will change! so what information will they get? have the aurors buried the information? or has Dumbledore ensured it remained hidden and Sirius able to find it? R&R PLEASE
Chapter 40

The Vow and its Consequences

Chapter 40

Three month had passed since Albus Dumbledore had been sentenced to Azkaban prison. Unsurprisingly life went on, people forgot about Dumbledore for most part. When he was remembered it was with disgust and horror, as far as everyone was concerned Dumbledore had killed their hero, a young boy who had defeated the darkest wizard the magical world had ever known. There were two or three people who continued on in their belief that Albus was only doing what was right, that he was innocent, but those people did not speak up regarding it, for anyone who tried to defend Dumbledore became outcasts, treated as though they were Dumbledore himself. In other words they were hexed and cursed, and conveniently there were never any witnesses who saw what happened.

What had everyone talking were the actions of one Lord Lucius Abraxas Malfoy. Despite the fact he had been declared not guilty for his association with 'You-Know-Who' the majority of the magical world had been furious over him getting off scot-free. They had believed he was a Death Eater, and an evil wizard who was just waiting on the Dark Lord returning. All the while climbing the ladder within the Ministry by lining people's pockets.

That was until a few months ago, when word began to get out about his latest project. Even more surprising was the vocal support of Headmistress Minerva McGonagall. It was during that time they began to wonder, was it possible he had been under the Imperius Curse all along? Creating a children's shelter wasn't something an evil wizard would do after all…and in the name of Harry Potter too. Lucius had said for the paper that he believed if such a shelter had existed…perhaps Harry would still be alive. The child had saved him, saved his family, and so Lucius vowed that nobody else magical would suffer. He even went as far as stating that all magical children would be welcomed in the children's shelter, Pureblood's, Half-Blood's and Muggle-born's.

Lucius had bought both the grounds around Riddle Mansion, the Gaunt lands which he had used to built the children's shelter but after careful tracking to find out who owned the building, which was used as tax purposes he realized, he had bought it from them, using means the Muggle-loving light wizards wouldn't…quite approve of. Not that Lucius cared, once he had the mansion he had considered redoing it, giving himself another property to rent out but it was far too Muggle for his tastes, he absolutely refused to have the thing in his name the way it was. So it had been demolished and a new building would be built in its place, in fact Narcissa had taken part in that, designing the building and telling the builders what to do and such. His wife would never admit it but she was extremely bored while Draco was being tutored in all things essential until his Hogwarts letter came.

Severus had been handed his nullified contract, Minerva had informed him that his expertise was no longer needed and that he no longer was considered the Potions Master at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It hadn't even been twenty-four hours since Dumbledore had been put in Azkaban. Severus had accepted it with a smirk on his face, glad at last that he no longer had to teach dunderheads the subtle arts of potions making. Due to Lucius' advice, Minerva had indeed quickly found two professors who fitted in rather well, even if they were younger than most of the other professors - the students seemed to like them.
Severus spent most of his time with his son, just enjoying the freedom to do whatever he wished. Subtly the 'reason' for Severus quitting Hogwarts had gotten around, not getting to spend time with his 'son' and wishing to do so before he began his education at Hogwarts or whichever school he sent his son to. Ingathering it in peoples mind subconsciously that Severus had had a son all along, so no question of his paternity would be raised. Fortunately the adoption potion had changed Harry enough that nobody in their right mind could honestly say that Harry Snape was or had ever been Harry Potter. He had too many Prince Characteristics; nothing in James Potter had remained in Harry. That and Severus was a known recluse, he rarely ventured outside, preferring to stay out the spotlight. Those in the Ministry thought they knew the real reason for Severus’ insistent on his son being hidden, for they knew he had been a spy for Albus Dumbledore and the proof had been immense so much so that it couldn't be denied. Unbreakable Vows and the like, so yes, his loyalties had most definitely been for the light side - and this they believed despite not knowing exactly what the Vows promised.

Today was a special day, it was Harry's first Yule at Prince hall, and the first time he was getting to celebrate the holiday. Yet when he had woken up at seven and Harry was still in bed it had surprised him. The presents under the tree were still untouched, and exactly where he had put them last night - without anything out of place - he hadn't even snuck down and tried to guess what was in them.

Severus stared at the tree, his black eyes filled with resigned understanding. Despite his reassurances, Harry still assumed he wouldn't receive anything. The Muggle world had their children believing in a mythical being called Santa Clause, but the wizarding world did not do that. No, they celebrated by having the entire family around, having a meal and exchanging gifts, back in the day wizards had hunted for the beast they'd put on the table during the evening meal before they paid homage to the gods. Some families still did it, in fact it was something of a tradition he and his mother had after his father was completely out of it, due to his drinking.

He had of course, informed Harry that 'Santa' didn't exist, but it had been for naught since Harry was already aware. He had observed Vernon and Petunia buying the items and also bringing them down the stairs after Dudley had gone to bed for years now. Harry due to the fact he'd slept in a cupboard under the stairs, and the weight of Vernon, he'd been woken the second he lumbered down. Part of him was relieved that he didn't need to tear away any innocence Harry still had after living with those wretched people.

Perhaps in a few years Harry would be comfortable and more secure in his new life and would no doubt have him up extraordinary early wishing to open presents. Which was what Lucius and Narcissa were probably going through right now with his godson he thought with amusement. It was one of the few days where Draco was allowed to be himself without being expected to be a pureblood heir. Not that Draco suffered from it, he was a spoiled little boy but he had limitations to it and that was a very good thing.

He would be seeing his godson in a matter of hours, not just Draco but his home was going to be quite full today, fuller than he wanted to deal with but he wanted to make this day memorable for Harry. He had invited Minerva expecting and understanding if she couldn't come, she was a Headmistress and sometimes a lot of students remained for the holidays than go home. Ironically it was mostly those who would have to return to the Muggle world that remained, each year all his Slytherin's returned home for the holidays. He would always think of his students whom he'd taught as his Slytherins. He had taken his duty as a guardian of sorts extremely seriously.

"Does Master Severus want breakfast?" Flippy asked, popping next to his Master who was now awake, he had been up earlier expecting young master to be awake already and had the fires going so the manor was nice and warm for his Master and young master.
"Just a coffee for the moment," Severus informed Flippy, moving away from the doorway which he had been standing at for a good ten minutes. He claimed his usual seat, Harry would be joining him sooner or later, the smell of food usually did the trick, but obviously not today since the smell of dinner (which was just in its beginning stages) was already wafting from the kitchen permeating the manor. A few moments later Flippy returned with his coffee before leaving without another word, between cleaning and cooking they'd be very busy.

Flicking his wand, he summoned a black bound book before holstering his wand again, and opening to the last page before immersing himself in it. It was a book he used to write down his ideas, both spells and potions; he had long ago stopped using his school books for such a thing. A great deal of them remained unfinished; others he was successfully able to get from theory to creation were published. Now that he wasn't constantly busy (with only the summer holidays to do as he pleased) with homework, essays, creating quizzes for the students, brewing potions for Poppy and overseeing the students brewing he had time now to devote to both his potions and more importantly his son.

To the world Harry was his son, and nobody would be able to accidentally figure out the truth. Lucius had successfully removed the copy the Ministry had of Harry's birth certificate, including the adoption certificate which updated automatically, it was used to prevent anyone from kidnapping a child and using the adoption potion and getting away with it. Which he was, thanks to the fact Lucius had ties within the Ministry. If they discovered it missing he was sure they would blame Dumbledore, but considering everything he doubted they'd even look, after all everyone truly believed Harry Potter was dead. He had all the documents safely squared away, it wasn't his intention to keep it hidden from Harry not forever, and he would be told - if he didn't already know - he certainly wasn't going to remind him. He wanted Harry to have a normal life and he was going to do his damn best to ensure it.

Shaking off his lingering thoughts, his gaze roaming over the page and like lightening an epiphany struck, of course, why hadn't he thought of that before? Phoenix tears, it would bind the potion together and also have the added benefit of healing further. The question remained where to put it, he didn't want an exploding potion after all now that would be no good to anyone. Piercing eyes thought on each scenario, regretfully each scenario played out with an explosion. He needed to add a potion that wasn't corrosive with phoenix tears.

This little project he had been working on for five years, regretfully he had lost hope that he'd ever be able to invent it. Sana Mente he had coined it, with all his troubles and duties he'd never been able to concentrate on it as much as he wanted to. During the summers he would try and brew it a few times, but he'd known even then he was missing something and each experiment he had worked on amounted to nothing but wasted hours. The margin at the side was a testament to how many times he had tried various ingredients.

Phoenix tears…he had nothing of the sort available to him; it was expensive, around a thousand galleons for a quarter vial. Which would allow him to do three or four experiments, if he was lucky. Summoning his owl order catalogues, from various different apothecaries from all around the UK. He liked to grab bargains on his potions ingredients, only the best of course, and it was why he had only five owl order catalogues for potions, when there were around fifteen shops that sell and deliver potions, but he found most inadequate.

Picking up the Finnegan Apothecary, where he got the majority of his stock, which was located in Ireland, by a prominent Irish Wizarding Pureblood family all of whom were Potion Masters themselves or married to one. Even as he browsed through it, new items were being put up for sale, and others disappearing after a red sign blazoned across it 'sold out' which didn't happen unless there was a mad rush, such as during late August and the start of September before the schools
started up. After getting to the ‘P’ section he found there was no phoenix tears only ashes, a
thoughtful frown worked its way onto his face, ash did have healing properties, and it might be
useful to obtain some.

Standing up he retrieved one of his self-inking quills and returned to his seat, filling the order in
which was at the back, knowing it probably wouldn't be delivered for at least three days. Placing
the magazine aside, he moved on to the others, and found what he was looking for in Stone
Apothecary, filling that in as well, having ended up buying more than he intended but no matter,
they would be used regardless. Potion ingredients did not get wasted with him.

Once finished he used a spell to return them to his desk, quill and all. Prince Hall was completely
decked with Christmas decorations. Severus had never celebrated Christmas, not even putting a
tree up the few times he had returned to Spinners End. He'd never had a reason to, and also
declined to attend any functions or dinners, not even the ones Lucius all but begged him to attend -
which he would deny since Malfoy's never begged of course. During those years he never thought
for a second he'd be the one doing the inviting, taking Harry in and adopting him had irrevocably
changed his life. He wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not. What he did know for certainty was
that he loved Harry, the little boy had wormed his way into his heart and he would do anything for
him. Even sacrifice his life for him if the need arose.

The sound of footsteps ceased Severus ruminating, catching movement off to the side, he watched
the child from the corner of his eyes, as he stood at the door unsurely. It hurt his heart to see Harry
suddenly so unsure of himself, he had come out of his shell so much in the past months, Draco had
helped a great deal, gave Harry normalcy, a sense of belonging he hadn't experienced before. Or
perhaps he just helped Harry forget, maybe both things, either way; he hoped Harry wouldn't
remain so unsure all day.

"Good morning, Harry, did you have a good rest?" Severus enquired, as he did every morning,
silently gesturing for the child to come to him, which Harry gladly did. Severus patted Harry's back
as Harry hugged him, needing to feel secure no doubt or maybe just shy. "Flippy?" Severus called
out to his House-elf.

"Yes Master Severus?" Flippy asked, completely covered in flour but answering the call.

"We'll have breakfast now, and bring through another coffee for me and a hot chocolate with cream
in it cool enough to drink for Harry." Severus asked politely, "We'll have it here." with that he
stood up, carefully manoeuvring Harry onto his hip as he approached the massive tree that Harry
had gazed at for a whole half hour when he saw it for the first time on the first of December when
the tree first got put up. Summoning a few pillows he put Harry on one of them, and sat himself
down as well. It was very uncomfortable; he didn't think he'd sat on the floor for coming close to a
decade. He awkwardly tried to get comfortable but he was a tall composed man, there was no
getting comfortable.

"Go on then," Severus prodded Harry, watching as those green eyes which had black flecks in them
widen before turning to him again unsurely. "The ones with Harry on them are for you," he once
again prodded the child softly; he could recognize his own name obviously and write it perfectly
with a quill. Severus picked one from under the tree seeing that Harry was overwhelmed and
placed it on his lap. Once Harry was happy enough to open them then he'd go back to his seat,
which he hoped was soon his knees were beginning to ache.

Harry unwrapped the present carefully, his green eyes glimmering happily, opening the box he
found two sacks of stones much like marbles. In each sack was thirty Gobstones - not that Harry
knew this, under the sacks was a square piece of wood, with four circles drawn out inside it, not
including the black circle in the centre.

"The game is called Gobstones, I'll teach you tomorrow unless you'd like Draco to show you, he's coming over later," Severus said softly, brushing his hand through Harry's hair. Harry deserved the entire world after what he'd been through. He appreciated everything, even the damn paper that he'd used to wrap the presents.

That one gift seemed to break the dam and Harry quickly plucked another gift from the pile. Severus noticed that Harry made sure it was for him before he opened it. He beamed in delight, over a simple pack of new exploding Snap playing cards. Draco and Harry had more than worn out their current packs, and probably lost a few as well, not that it mattered.

Once he was sure Harry was quite happily digging into his presents, Severus stood up, stretched out before moving to sit in his usual seat, Harry watched him go and a nod from Severus he turned back, positively exuding excitement. The chess set was unveiled next, Harry hadn't played yet, but Severus wanted to start him on it, it was a very educational game and one played very often at school, the sooner he learnt the more proficient he would be.

Flippy popped back in with breakfast, placing the platter which was bigger than him on the table after clicking his fingers and making the cup Severus had been using disappear. Picking up his coffee, Severus began drinking his second cup for the day; he would definitely need it since he was going to be enduring Black in his home all day. Admittedly things between them had thawed a little, but Severus would never forgive Black for his actions against him. Sure for most part he gave as good as he got, but he'd never actually tried to kill Black whereas Black had tried to kill him by sending him after a damn werewolf. They were somewhat cordial with each other, but they never discussed anything other than Harry or the Death Eaters and Voldemort.

Black had gone to work as an Auror, the Ministry all too happy to help him due to their mess up by sending him to Azkaban without a trial. Admittedly he had ulterior motives, the Ministry had strengthened up and Sirius hadn't been able to get the information he wanted. Those Black had known were no longer Auror's and even Moody had retired, he hadn't been seen once since Dumbledore's arrest. The letters he wrote the old Auror came back unopened, wherever he was hiding must have very strong wards - that surprised nobody the old man was paranoid - but to stop owls? The paranoia was worse than any of them could have anticipated. While he was not on call, investigating or writing up reports he was searching the basement for any information pertaining to investigating Voldemort after the night James and Lily died. Considering they will have covered it up, the information probably wouldn't be buried the year it happened, they will have buried it where they thought nobody would ever think to look - at least that was their thoughts on the matter.

Remus of course, had a job teaching Harry, with him pre-approving everything Remus wished to teach Harry. He got paid of course, he was absent for three days during the full moon each month and during that time Severus taught Harry himself. Usually in potions, teaching him how to properly prepare the ingredients, the small children's levelled potions kits had been completed months ago, but he had bought Harry new ones which were wrapped up under the tree - it would give them more things to brew. Honestly though, he couldn't wait until he could brew a proper potion with him. If he continued well with the children's potions then he definitely wanted to try, it was his passion and something he honestly wanted to pass on to Harry, something they could do together, something that was just theirs. Having a regular job worked wonders on the werewolf; he was actually wearing decent clothes for Merlin's sake. Or it might have something to do with getting his life back, after scurrying away like a rat on a burning ship the night James and Lily died and Sirius was arrested.

"This is for you daddy!" Harry said, panting out of breath, holding out a Christmas bag (with a
moving snowman) a parcel inside that looked…well as if…there was no word that came to mind
for Severus as he stared at it. Harry had done his best, and it was the thought that counted -
although Severus hadn't realized Harry got him anything…Lucius had taken Draco and Harry out
to let Draco get a gift for his mother.

"Thank you, Harry," Severus said, giving him a hug feeling extremely emotional all of a sudden,
normally he only received a few gifts, one from Lucius and Narcissa as well as a bag of sweets
from Dumbledore and perhaps a bottle of whiskey or some such from Minerva, two he had
considered just obligations Lucius and Narcissa usually gave him a card and a voucher for the
apothecaries.

Harry stood watching him with those wide green eyes, they were observing him.

Severus removed the parcel and found a card on top, hand made, with 'Happy Yule' written on it,
Remus had given Harry a lesson on traditions the wizarding world had observed, even if they had
tapered off due to the influx of Muggle-born's or Muggle raised wizards and witches. A hand
drawn picture of the manor and a few trees on front and inside Harry's scrawl the words 'To Daddy
love Harry' were written in ink. A small smile wormed its way onto his face, standing up; placing
the parcel to the side he put the card in a proud place in the centre of the mantel.

Harry looked extremely pleased if the wide smile on his face was anything to go by.

Returning to his seat he unwrapped the messily wrapped present and unveiled the gift Harry had
decided to get him. Inside was a figurine, a doe, it was white and almost wispy just like his
patronus, just like Lily's patronus. The doe was also something Harry strongly represented with
safety as he had placed a variation of the patronus into a globe for Harry who had been scared of
the dark; the patronus had been visible even from the globe. He noticed Harry watching, biting his
lip repeatedly obviously worried that he wouldn't like it.

"This is the most thoughtful gift I've ever received, thank you Harry," Severus said, wrapping
Harry up in a warm embrace. "I love it." Harry had chosen it himself, that made it even more
precious to him, while he liked potions, receiving vouchers for ingredients or the ingredients
themselves just felt…expected. This hadn't been, it meant something to Harry, and now it meant
something to him too. "Why don't you open the rest of your gifts before everyone gets here?" he
suggested.

"Can I have breakfast first?" Harry asked much to Severus immense surprise. Children usually
wanted to open gifts first, and even after that they rarely ate breakfast too wound up, they just
wanted to play with their gifts. He'd assumed Harry would be like that. A lot of his assumptions
about today had already been proven wrong, why not this one too?

"Of course," Severus replied, as if his stomach was shouting its agreement, it grumbled. "Go on, sit
down, I'll bring it over," he informed him, picking up the hot chocolate and his breakfast he
carefully placed the cup on the table next to the couch and placed the plate in his lap.

To his immense surprise the Floo flared to life, twice in the space of a few moments.

"I was not expecting either of you until later," Severus said unimpressed, was time alone with his
son on Christmas morning too much to ask?

"Sorry, Severus, I tried to convince him to wait a few hours," Remus said softly, as always playing
the peace keeper between both men.

"I found it," Sirius stated, he'd found the evidence that the Ministry had been looking into
Voldemort's disappearance despite the fact they said he had been killed that night. "I stayed all night getting the documents, they're only copies but I didn't want to risk that the real ones were charmed to let someone know if they were removed." he had taken the night shift because he wanted to spend some time with Harry on Christmas day. He didn't care that he was tired, Harry was finally accepting him, and by Merlin, he wanted to be part of Harry's life and he was finally getting to. So when he got the invite he made sure he was down for night shift the day before Christmas.

"Not today," Severus said adamantly, "We'll look them over tomorrow at earliest," he wasn't going to sully Harry's first Christmas with whatever was in that damn folder.

"I agree," Remus said vehemently.

"Of course," Sirius nodded his agreement, handing over the folder.

"Happy Yule, Severus, Harry," Remus said handing over a black gift bag; two gifts were stored inside from both himself and Sirius. "These are for you; Sirius has the ones for Harry."

"Have either of you eaten?" Severus asked resignedly, he wasn't going to get rid of them now. Sirius had already wandered over to Harry and sat down beside him, the large bag of gifts next to the tree.

"No, Sirius was adamant about coming right over as soon as he got home, I managed to get him to shower and change but that was it," Remus said in amusement. Smiling at Harry who said Happy Yule back, with a small wave in welcome to both him and Sirius.

"Flippy?" Severus called, once the elf appeared, "Please make two more breakfasts for our guests," the House-elves already knew what Sirius and Remus drank due to their frequency in the manor.

"Why aren't you opening presents?" Sirius asked looking over the gifts Harry had already opened.

"I'm hungry," Harry said plainly as if it made all the sense in the world - which it did to him.

Sirius nodded solemnly, when there was food about Harry was right at it, every time, he didn't play about. Sirius understood that part of Harry probably feared unconsciously that he wouldn't get more so always ate it as soon as it was there. The only time he could seem to forget about it was when he was playing with Draco, but when they were called in Harry went immediately even now. It hit him harder today, since he usually ripped open all his presents as a kid, forgetting about food, and his parents as harsh as they normally were let them enjoy Yule without the ridge pureblood policy coming out to play.

"Excuse me a moment," Severus said, he was going to put the folder in his office, so that he wasn't tempted to peak at it, ensuring Harry knew he would be back, yes despite the fact three months had gone by Harry still constantly looked for him. After his lessons with Remus he always tore through the manor looking for him. It was now that reason that Severus always made sure he was in the living room in time for his 'class' finishing. He had almost had a panic attack when he hadn't been there one day, he'd looked everywhere other than the potions lab he'd been in.

"It does look lovely," Sirius said with a grin, which wiped away seeing Harry grip his food tightly in his hand, eyeing him suspiciously. He'd taken one sweet from him! One sweet! An earwax Berty Bott at that! He hadn't expected him to hoard his food whenever he was around because of it. Sirius raised his hand to declare defeat; he wasn't going to steal his food.

Severus returned quite quickly, placing the gift Harry had got him safely back in the box, not
wishing for anything to happen to it despite the fact it could be repaired - nothing looked quite the same when it was repaired magically. He walked over and placed it on his writing desk where it definitely wouldn't be disturbed. He was in fact contemplating on putting it there; he did spend quite a bit of time on this desk after all.

"When will Draco get here, Dad?" Harry asked as he slid off the couch plate in hand, "Flippy?"

"Yes, young master what can Flippy be doing for you?" Flippy asked, gazing adoringly at his young master.

"Here you go, Flippy, thank you!" Harry said, "Happy Yule!"

Flippy's eyes filled with tears, "Happy Yule to you too young Master Harry," he said taking the plate before disappearing with a pop not wishing to make young master think he'd done something wrong so he thought it best to disappear before the tears sprang out. He was never treated like an equal, not in any family he had served, but Harry did all the time.

"Draco will be here in a few hours, before lunch," Severus informed him, "He will be opening and playing with some of his toys and eating breakfast like you." both Draco and Harry thought of each other as 'best friends' Draco didn't need to wear his 'mask' while playing with Harry, and Harry didn't make him feel the need to act superior. If anything the first few months had brought out a fierce protector in Draco, he had learned to care, learned to control his temper after seeing what it did to Harry. He didn't want to lose his friend after all, and Narcissa and Lucius were in awe of the side that Harry brought out in Draco. Harry was good for him, just as Draco's confidence was good for Harry.

Harry nodded eagerly before he sat down again right in the same spot, and began to open the rest of his presents.

Chapter End Notes

I am so sorry for the long wait, truth be told I though the muse for this one had dried up, i feared I'd never finish it - and I hate that thought! I never - ever want to abandon any story of mine so when I have it a try I was surprised by how easily the chapter came - more hope for the muse than I first thought, it's almost finished too, this was always going to be a short story with Harry in his childhood, perhaps one day there will be a sequel but it would be boring i mean it would just be Harry at Hogwarts with Draco probably in Slytherin with barely any troubles...I mean Voldemort is all but taken care of...only his main soul piece remains :) I mean is that something you'd want to read? even Dumbledores going to be in azkaban...what do you think? R&R please
Chapter 41

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

The Vow And its Consequences

Chapter 41

True to Severus' words, the Malfoy family and Minerva made their way to Prince Hall just before lunch. The group had become very close, Severus and Minerva due to the betrayal from someone they had thought of as a mentor and a friend. Lucius aiding Severus when he needed it most had warmed Minerva to him, and the trio's friendship had strengthened as they went to whatever length they needed to in order to get to the bottom of the truth. Along the way Remus and Sirius had been let in on the truth, Minerva, Lucius, and Severus had a genuine friendship but the two Marauders had been tolerated for Harry's sake. Severus didn't regard them as friends, but they certainly had come along way from the enemies they'd been once upon a time. Dumbledore had screwed over them all, and so it stood to reason they would always have that in common.

Still, Severus could scarcely believe he was sitting having lunch (and dinner later) with them on Yule of all times, time had changed them all. Glancing at his son, watching him interact with Draco, both of them beaming with exuberance, Yule was for them, and more than it was for the adults. Despite their excitement, he was pleased to see neither of them were forgetting their manners and were eating appropriately.

"What did you think of Harry's gift, Severus?" Narcissa asked, smiling sweetly at the children, Draco had picked out a beautiful opal necklace for her, which she was wearing today. She had been informed of what Harry had picked out for Severus despite Lucius' gentle nudging towards other items but Harry had been adamant about getting the doe figurine. Picking up her napkin, she wiped away the bit of soup that had dripped down her son's mouth absently before replacing it on her lap.

Severus glanced drolly at the woman, "It's a very appropriate gift," Severus replied, only slightly irritated after all he wasn't one for talking about his feelings or rather feelings on gifts he received. He was very touched by the gift, but he definitely didn't want to come outright and say that, least of all with Black and Lupin at the table.

"What was it?" Minerva enquired curiously, ignoring the mutter of 'Potion ingredients probably' that Sirius said.

"A doe," Severus replied.

"Why's that appropriate?" Sirius asked his brow puckered; when he noticed everyone including Remus staring at him incredulously he realized it was something very obvious.

"Lily's patronus was a doe," Remus said quietly, heart clenching, just thinking about the vibrant woman they'd all known but Harry would never get to.

"As is Severus'," Lucius pointed out smoothly after swallowing his roast tomato and mascarpone soup. "I wasn't aware that Harry knew what your patronus was though,"

"I imbued my patronus into a globe for Harry as a night light," Severus explained, not surprised they didn't know.
"That's a brilliant idea, Severus, you should see about selling that idea," Lucius said shrewdly. Many children were afraid of the dark, and this was a very good idea, the patronus charm would exude the feeling of safety which was only an added benefit to help them in the long run.

"It would be a good idea, if most could actually perform the charm," Severus pointed out, the empty bowls of soup they'd all consumed disappeared. Butternut and sage Risotto was the next meal brought through by the extremely busy House-elves.

"That unfortunately is all too true," Minerva agreed, a lot of powerful people had been in the Order and yet only a few had been able to cast the Patronus charm. Although by the end a few more had been able to due to necessity, the rumours that the Dementors had joined forces with the Dark had been the motivator behind that. "This is amazing, Severus, you'll have to give my compliments to the House-elves." she added as she scooped up more of the Risotto, something that most definitely wasn't served at Hogwarts, not even during Yule.

"It is," Narcissa agreed. Giving her son a spoon to help him eat it, and save it from going all over Draco in the process. She noticed that Severus had already done the same thing for Harry, both kids were making their way through the Risotto with haste, no doubt they wanted to play with their shiny new toys.

"I'll be sure to pass along the compliments," Severus replied, despite Sirius and Remus coming early he had actually enjoyed himself. Harry and Draco still had gifts to open from Minerva as well as Lucius and Narcissa since they'd come through in time for Lunch there hadn't been time to open them before. "Lucius are you alright?" Severus asked him, noticing the frown on his face; he was quieter than usual and seemed as if he had something eating at him.

Lucius shook his head slightly, mouthing the word 'later' before replying, "I'm fine," children were much more observant than people realized half the time, and this wasn't something he wanted to burden his son with.

Severus' eyes flared with worry but he nonetheless nodded his agreement, it had to be something extremely worrying for Lucius to actually show it. His mind went from prospect to prospect of what it could be but nothing seemed to fit, shaking it off, he would find out later when his son and godson were safely distracted. The rest of the Risotto was finished in silence as all the adults automatically became worried themselves.

Dessert consisted of Yule chocolate pudding, with a side of fruit, raspberries and strawberries, with strawberry sauce drizzled on the pudding itself. The helpings were small, since dinner was the main course, and a filling one at that. Draco definitely showed his approval for his kind of food, as he dug gleefully into his portion.

"Can I open my presents now?" Draco begged the second his dessert plate was clean of any possible scrapings.

"In a moment," Narcissa promised, "At least let Harry finish his so you can both play."

Draco nodded somewhat reluctantly, eyeing his wrapped presents impatiently.

Sirius chuckled and grinned at Draco's impatience, now that was how Yule should be, he hoped he got to see Harry a little more like that at some point in his life. As soon as Harry was done, the empty plates disappeared and Draco all but jumped from the table and ran towards them, until his dad cleared his throat then he slowed down absently making sure Harry was with him.

Platters with tea, coffee and two hot chocolates soon took its place on the table, leaving the adults
to safely digest their food.

"So what's going on?" Sirius asked, wondering if it had anything to do with his discovery.

"It's nothing I can't handle," Lucius stated, making it clear and no mistake that he could handle this on his own. It had been enough to have him revise his will and go to Gringotts to ensure it put through.

"We've been receiving increasingly violent threatening letters," Narcissa told them, placing her hand on her husband's shoulder. "One of them was addressed to Draco." thankfully though her husband had a redirecting spell on all mail, he was cautious and paranoid for a reason.

Severus sat up straighter; narrowing his eyes, "Was he hurt?" the thought of anyone cursing his godson filled him with rage.

"No, Severus, all mail comes through me," Lucius answered immediately.

"Who is it?" Severus then asked, knowing Lucius would have at least a rough idea on who was doing it.

"It must be one of the few who got off," Minerva said thoughtfully, before Lucius could answer. "The more known ones have to be Nott, Avery, Macnair…Crabbe and of course Goyle." all of whom all had children now the exact same age as Draco and Harry.

"Those are the ones who were caught and got off," Severus corrected her still staring at Lucius in silent demand for an answer.

"I heavily suspect Nott and Avery, the writing is different in parts of the letters showing at least two people are colluding together." Lucius explained grimly, "Crabbe and Goyle are useless, they can't do anything without someone telling them, so the chances are extremely of them this is slim. Nott wouldn't risk it, not since his wife died, he is all that Theodore has, he was quite happy to hunker down and play it out. He might be one of the Dark Lord's most loyal but even he knows to do anything is paramount to suicide especially against me."

"Who else could it potentially be?" Minerva asked thoughtfully, her hands wrapped around her coffee occasionally taking a sip.

"There's many who evaded justice, the Carrow twins are one of the many," Severus answered, they'd just joined the Dark Lord's cause, and had not yet really taken part in any raids for someone to get a description of them to the Ministry.

"They'll know that the mark is fading, could this be them just panicking?" Minerva questioned.

"It's possible," Lucius said slowly, "But I do not think so, it's more to do with me being seen as a 'traitor' to the cause;"

"You said there was a hex in one of the letters?" Sirius asked, joining the conversation a little hesitantly.

"The one for Draco this morning, yes," Lucius turned to face Sirius answering at the same time.

"Do you still have it?" Sirius then enquired.

"Of course," Lucius replied, "I have not yet had an opportunity to deal with it, and I refuse to let them ruin my son's Yule."
"Well if you like I can investigate it... on the side, not as an Auror, but I'll be able to tell you who's magic it is, even if they've tried to mask it, it isn't as easy as you think when it comes to masking your magic. There's always a residual strand left behind, we learned this in Auror training. Only those extremely powerful have a hope in completely removing their signature."

"Why would you want to help me?" Lucius asked suspiciously, he was under no illusions that Black cared about him, they hated each other, and they'd been on the other sides of the war for Merlin sake. Unlike the others Black knew he hadn't been under the imperious curse, his change in sides now didn't better himself in Black's eyes.

"You helped my godson," Sirius said frankly, "I will always owe you for that, let me help you and your son in turn." plus Harry and Draco were like brothers, even he wasn't blind to that. It was the start of a beautiful friendship that would last well after they both graduated Hogwarts. They were lucky, and he would do anything for Harry, including help the Malfoy's. Harry would be devastated if anything happened to Lucius or Draco. For some reason Harry really, really liked Lucius which had irked him until Harry began to open up to him and trust him a little. "Narcissa and Draco are family, Black blood that means something too."

"Enough of this, let's just enjoy today, the boys are beginning to sense something amiss," Narcissa admonished them.

"They won't get to threaten Draco again," Severus said with a steely undertone, his eyes flashing with feral promise. He didn't care if he and Lucius had to hunt the wizards down and kill them, he would do it. He was by no means a good law-abiding citizen, he had done his fair share of rule breaking things and for family, and he would always do what it took to keep family safe. If they were coming after Draco the chances of them coming after Harry for being his 'son' was strong. No, they would be taken care of, and the world would be safer for it. They wouldn't leave any evidence behind either, oh no, there would be nothing to tie them to any crime.

Lucius nodded just once in a curt agreement as understanding flowed through both men. They had killed a woman for less, Figg for less than what the Death Eaters were determined to do to his son. He had chosen his side, openly declared where his allegiance lay; he would need to deal with them. He had been an idiot not to have considered it sooner but he'd assumed they'd stay away tails tucked between their legs and continued on with their lives. Their insistence on threatening his family they had made their own soon to be orphans.

"Now then, here you go lad," Minerva said, removing gifts from her cloak pocket, giving one to Severus, adding her own attempt to change the subject. Unlike the others she had understood the byplay between both men. She didn't even like to think about it if she was honest, but unfortunately both men would do what they needed to keep Draco and Harry safe. She understood that if they'd come after Lucius - using his son to achieve it - they might come after Harry and she couldn't bear the thought. She also handed out the others, nothing big or extravagant but she'd been aware that they were coming and so chose to get gifts for them all.

"I have not been a lad for a long while, Minerva," Severus accepted the gift deeply amused, she hadn't called him that in a long time.

"I've known you since you were eleven, you will always be a lad to me," Minerva brushed off his words, used to them by now.

Severus began to unwrap the gift, eyes widening in surprise it wasn't his usual bottle of alcohol. It was a book on potions, and if he wasn't wrong, the book had yet to be published. "How did..."

"I know Maria, she's a friend, when I mentioned that I would like the book for you she sent it
immediately," Minerva said, thoroughly satisfied that Severus liked the book. Maria had also tried to give it to her for free, but Minerva wasn't having any of it. She had instead transferred the money into her vault, preventing her from protesting. "It won't be out until after the New Year, but as you know writers get so many books to give away or keep at their own discretion."

"Thank you, Minerva, I have been looking forward to this being published," Severus said with deep gratitude, it was in all Potioneer magazines, descriptions of upcoming books and such. It was said to fly off the shelves when it was out, and the shops were already taking pre-order sales.

"I'm just glad you like it," Minerva said, the others were all giving thanks of their own; Remus had received a voucher for clothes from Gladrags. Sirius had received a book, a muggle book on how to interact with abused children and how their reactions and inactions should be read as and a selection of sweets since Sirius had a sweet tooth a mile long - as evidence he had took a sweet from Harry earlier that week. Narcissa and Lucius got wine, a good year too; she knew they liked their wines. Abraxas used to own a winery, and sold it before Lucius had come of age, and many of those wines (which had been placed in the cellar) had been used over the years depleting their supplies. A small box of chocolates was also in the box for them to enjoy.

It was her turn; she received a large selection of shortcake and gingersnaps from Narcissa and Lucius. Scottish whiskey from Sirius and Remus. A hand made card with a cat lying stretched out under a Yule tree on front that looked remarkably like her Animagus form from Harry; Severus had got her a fairly rare Transfiguration tome. She graciously thanked them; giving a small smile to Harry for his 'wonderful' card she was delighted with it. She beckoned them forward, giving them their gifts.

"Happy Yule," she said as they sat beside her and eagerly opened, Harry more sedately but enthusiastically nonetheless. Inside they found a selection of sweets, a book each on Latin for children, a fun book apposed to the dry and boring lessons one receives. Seven packets of Quidditch trading cards the book to go with it and toy snitches - she didn't bother with broomsticks since both boys already had one or would soon enough knowing Sirius.

"Thank you!" both boys chorused before they gave her a hug, and then proceeded to drag their gifts to the centre of the room to investigate more thoroughly. They had been well and truly spoiled today.

"Honestly, I'm surprised you didn't end up with a Quidditch career," Severus said dryly, shaking his head in amusement.

"Merlin, no, I am not that must of an enthusiast," Minerva denied.

Severus, Remus and Sirius snorted in amusement, while Narcissa and Lucius just tried to prevent the rising of their lips since that statement had well and truly amused them. "If you say so," Severus replied sardonically. She was extremely competitive and absolutely loved when her team won and she wasn't even the one playing the game. 'Denial' wasn't only a river in Egypt, apparently.

Severus smiled slightly when he saw Draco explaining what to do with the trading cards. The others all turned as well; just content to watch the kids enjoy themselves and talk. Quidditch and anything associated was one of the things Severus had no interest in, and hadn't bought anything for Harry. Not out of spite or not wishing for Harry to take to the game, far from it, he knew the others would buy him gifts in that area aplenty and he wasn't wrong. Surprisingly Sirius hadn't gone overboard with gifts, he'd given Harry five, one of them a new child broom with the latest safety features, stuffed teddy's in the shape of a stag, wolf and black dog which he had pointed out was actually a panther for all the good it did and colouring in books and crayons with words and
numbers surprisingly - it wasn't something he'd expect Black to do but suspected Remus had hand in it.

"Come by tomorrow," Severus said quietly to Lucius, "Black found the files, in fact bring the letter and let him do what he needs to here while you and I look over the documents."

Lucius perked up at that, "I will," he agreed immediately, the sooner the last part of the Dark Lord was dealt with the better, at least he would only have to worry about vengeful Death Eaters if that were the case. The thought of the Dark Lord returning quite frankly terrified him to the bone. In fact he was almost curious enough to try and get Severus to show him now, but he knew his wife would not allow it, not on Yule. He worked a lot and missed quite a bit of Draco's development, Yule was family time, time that Draco would get to spend with all of them together.

Chapter End Notes

I would say there is only ooo five or six more chapters of this story left, although someone did give me the idea of adding to it now and again, just add on chapters that act more like a one shot how would you like that? Just scenes of life for the Snape family, will Harry be told he used to be a potter or will Severus keep it from him until hes seventeen at least? just to keep him all the more safer? will the Death eaters prose a threat to Harry as well? well anyway next chapter will we see Severus and Lucius dole out vengance against those who dare to harm their kids? I always did say that neither were law abidding men remember? they do what they have to :D and don't trust the law to deal with it appropriately. Will Severus visit Dumbledore in prison with the news that voldemort is gone? or will he find out after he's released? R&R please
Chapter 42

The Vow And its consequences

Chapter 42

"Good morning," Lucius said, kissing his wife on the cheek in greeting as he moved to the head of the small table -for four -and sat down the mail and his newspaper was already laid at the side of the table along with his coffee. A few moments later a plate of food appeared for him, a full English breakfast. "How are the ladies doing?" speaking of Narcissa's 'friends' if they could be called as such, they merely got together to gossip or try to find out whatever they could on certain things.

"They are curious about your new venture and the reason behind it," Narcissa said, eyes twinkling in amusement, "They weren't even subtle about it," it was finished actually, the building, now it was her turn to begin decorating it, giving it a homely feeling so that the children didn't feel as though they were in a hospital or a temporary accommodations. Even though it was built to be a temporary home for them, she wanted them to feel at home, to be happy there. Some of them would end up being there until they were old enough to venture out on their own at the age of eighteen. Which is what they had decided upon unless of course, they had an inheritance and could safely leave the children's home with a place to stay.

"New venture?" Lucius drawled, "I am surprised its taken so long for them to ask," shaking his head in amusement, before digging into his breakfast, sipping coffee in-between bites. Hangleton had been like a ghost town before he bought it, no Muggle ventured up that way terrified as they were. Now though, they would not remember the area, to the Muggles it was completely off the map. They would remember Riddle Manor and the Gaunt shack being much closer than it had been in reality to accommodate their memories but that was it.

"They've been curious for a while now," Narcissa pointed out, she would be the one doing the interviewing, Lucius had enough to deal with without interviewing people. Plus, she didn't think people would be comfortable being interviewed by Lucius due to his reputation, while he had been cleared by the Ministry, the public had still seen the bad side of him, they weren't as easily placated or fooled as Lucius quipped from time to time. They were beginning to ease up on the Malfoy family, treating them less like 'Death Eaters' willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. "I do hope we do not get a lot of people wasting our time during the interview process."

"Unfortunately, it has to be done," Lucius sighed, he did need people to run it, he didn't want the Ministry having any say in it. "The Ministry know where to bring magical children should they require accommodation," which was one less thing for them to deal with the second the doors were opened.

"And have you given any thought to Severus' suggestion?" Narcissa queried, she was already going through her contacts trying to find someone adept enough to ensure the education of teenagers and ensure they received the necessary tutelage to pass their O.W.L.'s and depending on the success their N.E.W.T's too. To think there were children, magical children out there uneducated due to the fact they didn't have a permanent residence or money to go to Hogwarts or any magical school was horrifying. Severus had informed her that many of them lived down in Knockturn Alley because if they slept in Diagon Alley the Aurors would hex them to get 'rid of them' so they didn't 'interrupt
normal peoples lives' and they say those on the dark side were the bad people.

Lucius pursed his lips, "I do not believe they would trust anything I say," he revealed, and it wasn't because of his past…associations as surprising as that was for him to swallow. "I shall ask Severus what he recommends in dealing with this particular problem," he had seen them from time to time while visiting Knockturn Alley but hadn't paid any attention to them. Not everyone who is dirty is homeless, just teenagers being teenagers, even Draco - not that he was a teenager - got dirty from time to time, and got reprimanded if he had his good clothes on, but he was an heir, and one day going to be a Lord of the Malfoy estate he had greater expectations than most children his age.

"I do hope you aren't going to cancel on Severus and Draco again, the weekend is only time your son gets to spend time with you," Narcissa gave him a warning look, not to let their son down again. "He's looking forward to seeing his godfather and Harry,"

"I have no plans, I promised Draco, and I will keep it," Lucius stated firmly, he wouldn't dare go against his wife when she gave him that look, it would regale him to the guest bedroom for weeks if he did.

"Good," Narcissa said smugly, finishing the remains of her coffee knowing she had her husband exactly where she wanted him. "Are you ever going to tell me what was in those files?" it had been two weeks since Severus, Sirius, Remus, and Lucius had met up leaving her with Draco and Harry to do research. She'd been waiting for him talking to her about it, but he hadn't, she would have wondered if he had just forgotten about it but she knew her husband better than that.

Lucius glanced up momentarily confused before his face smoothed over, "That file was information regarding the cold case of the Dark Lord, it seems that despite the celebrations and conclusion that the Dark Lord was dead…the Ministry did not believe it themselves, this you know. They tracked him from country to country quite successfully might I add for chasing a phantom." he had been dutifully impressed with them.

"Until of course, they lost him?" Narcissa deduced, quite curious, he had fled the country, it wasn't something she'd expected, but his thirst for survival would have made him go to any lengths to evade justice.

"Or he remained in the same area and did not flee further," Lucius pointed out, "If that is the case…as weakened as we have ensured he is…without help that is, he will remain in the same spot, at least we hope so. We may just be lucky enough to find the last shard, end this once and for all." and he would have to ensure success, he had publicly declared himself on Harry Potter's side, regardless of whether the child was dead or not, the Dark Lord would not tolerate betrayal and he would see it thusly.

"And where was the last country he was suspected to have evaded the Aurors?" Narcissa questioned shrewdly.

"Tirana, the Republic of Albania," Lucius revealed. "This remains between us," he warned her, despite the fact she probably didn't need to be warned how dangerous this information actually was. The look she gave him in retaliation was enough to calm him down if any of the Death Eaters found out…and found him, well the thought horrified him.

"And this information can be found in the achieves?" Narcissa was horrified to hear that, "Anyone could have gotten into it? He had spies within the Auror department, they could have gotten that information anytime!" the thought of what could have come to pass was terrifying.

"Relax, the files are no longer there, Black has no intention of returning them," Lucius calmed her,
truthfully he'd reacted quite the same way as Narcissa was right now. He knew Severus had been apprehensive too, but he was better at concealing it. Probably because he knew better than to fret over what could have come to pass and concentrate on the here and now.

"When are you leaving?" Narcissa then asked, leaning back against the chair but remaining upright with her bred in pureblood posture. Figuring out why Lucius had chosen to speak of what was in that file now of all times. It would be soon and had better not be during the weekend, but considering their mission…she could perhaps give him some leeway especially if it was complete.

"Severus is the one dealing with that side," Lucius explained before dabbing his mouth to get rid of the grease lining his lips. "He says it's best that I do not deviate from my schedule, especially if there is a chance I am being watched."

"Severus is a known close friend, they may be watching him too," Narcissa cautioned.

"They will not be investigating what he does in the Muggle world, it's too alien for them," Lucius reassured her, and it was true, they wouldn't know what was what in the Muggle world.

"You're traveling by Muggle means?" this startled Narcissa badly.

"We are," Lucius confirmed.

"I…see," Narcissa stared wide-eyed, "You are taking Draco and Harry to Albania?" not to mention her. This would draw a hell of a lot of attention to everyone.

"They're less likely to wonder why if everyone goes," Lucius said, putting forth their thoughts on the matter. "This is only a precaution just in case." the likelihood of anyone paying any attention to anything Muggle was low, but Severus and Minerva - as well as himself - didn't want to risk it. They wanted to deal with the Dark Lord once and for all.

"Very well," Narcissa conceded to the precautions and understood them. "I will pack everything we may need."

"In Muggle worthy cases," Lucius added, "Minerva has kindly offered up a few cases for us to use, she said she'd drop them off at Severus', he may already have them."

"Nothing came from them today," Narcissa said, they had proof now that it was Avery and that he was working with Crabbe Senior, it was no coincidence that Crabbe Senior had stopped writing or associating with them and then the letters began, which had only hit them in retrospect.

Lucius' eyes darkened just thinking about those lowlife scum who would dare to threaten a child, especially when they had children the very same age who would all attend Hogwarts together. He and Severus were both out for blood, it would take good planning and a great deal of patience in getting those idiots who were stupid enough to threaten Draco. They already had planned it all out, they were just waiting on Crabbe and Avery screwing up and leaving themselves weakened and vulnerable. He sincerely hoped it didn't happen until after they had defeated the Dark Lord permanently, but when did things ever go the way they wanted them to? Plus, once the mark was completely gone…who knows how they would react? This was another reason he was glad his wife and son were coming on this trip with them, it would ensure they were safe.

"We have had word that the children's shelter is complete," Narcissa added, "All that is required now is decorating, I shall use Tanya Brown, she did superb work of the sitting room last year."

Lucius' lips twitched, "You mean when you let her do anything?" deeply amused.
"I had a very specific way I wanted the sitting room, it's where I spend a great deal of my time entertaining," Narcissa stated, removing the cloth napkin from her lap and placing it on her empty plate, it had been empty before Lucius ventured into the small dining room. "She was very understanding and accomplished what I asked for."

"Very well," Lucius agreed, quite honestly he was glad he wasn't getting pulled into it, he wanted nothing to do with woman's work, and decorating was a woman's work in his view. Narcissa was hardly offended by it, and quite gleefully undertook any project on the manor and had done so since their marriage many years ago. That's not to say he didn't have an opinion on it, but the times he had it had been ignored.

"I suppose I shall have to wait until we return," Narcissa explained, there was just no point in writing to her until after they're done, she wasn't going to be here to suggest anything or show Tanya around the children's shelter to let her get a mental layout and see what she thinks.

"That would be for the best," Lucius said in affirmation. "I do not believe Severus will have us waiting around long."

"Are Mr. Lupin and Sirius coming as well?" Narcissa nodded to the House-Elf as it got rid of everything they'd had on the table.

"They are, he's an Auror, he may be able to help," especially with discretion Lucius thought to himself. "Minerva too," the entire gang was going, surely between them all, they would succeed in their venture.

Their lives had changed so much, who would have thought it all started when Severus brought a young boy to their doorstep in need of aid and discretion?

Chapter End Notes

Yes, this story will be finished even if it kills me, I'm so sorry you've all been kept waiting... it will probably end earlier though, perhaps in 3-4 chapters instead of ten depending on the lengths I can bring out! I think the ending will be Harry leaving for Hogwarts with Draco when they're both eleven OR would you like to see their sorting? Or will I pan it back to the adults later at night revealing where they're sorted by a letter from their 'sons' Will Lucius end up having a heart attack by having a son sorted into Gryffindor to remain beside Harry? Or will Harry end up sorting himself into Slytherin to be beside Draco? lol R&R please

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