Summary

Summary: 5-year-old Harry Potter overhears his aunt complaining to his uncle about the "freaks" camping nearby. Maybe if they are the same type of "freak" he is they will want him?

Pairings: HP/DM, HP/OMC, Severus/OMC, Remus/OMC/OFC, Remus/Sirius and others as the story progresses
Warnings: Under 18 - Harry is still at school. AU, mentions of child abuse, Slash, Violence, Sexual Situations, powerful Harry, manipulative Dumbledore, there are chapters with vampire blood play, het, threesome, and third person remembering of non-con and murder of children. I will give warnings before those chapters so it can be skipped over if you want. Despite these warnings it really isn’t a dark story, if you have questions feel free to contact me.

Beta: the amazing Rakina

Notes

Disclaimer: The world of Harry Potter, its characters and settings are the copyrighted works of J.K. Rowling, Warner Bros., her publishing companies and affiliates. No profit was made from the writing of this story.
Also- I'm using the word 'Gypsy' in its modern meaning of a group of traveling performers. No one in my story is of Romany decent.
Chapter One

A/N This story is complete and Beta-ed by the wonderful Rakina. I’ll try and post several chapters a week- but there are 84 of them so it will take a while.

Friday June 13, 1986

A shrill, horse-faced woman burst into the house screeching, “Vernon! Vernon, you will not believe what nasty riffraff has come to town! Vernon, where are you?”

“Calm down, calm down Pet- I’m here now. Tell me what is going on?” A blubbery ball of a man came bounding down the stairs to try and calm the shrieks of his wife, hoping she wouldn’t wake their precious son. “Dudders is napping. Calm down and tell me what has happened.”

A bony hand flew to Petunia Dursley’s mouth. “Oh dear, poor little Dudders, do you think he is alright?” she questioned, her voice dripping with sugary sweetness.

“Oh, I am sure he is just fine. He will let us know if he needs us. Such a fine boy he is.” Vernon Dursley puffed with pride. “Now sit, Pet, and tell me what is going on.” Guiding her to the sofa they sat and she began her tale of terror.

“Oh, Vernon, it is simply dreadful! The empty field across from the grocery store - you know the one where they hold the fair every year?” Vernon nodded yes and patted her hand reassuringly. “Well as I was leaving with the week’s shopping - oh it's still in the car!” Petunia squeaked realizing that the ice cream was still in the boot of the car melting, and it was her little Dudley’s favorite.

Patting her hand again in reassurance Vernon took care of the problem. “Boy! Boy, get over here now!”

A small thin boy cautiously came out from his cupboard under the stairs. He ran his hand through his messy black hair to try and smooth it out, and kept his emerald green eyes firmly on the floor. “Yes, sir?” he replied in his soft five-year-old voice.

“There are groceries in the boot of the car. Bring them inside right now and put them away! And if you dare eat anything…” Vernon’s hand connected with the side of the boy’s head throwing him to the floor, the warning clear.

“Yes, sir,” said the hurt little boy, climbing to his feet and quickly heading outside. He had been listening to the conversation from his cupboard and didn’t want to miss out on what was going on. Pulling one of the full bags of groceries into his arms he quickly went back into the house.

“… and the field was covered with their disgusting vans and campers! Vernon, what are we going to do?” wailed his Aunt Petunia.

‘Who?’ wondered the boy as he hurried back outside. There were three more full bags of groceries to get, and the sooner he had them in the house the sooner he could listen to the conversation. He really tried not to be curious – it only got him in trouble – but he just couldn’t help himself. He did think
proudly that he could now hide it better than before.

Back and forth the young boy went, panting under the strain of the heavy bags filled with food he would get very little of. He would catch snatches of conversation, mostly Aunt Petunia wailing about the image of the neighborhood and protecting “Her precious Dudders from these monsters!”

The boy was now in the kitchen putting the food away with the aid of his step-stool. His ears perked up at his uncle's shout.

“Freaks! That is what they are – nothing but worthless freaks!”

Now sadly this got the little boy's attention. That was what his uncle always called him, a worthless freak. ‘Maybe they are relatives of mine, or even if not if I am the same kind of freak maybe I could live with them,’ the boy thought, hoping to find out more.

“I can’t believe they are allowed to be so close to normal people! I am going to call the police and check to make sure they have proper permits. It's disgusting to think that this is being allowed!”

The couch groaned as Uncle Vernon stood up. The boy continued his work, and listened as his uncle dialed the phone. The boy lost the beginning of the conversation as he put away food into the freezer, but when his head popped out he could hear his uncle yelling into the phone.

“It’s gypsies! How can that be okay! They are in the empty field across from the grocery store that is only a mile away from my home and my son! Who knows what kind of freaky things they are up to! I demand an investigation!”

The raven-haired boy lost the conversation again as he put the food away into the fridge. He snickered very quietly to himself imagining his uncle's face turning purple as he shouted into the phone. With a sigh he shut the fridge door and threw away the plastic bags the groceries had come in, and headed back to his cupboard to await his next chore, or if he was lucky some food.

“I have an idea,” chuckled Aunt Petunia. “Why don’t we sell the boy to them. He is a freak just like them.” Disgust laced her voice as she watched her scrawny, dirty nephew climb into his cupboard under the stairs. She wouldn’t sell him of course – he did too much around the house, but it was a lovely thought.

The boy settled down on his cot, as his aunt's words twisted in his head. ‘Buy me – would they really buy me?’ the boy thought. ‘That means I am worth something to them.’ Smiling, the boy let his thoughts take him. ‘If they are freaks like me, and I am worth something to them, maybe, just maybe they will let me live with them and I can get away from my aunt and uncle.’ A small smile lit up the boy's face but it quickly went away as he heard his fat cousin thud down the stairs. He was always afraid that the stairs would fall on top of him whenever his uncle or cousin walked on them.

“Mummy, what did you get me?” squealed Dudley running to the kitchen to see what treats he had got from the store today.

Petunia followed him into the kitchen, “Well, Duddums, I got three of your favorite ice creams and two bags of your favorite crisps, and tonight Daddy is taking us out to dinner. And you, my sweets, get to pick the place!”

“Yay!” yelled Dudley grabbing a container of ice cream and a spoon. Petunia smiled down at Dudley as he scooped ice cream into his pudgy mouth.

An hour later Uncle Vernon was pounding on his door and yelling, “Freak, we are going out, you will do the laundry and tidy Dudley’s room. And if it isn’t all done when we get back you'll be in for
“Yes, Uncle Vernon,” came the soft voice of the boy. He came out as he heard the door shut, and watched as they drove away. Quickly he ran upstairs and gathered the laundry; the gypsies might not take him and he had to get at least some of this done. Having started the laundry he quickly went back upstairs. Dudley’s room was a mess – it would take the whole time. With a shuddering sigh the boy turned away from it and went into the bathroom. Quickly he showered and put on his best clothes. Unfortunately all of his clothes were hand-me-downs from Dudley. Stained and faded, they hung off his thin frame. The boy then brushed his teeth, combed his hair - which stayed a messy black mop – and went downstairs. He put on his shoes and then packed a bag of all his important stuff. It all fit into an old backpack of Dudley’s he had found in the trash – it was the wrong color so Dudley had thrown it away. Going to the utility room the boy quickly put the wet clothes in the drier and started another load of washing. He then hitched his pack up on his shoulders and opened the back door, going out that way so the neighbors wouldn’t see him.

Luckily it was summer, and the sky was still light out. The streets were quiet as it was dinnertime, and looking in windows the little boy could see families gathered around tables eating and laughing together. Oh, how he wished for a family! His parents were dead. His aunt and uncle said they had been drunk and crashed their car killing themselves and giving the boy the scar on his forehead. The boy bravely pushed these thoughts away and focused on where he was going.

He had walked for a long time; the sky was alight with the sunset when he came to the field. There was a large tent set up in the middle; it was dark blue in color with swirls, stars, and moons in all colors of the rainbow. Behind the tent were vans, campers and a few tents. Scattered about in front of the tent were piles of wood and cloth. He watched as the people put together smaller tents and booths. They laughed together as they worked. It felt so happy here, with the sounds of happy chatter and soft singing. The boy counted twelve people all dressed in summer clothing the likes of which he had never seen. Oh, he could tell they were dresses, shirts, trousers, and such but the colors and the fabrics were unusual. ‘These must be very happy people,’ the boy thought to himself. ‘How could anybody be unhappy with clothes like those?’ There were a bunch of other people putting together booths and stalls; they were not part of the gypsies though. The boy even recognized some of them from around Little Whinging. Deciding to stay out of sight until all the local people had left the boy hunkered down into the hedge to wait.

Chapter Two

Vincent could feel the presence of some magical being. Whatever it was had arrived as the sun was setting and had stayed watching them. All of his clan could feel it. He felt nothing malicious or angry about the presence, simply watching and thoughtful. Vincent watched the last of the local vendors leave, smiling and waving to them. They would be back tomorrow to participate in their little fair, but until then there was magic to be done.

Turning back to their tents Vincent pulled the tie out of his chestnut brown hair and ran his fingers through it to pull any knots out of the waves, enjoying the feel of his hair loose against his back. His sharp eyes scanned the perimeter of the camp looking for their watcher as he walked towards the others. He needed to talk to Freja; she would have been working out what this being was as soon as she felt it. Vincent smiled as he watched the other gypsies setting up their area and getting ready to cast a circle of protection. Most Squibs didn’t know their full potential but Vincent and his family did. Each and every one of them were outcasts from the Wizarding world, and being unwilling to hide themselves in the Muggle world they lived between them both. Using Earth-based rituals from many times and cultures they could tap into nature's magic and work their spells. Each of them had
gifts endowed by their Wizarding ancestry no matter how long ago that was.

Vincent’s great grandparents had both been Squibs born of witches and they had started this gypsy troupe. Vincent’s thoughts wandered over the core group, six powerful Squibs; Freja, a Danish squib born of magical parents, possessed a gift of divination, plants, and cooking. Then there was Naveen, a second generation Squib born in India with the gift of being able to control air and wind – he could maintain his balance as well as that of whoever he was working with and had the ability to protect the troupe from violent storms. Naveen’s wife Ria was a beautiful third generation Squib. Her amazing mental powers included a level of telepathy that made secrets hard to keep. As Vincent’s mind continued to do a roll call of his clan he thought of Soto, a second-generation Japanese Squib. His gift of seeing energy and auras allows him to excel as a master martial artist and swordsman. Vincent smirked as he thought of Adonis, a fourth generation Squib, and the gypsies’ Greek god. Adonis was golden from head to toe – even his eyes were a shade of gold. Adonis could remember anything he ever read or heard; it helped a lot with all the different laws as they traveled from country to country. Vincent smiled even more warmly as he thought of his partner Mudiwa. Mudiwa was the third son of a South African shaman Squib, he entertained and protected as the troupe’s master of illusion.

As he walked through their camp Vincent smiled and nodded to the more transient people traveling with them. Most would stay a few years and then move on; only those still with them after five years would move to “permanent” status. They had a really nice group of twelve transient Squibs. They were clowns, jugglers, peddlers, and fortunetellers along with other specialties, and those learning new skills from the others. Three children ran by grateful to finally be allowed to play. Everyone pitched in setting up and tearing down camp along with basic daily chores and ticket taking. The peace and happiness of his troupe filled the air as music, laughter and conversation surrounded him along with the wonderful smells of dinner cooking. Looking ahead he smiled; away from the others his friends had a fire going with dinner cooking over it and oriental rugs and pillows circling the red-orange flames. It was time for their nightly meeting, and hopefully their magical watcher would show itself.

The boy watched as the tall man gracefully walked across the field toward the tents and people. He had never seen anyone move so smoothly. He had watched the adults and even a few kids working together; they seemed so happy talking and laughing. Once the last of the locals was gone and the boy felt sure they were not coming back he began to creep towards the back of the group where the tall man had settled on the most beautiful rugs and pillows the boy had ever seen. The smells of dinner cooking made him stumble for a moment, he was so hungry and nothing his aunt cooked had ever smelled so good.

Once the boy was close to the circle of pillows and rugs he crouched down in the shadows and waited. The man seemed to be waiting, and the boy decided to watch and see what happened. The man relaxed before the fire seeming to melt into the pillows he rested on, his long legs stretched out and brown leather boots shining in the firelight. The man's trousers were dark brown and the boy’s fingers itched to touch the unfamiliar, soft-looking material. His honey brown t-shirt fit like a second skin. The boy was fascinated with the man before him; he had never seen someone who looked so fit outside of his cousin’s comic books.

Suddenly the black night sky moved and shimmered behind the man. The boy almost screamed in fear as the shape moved forward and a man stepped far enough into the firelight to be seen. His skin was as black as the night that surrounded him; his clothes were black and form fitting. The boy almost gasped again as the man’s baldhead leant down to kiss Vincent.
“Good evening, Vincent.” The man's voice was as dark and deep as his skin and it made the boy shiver.

“IT is now, Mudiwa.” Vincent smiled taking Mudiwa’s hand and guided him down beside him on the pillows. “Are the others coming?”

Mudiwa shifted on the rug getting the pillows just right. The boy was sure he was a superhero – he was huge with muscles everywhere, just like in the comics. “Ah yes, here they come now.” As he spoke three more people entered the circle and the boy felt calmer.

Vincent looked up and smiled. “Good evening, Freja.” The woman with short blonde hair smiled down at him and found a place to sit. She looked tiny sitting next to these two large men. To the boy she looked like the fairy on the movie Dudley liked to watch.

Next, a couple with creamy brown skin sat down next to each other. The woman, Ria, wore a dress of bright pink with gold patterned trim; it almost looked like a thin sheet had been wrapped around her. Ria’s hair was in a long, thick braid, and gold bracelets jingled on her wrists. Vincent said hello to Naveen and the man holding Ria’s hand sat down next to her. Naveen had soft, dark brown curls that reached his shoulders. Dark eyes glinted in the firelight.

“Good evening, Vincent.” Naveen’s voice was accented and sounded soft and warm and it made the boy smile. The boy hoped these people would let him stay – they sounded so nice, they smiled at each other and were so relaxed and calm.

Lastly two men came into the circle talking and laughing. “Good evening, Adonis,” Vincent said to a man who looked like he had been painted gold. His skin and hair glowed in the firelight. He wore simple blue jeans and a white t-shirt, and yet he looked so amazing. Next to him stood a man with thin almond-shaped eyes and lightly colored skin. His black hair was pulled up into a tight bun on the top of his head. He wore thick, black cotton pants and a dark red shirt of silk. The boy remembered washing out a silk dress of his aunt’s that had shined like that. As the man Vincent had called Soto turned to sit the boy saw a dragon painted onto the man’s arm peeking out from under his shirtsleeve.

“So,” Vincent began calmly, “how is everything? Any problems getting set up?”

“Everything went just fine,” Freja answered for the group. “What about our visitor? And we still need to set up the circle.”

The boy’s ears perked up. Did they know he was here? Crouching lower he continued to listen to their conversation.

“I am hoping whatever it is will come to us. I get no hostility from it. Soto?” Vincent asked, looking over at the ebony-haired warrior.

Soto’s black eyes stared directly at the boy's hiding place. “I see power and magic but I don’t know what it is. I see no anger or hostility; however it is hurt and hiding right behind those boxes just outside the firelight.”

The boy crouched down scared they knew he was here but not what he was. They seemed okay with it; maybe he should come out and talk to them.

Just then the golden man Adonis spoke up. “While we are waiting does anyone have anywhere they want to go in the next year? I have us booked for the next two months and I need to get started for September.” Looking around at his friends he noticed Ria blush and Naveen taking a deep breath.
Calmly looking at them Adonis waited.

Naveen squeezed Ria’s hand and she smiled up at him. “We would like to be in India by the second week in December, and we will need to stay for at least two months.”

“Why?” asked Freja concerned about what was going on with her friends.

“Well,” began Ria nervously noticing her friends straightening up and looking intently at them. Smiling she continued, “I am three months pregnant and I want my mother and sisters with me when I give birth.” The cheers and shouts almost sent the small boy running, but he quickly realized they were happy sounds and settled back down.

“Oh, this is wonderful! Of course we can go to India. There will be lots of celebrations for Diwali and if we are careful with our pennies we can all take some downtime while there. Right, Adonis?” Vincent asked.

Adonis did some quick budgeting in his head. “Yes, it is definitely doable. I will work up a schedule and pass it around to the rest of the clan; I am sure some will leave before India.”

“That is fine.” Mudiwa’s rich voice startled the boy hiding in the shadows. “People are welcome to come and go as they please.”

The others nodded their agreement, and began talking amongst themselves. The boy pondered what Mudiwa had said – if people were really free to come and go maybe this wouldn’t be so hard. It took a few moments, but finally the little boy stood up on shaking legs and began to walk towards the group of brightly dressed adults.
Chapter Three

As the boy stepped into the firelight the eight gypsies stopped talking and very slowly turned towards him. Vincent’s brow creased. ‘This little boy is what we have felt all day?’ His eyes met those of his friends questioning the presence of this small child. They all seemed to say the same thing, ‘How the hell should I know?’ Everyone seemed to be in shock, and stared openly at the boy who was frantically twisting his huge old shirt in his fingers, and looking at them through his messy fringe.

Taking a deep breath and gathering up his courage the boy looked straight at Mudiwa. “Did you mean it?” he asked in a soft voice.

“Did I mean what?” asked Mudiwa, deliberately softening his deep voice.

“That people were welcome to come and go as they please?” the boy answered a little more strongly, his eyes glancing at the others in the circle.

Keeping his voice soft and calm, the surprised man answered, “Yes. Is that why you are here, to join us?”

Smiling broadly the boy boldly stepped forward. “Oh, yes please. I can do all sorts of chores. I wouldn’t be a burden, I promise.” He clenched his hands together in an unconscious childhood sign of innocence and sincerity.

The gypsies smiled at the boy’s enthusiasm, and yet they were concerned.

Freja gently waved the boy over. “Come here, child; come closer to the fire. We were just about to eat so why don’t you join us?”

“Really?” The boy nervously made his way around the group and over to Freja staying just out of arms’ reach. “Are you sure it’s all right for me to eat with you?”

Freja smiled sweetly at the boy, and yet inside she was wary. The boy was acting as if he had been badly abused. “Of course, there is plenty for everyone.” As the boy crept closer and sat next to her on the rug she looked over his head into Vincent’s hard, angry gaze. Good – he had seen it too.

“So I suppose introductions are in order, or did you catch all of our names already?”

The boy blushed and ducked his head at being caught. She didn’t sound angry; her voice had stayed warm and soft the whole time. “I’m sorry,” he said quietly. “I wasn’t sure, and...” the boy mumbled.

“Oh, it’s quite all right, dear. I think it was very clever of you to watch and wait. Now let’s see how clever you are; can you remember everybody’s name?” Freja asked with laughter and kindness in her voice. The boy looked up at her and she almost gasped at the large, brilliant green eyes that met hers.

“I only know their first names,” the boy said shyly. “Is that okay?”

Freja smiled down at him, her light blue eyes crinkling at the corners. “That is just fine, dear,” she replied and reached out to pat his hand. She stopped when he flinched, then slowly continued patting lightly before pulling her hand back into her lap.

“Yes, well – okay then.” Bright green eyes scanned the group quickly and returned to the fairy lady to his left. “You’re Freja.” She smiled and nodded. Next he made eye contact with deep chocolate
brown eyes and a lighter honey brown pair, both warm and friendly. He smiled at them. “Ria and Naveen.” The boy stopped for a moment, brow furrowed in concentration and then looked up at them again. “Congratulations,” he stammered out in his sweet child’s voice, obviously having trouble with the word.

They both grinned at him, “Thank you, sweetheart,” Ria replied. The boy blushed, and looked down. No one had ever called him ‘sweetheart’ before. Looking up the boy caught her eye and blushed again before turning to the next person. Pale, gray eyes made him gasp; he had not been expecting them in the ebony-skinned man. Taking a deep breath he smiled up at the huge man. “Mudiwa.”

Mudiwa nodded silently impressed that this small child had remembered his name so well.

“Vincent,” the boy said calmly, looking at the gypsy he had first seen and then followed. Vincent bowed his head and then looked at him with sparkling, lavender eyes. The boy blinked and looked harder. Vincent smiled softly; the boy had obviously never seen anyone with lavender eyes before.

Smiling back the boy turned to the man sitting to Vincent’s left. “Soto,” the boy said and then held his breath. The thin, black eyes caught his and held them; suddenly the boy couldn’t breathe and started to tremble.

“Soto!” Freja snapped, breaking them out of their trance. She glared at him while gently placing her hand on the boy's shoulder again. He flinched, and quickly turned to face her. “Are you okay?” she asked softly.

The boy smiled shyly. “Yes, I am fine thank you.” And he turned to the last person in the circle. Looking at the golden man he saw eyes that looked to be gold too. “Adonis,” the boy finished. The man smiled at him warmly. The boy looked up at Freja to see how he had done.

Freja beamed at the little boy, his wild, black hair going every which way, big emerald green eyes shining up at her, red lips stretched into a smile, and the warmth of the fire making his pale skin glow and turn pink. The boy looked like a cherub; at least he would if they could put some meat on his bones.

Turning from those thoughts she exclaimed, “Very good! I knew you were a clever young man. Now how about some dinner, ja?” The boy’s smile brightened and he nodded; whatever was in the black pot over the fire smelled delicious.

As Freja began dishing up bowls of whatever was in the pot she would pass it to Ria who put what looked like thin bread in the bowl, and then it was passed around the circle until everyone had a bowl of hot stew. The boy looked under his lashes at everyone as he blew on his food, just to make sure that no one was going to take it from him. Everyone seemed content with their own bowls adding different seasonings or digging in. Slowly the boy lifted a spoonful and blew on it before putting it in his mouth. He closed his eyes in pleasure and hummed as exotic flavors burst over his tongue and warmth filled his belly. The gypsies smiled at the frank appreciation of their simple meal.

“Well, Freja,” laughed Adonis, “I think that is the best compliment you have ever had for your lentil and rice dhali. It is very good. Thank you for cooking this evening.” A round of thank yous burst forth around bites of food.

Freja smiled; it was always so nice to cook for those who were grateful.

“It is very good. Thank you very much for feeding me.” The boy’s soft voice was speaking of more than just gratitude.
“You are more than welcome, cherub.” Freja smiled down at the boy and yet sadness filled her heart, someone had hurt this child badly.

The boy smiled back feeling happy and safe. Turning back to his food he wanted to eat quickly, but knew better than to try. He picked up the flat bread and bit into it. It was warm and soft and very good. Again he hummed with pleasure, and dipping his bread into his soup he took another bite, chewing slowly and carefully so he wouldn’t get sick.

Everyone ate in happy silence. Once the adults were done Soto spoke. His voice, while gentle, was sharp and clean from his accent. “You have us at a disadvantage, young man. You know our names but we do not know yours.”

“Oh.. um… well I don’t really know.”

The gypsies all stared at the boy in shock. Ria was the first to recover. “What do you mean, sweetheart?”

“Well, my aunt and uncle call me ‘boy’ or ‘freak’. When asked by others they say I am their nephew, but never say a name.” He had set down his bowl and was twisting the edge of his shirt again.

The gypsies looked to Freja; they could all feel her temper about to explode. Freja was the smallest of them all, looking almost like Tinkerbell from Peter Pan and seemed so docile, but that was misleading. Standing up slowly, her blue eyes looking like ice, she snarled: “That is it! This boy is coming with us. I do not care what any of you have to say! And before we leave, those horrible people who he has been forced to live with will pay! Right now we need to put up a circle of protection. If those blasted people report him missing they will come here first, and we will need the warning. I am going to get everything!” And off she stormed.

The boy was shaking and trying to make himself as small as possible. Vincent felt the boy's fear and quickly went over to the shaking child. Prepared for the flinch he rested his hand on the boy’s back and slowly rubbed circles across it.

Gradually, Vincent’s rich voice calmed the frightened child. “Hush, everything is all right. We will keep you safe. Your aunt and uncle won't find you.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to cause any trouble,” the boy said shakily, unsuccessfully trying to hide his tears.

Vincent scooped the boy up, mentally cringing at how painfully light he was. ‘Freja is going to have a conniption when she finds out,’ he thought. Placing the boy in his lap Vincent began to rock him gently. “You haven’t caused any trouble. We put up a circle every night. Freja is angry that you were treated badly, and if she sees that Soto interrupted your meal she might get angry at him,” Vincent said with a chuckle as the boy physically and emotionally relaxed in his arms. Vincent smiled and taking a deep breath surrounded the child and himself with waves of calm. “Are you still hungry? I don’t think Soto wants to face an angry Freja right now,” Vincent said teasingly.

Soto played along raising his brow in shock and looking worriedly in the direction Freja had gone. The boy in Vincent's lap giggled softly at Soto and picked up his bowl and began to eat again.

Freja’s eyes softened as she took in the boy sitting in Vincent’s lap finishing up his food. Oh, she had noticed what had gone on and Soto was lucky the boy had got his appetite back! Smiling she entered the circle.

“I am sorry that I stormed off like that, cherub, but now that you are part of our clan we need to
The boy perked up at this, “Really I can stay with you, and you won’t make me go back not ever?” His childish words were filled with hope and joy.

“Yes, really,” said Mudiwa firmly, knowing that everyone felt as he did. This boy was not going back no matter what.

“Now,” said Vincent, “we need to set a circle, but first we need to give you a name.”

Naveen perked up at this. “I think,” he said slowly, “that we should call him Cherub as Freja does until we know him better and then we can give him a proper name.” The gypsies nodded, and looked to the boy.

“It is okay with me,” he said softly. “But what is a cherub?”

Freja grinned. “A cherub is a child angel.”

Cherub nodded. “Okay.”

“Perfect, now to set the circle. Cherub, you’re with me tonight,” said Vincent, standing up and keeping hold of his newest gypsy.
Chapter Four

Cherub wiggled a bit until he had his arms around Vincent’s neck and his little legs wrapped around the man's waist. “I can draw a circle really well,” Cherub said hopefully, he really did want to be useful.

Vincent smiled. “Of that I have no doubt, but this is a magic circle, and we need everyone to help.” The boy in his arms stiffened, and began to tremble, fear bleeding off of him.

“But magic is bad,” Cherub whispered.

“Why do you think magic is bad?” Vincent asked, tightening his grip on the small child, and sending out calming energy again.

Cherub was silent for a moment; suddenly Vincent sat down. Cherub squeaked and clung tightly.

“Hush, little one, you're safe. Our place is here in the middle of the circle. Freja will walk around the outside of the field casting the circle and the others will each take a place at one of the five points of the star. Together we will make this field safe for all of the Dragon Heart Gypsies and those who choose to spend time here with us,” Vincent explained calmly as he got comfortable sitting cross-legged on the ground. Waiting patiently to see how Cherub would respond to this, he could feel the child thinking. Smiling to himself Vincent let his energy flow from his body and into the earth allowing him access to the natural energies there. Vincent sent his thanks to Gaia, and opened his eyes to emerald green eyes studying him closely.

“What did you just do?” Cherub asked, still whispering.

Vincent smiled, pleased that Cherub had felt the energy. “Well, I sent my energy into the earth and then accessed Gaia’s energy. Oh, Gaia is Mother Earth,” he explained seeing Cherub’s confusion. “You see while the others call in the energies for their point of the star, I sit in the center to focus those energies and ask for their help.”

Cherub looked at the ground in puzzlement. At the Dursleys’ he was beaten if anything strange or unusual happened, they called him a freak and claimed he did magic. He had felt something surround him when really odd things happened, and there was energy around the Dursleys' house that he didn’t feel anywhere else. What he was feeling now from Vincent was similar to what would surround him sometimes when he was really afraid or wanted something really badly. Looking up into patient warm eyes, Cherub smiled. “Can I help?” he asked softly.

“That would be lovely. Can you picture in your mind all of us safe? With enough to eat, happy and healthy?”

“Yes, I think I can do that.” His little brow furrowed under his thick wild fringe.

“Okay then,” Vincent said. "Let's sit nice and still and hold the image and feelings of us being happy and healthy in our minds and bodies." Looking up he could see Freja in the east waiting for everyone to begin. Dipping her hand into the bowl she carried she sprinkled a mixture of salt and herbs on the ground as she walked to the south. Vincent could feel the energy rising and turned his focus to his clan, the local merchants and visitors that would be going with them over the weekend, and their newest gypsy currently in his arms. Calmness swept through Vincent as the elements were called and the circle began to form.
Cherub had his eyes closed trying to focus on happy thoughts and feelings. He could feel a pure clear energy slowly surrounding them all. At certain points he could feel other more focused energies, and then the circle was completed as the different energies came together with the pure energy from the circle. Unable to resist Cherub opened his eyes. Blinking, he looked around him in amazement. They sat in the middle of five lines of light each a different color: blue, red, blue-green, copper, and purple. Surrounding the colored lights was a circle of white that seemed to go up into the heavens.

“Oh, it is so beautiful!” Eyes filled with wonder, and his heart filled with joy, Cherub reached out his hand to touch the lights.

‘How powerful is this kid?’ Vincent thought as he opened his eyes. He could feel the energy, but not see it. Looking down at Cherub he saw the boy reaching out. ‘Oh dear,’ he thought before the energy exploded.

Everything intensified and for a moment the seven gypsies could see the circle and pentacle they had cast glowing golden. The energy shot through them before returning to where it had come from and they were blinking away the tears from the light and beauty of the energy that had just connected them to each other and to everything everywhere.

Suddenly the boy in Vincent's lap collapsed. Quickly turning him so he was face up Vincent checked his pulse and breathing.

Cherub had a pulse and was breathing deeply and steadily. Smoothing Cherub’s silky black hair from his forehead Vincent froze. Across the boy’s forehead was a lightning bolt shaped scar. “Great goddess, Harry Potter! What am I going to do?” Double-checking that the boy was really all right Vincent stood up and carried Cherub back to the fire knowing the others would meet up there.

The Dragon Heart Gypsies traveled all around Europe and Asia performing for Muggles, Squibs and magical folk, so they kept up with what was going on in all communities and countries they visited. They knew about Voldemort and Harry Potter, and here he was, the savior of the Wizarding world lying in his arms. This too-thin, beautiful boy had saved the world and then had been left for three years in an abusive home! Vincent’s anger rose, he knew how it felt to be abandoned without a care. The Wizarding world didn’t care about Squibs and had a history of abandoning Squib children – or if they were lucky waiting until they were of legal age then letting them go. Some Squibs found a life blending in the Muggle world, having families and living happily. Others found Squib communities and lived in between the Muggle and Wizarding worlds. Some stayed in the Wizarding world doing jobs that didn’t require magic. And some Squibs simply disappeared.

Vincent had always felt lucky to have a home and the ability to offer a home to other Squibs. Looking down at the boy in his arms Vincent didn’t know what to do. He would have taken in a Squib child in a heartbeat, but this was Harry Potter. Sighing he looked up as he felt his family come closer. Vincent needed their council.
“Is everyone alright?” Freja asked and she looked everyone over. “Ria?”

“I am fine, what was that? What happened?” Ria replied.

“It didn’t feel or look bad,” Soto answered.

“Sit everyone, and we will figure this out.” That was Mudiwa’s deep voice calming everyone. He put on a kettle for tea, and then spoke again. “Is anyone hurt?” receiving a chorus of “no’s” he continued. “What I felt was amazing, harmony and peace and connection so pure it brought tears to my eyes. Is this what you all felt or was it different?”

Mutterts of “Exactly” and “It was amazing.” Were heard from everyone.

“Okay, good,” Mudiwa continued. “I saw our circle and pentacle for the first time; it flared with a beautiful golden light, was this the same for everyone? Soto?” The group said yes, and Soto explained what he saw.

“I could see Freja casting the circle, as always it was a beautiful white light. Then Ria called in Fire and a red line formed, then I called Earth and a copper line, next Naveen called Air and a sky blue line formed, after that Adonis called Water and a blue-green line was added. Finally Mudiwa called in Spirit and a purple line crossed the circle. As the energy increased the lines connected to form a pentacle, just like always. Then I could see thin lines of gold swirling through the white circle and the elemental colored lines, this indicates that Vincent is asking the energies for what we want and setting up the protection, when suddenly bam! Everything turned to gold; it has never done that before, never.” Soto took a deep breath and settled down. Looking up at Vincent he noticed that Cherub was asleep in his arms.

Confusion marred Mudiwa's brow. “Cherub? Cherub did all this.”

It was as if everyone suddenly woke up and jerked their heads in unison towards Vincent. The suddenness made Vincent chuckle.

“Everyone please calm down,” Vincent said. "Cherub did do something, and yes he seems to be just fine. I will tell you all once we have a cup of tea in our hands.” Smiling he turned to Mudiwa who was getting up and pouring the hot water into a large ceramic teapot.

The soft scent of lemon-peppermint greeted them as Mudiwa passed out cups of tea to everyone. Adonis got up and passed around a tray of biscuits. Once everyone had prepared their tea to their liking and taken a few biscuits Vincent began telling them what happened, from Cherub's reaction to the word 'magic', up to seeing him touch the pentacle of energy they had created. Sitting back he watched everyone process what he had told them so far. Freja looked concerned and seemed to be trying to remember everything she had read about magical children. Ria was gazing softly at the child in his lap, and seemed at peace with what had happened. Naveen had his brow furrowed in thought most likely examining every bit of information to try and figure out what was going on. Soto, arms crossed and scowling, was looking right at Vincent. Vincent tipped his head to him acknowledging that he had not told them everything just yet. Adonis, always the carefree one of the group, was sipping his tea and watching the others with a soft smile on his face.

Looking to Mudiwa, Vincent smiled a bit as he caught the gaze of the soft, gray eyes. Vincent’s
smile widened when Mudiwa arched an elegant eyebrow as if saying, ‘Yes, and what else is there?’ Clearing his throat, Vincent got everyone's attention.

“There is one more thing you all need to know. What I am going to tell you is big, and I want everyone to sleep on this information. Tomorrow we will come back and decide what to do with Cherub, okay?”

Warily they nodded, Freja now crossing her arms, her eyes hard.

‘I hope we keep him otherwise Freja may do us all in,’ Vincent thought before continuing with his story. “After making sure Cherub had a pulse and was breathing I placed my hand on his forehead to check his temperature. When I smoothed back his hair I found a scar.” Gently raising the sleeping boy up against his chest Vincent again smoothed the soft, black hair away from the pale forehead. Everyone gasped.

“Oh, my Goddess! Is that who I think it is?” Freja asked.

“It can’t be, can it? They wouldn’t leave ‘the savior’ in such a home, would they?” exclaimed Adonis.

“What other child could have had so much power?” asked Soto.

“Vincent, who do you think this child is?” questioned Mudiwa.

“And,” added Naveen before Vincent could answer, “are we still going to take him with us?”

Vincent raised his hand asking for silence. Gently he passed Cherub into Mudiwa’s arms, he needed to pace while talking, this was just too big.

The boy sighed happily and curled into Mudiwa’s broad chest. Eyes wide Mudiwa whispered, “He weighs nothing.”

Even though it was said softly Vincent flinched as he saw Freja’s jaw tighten in anger. Taking a deep breath Vincent stood and started pacing outside of the circle, and began speaking. “Yes, I think this is Harry Potter, and I don’t know if we are still keeping him. It will increase the danger to our clan, but they left him all this time with people who called him a ‘freak’. This child, the hero of the Wizarding world, doesn’t even know his own name!”

Vincent was getting angry and worked up, pacing faster, and thankful everyone was letting him talk and not interrupting. “On the one hand we said he could come with us, and I hate to break a promise, but if he comes we would have to change things. The level of protection would have to be greater. We would have to keep him hidden in case someone recognized him. He would need to be educated in magic. I just don’t know!” Sitting down with a thump, Vincent sighed and looked to the rest of the group. All of them were deep in thought.

Mudiwa was the first to speak. “I gave my word that he wouldn’t have to go back to that house and he could stay with us. If he had lied to us about who he was I would have less issue sending him elsewhere, but he didn’t. Cherub, is a child in need. He came to us, found us, and so far has strengthened our protection. I am willing to help train him in magic.”

“It will be a cold day in hell before you can send that child away from here,” Freja snarled. “The Wizarding world abandoned him to those horrible people, not checking up on him – or if they did, not caring what was happening to him! At five years old this child was desperate enough and brave enough to run away and ask us for sanctuary. It is said that Harry Potter will defeat Voldemort, and that he is the only one who can. I don’t know if I believe that, but I am willing to teach him
everything I know. If they come looking for him, Cherub will be ready if and when the time comes.”

“I agree,” Soto stated calmly. “Not only has this child asked for help, but we have offered that help. We can help him learn magic, both Earth-based and Wizarding. We can teach him to accept people from all cultures and different magical beings, which the Wizarding world rejects. I do not plan to use this child; however an adult wizard as powerful as Cherub who will be open and accepting to all people and beings can only make the Wizarding world a better place.” Everyone nodded seeing the potential for change and acceptance for many who were shunned by the Wizarding world, themselves included.

“He is a child,” Ria’s soft voice stated calmly. “A child who has asked for our help. That is all I need to know.”

“Yes,” agreed Naveen. “With his added magic and a well-placed scarf we can hide him easily. We will need to be a little more aware of what is going on with the Wizarding world and watch their behavior when interacting with them. It will be interesting to see how long it takes before someone notices he is missing.”

Adonis said thoughtfully, “Next weekend we are in Ottery St. Catchpole for the Summer Solstice Festival. There will be many Wizarding families there. I suggest we keep him hidden until we know what is going on and if they are searching for him. And then if they are not looking for Harry Potter, Cherub can come out. Here is another question to ponder: what do we tell Cherub?”

“Nothing,” Mudiwa said. “We teach him what we know: clowning, juggling, all of our acrobatics and such. We also teach him how we use our gifts, and how we do our Earth-based magic. We give him a name when we know him better just as planned. And when he is ready for more, when we have to find or buy spell books for wizards so he can learn that magic too, then we will tell him all that we know about who he is. This way he can learn much and be allowed to be a child before he has to face his destiny.”

Everyone nodded in agreement. “Okay, it sounds like we have a good plan, and that we are all on the same page. Let’s all get some much-needed sleep and met again in the morning. If anyone has any concerns please feel free to voice them. I want to know, and I want everyone to feel good about having Cherub with us.”

Everyone hugged goodnight, and kissed Cherub’s forehead while he still slept in Mudiwa’s arms.

Together Vincent and Mudiwa walked to their tent and laid the sleeping boy in the middle of their bed. After getting ready for bed, the two men kissed lovingly and then settled in on either side of Cherub.
Cherub woke up warm and happy, surrounded by something soft and smooth. Eyes shooting open open Cherub looked around trying to remember where he was. Mudiwa’s deep, rich laugh coming from outside brought back the happenings of the night before. Smiling, Cherub settled back into the fabric and took in the room. The sun was illuminating the walls of the surprisingly large tent. The floor was covered with beautiful earth-toned rugs with African patterns. There was an area with thick pillows surrounding a small ornate dark wooden table to the right of the bed. To the left was a folding screen with beautiful watercolor butterflies and a bar with clothes and wild costumes hanging from it, plus several trunks. Against the back wall was the bed Cherub was in. Sheets of rich, smooth, purple silk covered the bed; at the bottom of the large bed was a thick duvet of rough gray silk. As Cherub lovingly touched the duvet he thought it would be really warm during the winter. Stretching, he turned to hop off of the bed and his feet hit the floor.

‘That’s odd.’ Cherub thought and looked down. The bed was on the floor, and it seemed to be a large pillow. Cherub shrugged – it was comfortable, that was all that mattered to him. Standing up he did his best to straighten out his wrinkled clothes before leaving the tent. Suddenly the tent flap opened and Mudiwa walked in; Cherub froze not sure of what to do.

Kneeling down in front of the small boy, Mudiwa placed a large comforting hand on Cherub’s thin shoulder, noticing the flinch but choosing to ignore it. “Hush, little one, everything is just fine. Vincent and I tucked you into bed with us last night, because we chose to. You are not a bother and we were happy to offer you comfort.”

“Anyway,” Mudiwa dropped his deep voice to a whisper, “you being there kept Vincent from kicking me all night long.” Cherub grinned and giggled softly.

“How about some breakfast?” Mudiwa asked, standing up and holding his hand out. Cherub looked up at the large, fierce-looking man with midnight black skin over powerful muscles and took his hand without hesitation.

Stepping out into the cool, early morning air Cherub blinked in the bright light. Freja and Adonis were working around the fire while the others sat on the bright pillows talking and laughing. The site was even more beautiful in the morning light. There were pillows that looked made of thin carpets, dark red with beautiful dark pictures woven into the fabric. Pillows made from watercolor-painted silk, and pillows of bright, jewel colors with teardrop shapes printed on them in gold and silver. ‘I wonder where all of these pillows are from. I hope I get to go there,’ Cherub thought as he moved.
forward. “Good morning Freja, Adonis. Can I help with breakfast?”

“Good morning, sweetheart. After you clean up I could most certainly use the help of such a strong young man,” Freja replied grinning at Cherub’s blushing cheeks. “Mudiwa, would you please show him where he can freshen up?”

“Of course, Freja. Come along, Cherub, right this way.” Mudiwa took Cherub over to one of the three large buses. The bus had a beautiful forest at sunset painted across its side. Cherub looked around curiously as he climbed into the bus. There was a cushy-looking driver's seat in dark blue with a small table next to it with holes to put drinks into. Behind the driver's seat there was a small table with two benches on either side. Across from the table there was a dark blue, leather couch, with more beautiful pillows. Mudiwa held open a sheet of fabric decorated with blue and black Celtic knotwork. Cherub walked through the curtain into a storage area. Other than a small door to the left the back of the bus was filled with shelves, ropes and containers for holding the clan’s gear.

“Open the door.” Jumping at the deep voice Cherub hurried to comply.

Cherub stood in the doorway with his mouth dropped open in amazement; behind him Mudiwa chuckled. Before him was the most beautiful bathroom Cherub had ever seen. There was a blue tub so large it looked like four people could fit in it, a shower stall made of clear glass blocks which had two shower nozzles, a sink with a shiny sliver tap and light wooden cupboards underneath. Above the sink was a huge mirror clearly reflecting two doors.

“The door closest to us is full of towels and bath stuff, plus a hamper for dirty clothes. The other door is the loo,” Mudiwa said- his voice filled with amusement. Cherub turned to look up into the powerful African face.

“How is this possible?” Cherub asked his voice barely more than a whisper.

“Well,” said Mudiwa, his full pink lips smiling and showing white teeth, “there are many kinds of magic and some kinds can create amazing things. We call this ‘Wizard Space’. All three of the buses have spaces like this. And not just bathrooms, all of the storage space can hold many times what it should. The bus painted with an ocean scene has a kitchen complete with cold storage, and a small bathroom. The bus painted with buildings from all over the world is set up like this one; a large storage area and a bathroom.” Mudiwa was curious how the small boy would take this.

Cherub slowly entered the bathroom, and headed to the sink. Reaching out he touched the taps pulling his hand back quickly. Mudiwa shook his head, Cherub reminded him of a kitten touching water. Wide green eyes looked into his from the mirror. Mudiwa nodded his head and smiled. Cherub smiled back and turned on the water. ‘This is amazing!’ Cherub thought.

“Will you be okay on your own?” Mudiwa asked.

“I think so,” Cherub replied. “I’ll just be a few minutes.”

“Take your time. I will be at the fire with the others. If you need anything – just call; I will leave the bus door open so I can hear you. Okay?”

Cherub smiled up at him. “Okay, thank you.”

Mudiwa walked out of the bathroom shutting the door behind him; as he walked out of the bus he heard the lock click into place.

Everyone was sitting on the cushions and pillows around the fire sipping tea and chatting. Mudiwa took a moment to look at Vincent; his auburn hair shone in the early morning sunlight as it flowed
down his back; his long, lean legs stretched out before him. Mudiwa smiled; Vincent was gorgeous, lean and well muscled. Not nearly as broad as himself, and a few inches shorter, but they fit perfectly together. As his gray eyes traveled back up his lover’s body to his face laughing violet eyes caught his own. Vincent had caught him staring, and by the love and laughter sparkling in his eyes Mudiwa knew Vincent didn’t mind.

Mudiwa walked over and sat down, kissing Vincent softly. Accepting a cup of tea from Freja, he took a sip, and then spoke. “Cherub is freshening up, but won’t take long, is there anything we need to discuss?” Mudiwa usually led emotionally charged discussions within the group. He could easily keep his voice calm, and the richness of it was soothing. Looking around he made eye contact with all of his friends. Everyone seemed calm and content. Except for Freja whose ice-blue eyes glittered with determination and maternal fierceness, making her look even more like a pixie than usual. Mudiwa smiled at Freja instantly calming her. No one was going to change their minds, Cherub was staying.

Cherub hummed happily to himself. This was the most amazing bathroom he had ever seen! He washed his hands and face, and then dried off with one of the soft, fluffy towels sitting on the counter. Looking into the mirror, his large green eyes standing out in his pale thin face, Cherub touched his cheek; it looked so sharp with his cheekbones sticking out. Freja had clean, sharp features, but not like this – hers seemed softer somehow. Cherub sighed and turned his attention to his hair. Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon had always hated his messy, black hair. Cherub ran his fingers through the soft strands, ‘I can at least neaten it up a bit,’ he thought. His aunt and uncle had wanted his hair shorter than it was. It always grew back after they cut it though Cherub never understood why.

‘Maybe longer would be better,’ pondered Cherub. ‘Vincent has really long hair, it is wavy and such a beautiful auburn.’ Cherub remembered that Adonis’ straight, golden hair fell to his shoulders; Naveen’s hair was curly and came to his jaw. ‘I think Soto has long hair,’ Cherub thought, remembering the tophat that Soto wore last night. ‘Or maybe I could shave my head like Mudiwa’s?’ Cherub giggled at this thought. Mudiwa’s high cheekbones, large gray eyes, and wide nose worked well with his shaved head, giving him a very powerful look. ‘I don’t think I can pull that off.’ Cherub smiled. ‘At least my hair will be mine to do with as I please.’ Placing the towel in the hamper Mudiwa had shown him, Cherub turned off the bathroom light and went to breakfast.

As he walked towards the sounds of talking and the smell of food Cherub started to get nervous. ‘What if they don’t want me anymore? What if I do look awful like the Dursleys always said?’ Cherub looked down at the ground, tears filling his eyes as his uncle’s voice shouted through his head: ‘Who would want a worthless freak like you?’ Cherub stopped moving, trying to calm down. Suddenly he was wrapped in strong, warm arms.

“Hush, little one; you are safe here, I have you,” cooed Vincent. Cherub buried himself in the soft shirt and sobbed. Vincent breathed slowly and deeply, continuing to say soothing words to the trembling boy in his arms. Vincent had to blink back his own tears as the waves of pain, fear and self-loathing coming from Cherub overwhelmed him. Absently, Vincent rubbed the small back trying to sort out what had caused the breakdown. As Vincent opened his empathic abilities to Cherub he flinched. Dropping into a light trance through his breathing Vincent found the key. Pulling Cherub closer Vincent buried his face into the boy’s soft hair and gently whispered in his ear. “I want you here with me, with us. We want you here with us. I know you are very special, and I cannot wait to find out all of the amazing things you will do.” Cherub froze then and with a shuddering breath he tried to burrow deeper into the hard chest, soaking in the feeling of being safe and wanted. Vincent continued to card his hand through Cherub’s hair waiting patiently for him to calm down. After a few minutes Cherub rubbed his face against the soft, silky shirt; slowly sitting up.
Before he could say anything Vincent spoke, his voice soft and warm. “No apologies. None are needed. Are you feeling all right now?” Cherub looked up as Vincent’s calloused hand wiped away the tears from his cheeks.

“Yes, I think so.” Cherub’s voice was a bit hoarse from crying. ‘No apologies,’ he reminded himself. “Did I ruin your shirt?” Cherub asked tentatively as he saw the large, wet patch his face had been pressed against.

Vincent smiled. “No, it is only water. It will dry and be as good as new.” Ruffling Cherub's hair he asked, “Are you ready for breakfast?” As if in answer Cherub’s stomach rumbled, making him blush. “I will take that as a ‘yes’. Come along, let's get you some food,” Vincent said standing up and helping Cherub at the same time.

Cautiously Cherub reached out to take Vincent’s hand. Vincent smiled down at Cherub and held his hand open, slowly closing his fingers over the small, pale hand placed in his.
Chapter Seven

Vincent sat down by Mudiwa placing Cherub between them. Everyone else had finished eating, and had obviously waited for their return. Cherub shifted uncomfortably and looked down at his hands. Vincent slowly looked around the group making eye contact with every member of his family wanting to make sure that no one had changed their minds. Everyone met his eyes with resolve; Cherub stays. Smiling he nodded to Freja.

“Well, young man, what do you want for breakfast?” Freja asked kindly to the scared little boy.

Cherub’s eyes were huge. He had never been offered so much food! It all sounded so good, but he didn’t want her cooking just for him. “Um, can I please have some orange juice, fruit with yogurt and a small scoop of potatoes?” Cherub twisted his fingers nervously in the hem of his shirt hoping that what he asked for was really okay.

“Of course, sweetheart.” Freja began filling a plate. “Now I don’t know how much you can eat, so I am giving you a small portion and if you want more you just ask; there is plenty.” Freja smiled handing Cherub a plate. ‘Of course there is plenty I stopped Adonis and Mudiwa from having thirds,’ she thought to herself.

Cherub looked down at the beautiful plate of food. It was a heavy, thick plate, rough on the bottom and painted a shiny, dark blue with some kind of brilliant red design that he couldn’t see clearly underneath his food. There was a steaming pile of sliced potatoes with thin ribbons of cooked onions and green bell peppers, a colorful mound of cut-up fruit – Cherub recognized banana, grapes, apples and strawberries as well as small cubes of deep yellow with flecks of white that he didn’t recognize. There was a small bowl, it was the same colour and design as the plate, filled with creamy white yogurt. Carefully looking up through his fringe at the adults Cherub saw everyone was busy talking about what was going to happen that day. Half listening to the adults, Cherub picked up his fork, which was made of a dark, smooth wood, and speared a bite of potato – it was a little spicy and garlicky. Placing the bite in his mouth Cherub hummed in delight, causing the adults to smile indulgently at him. Cherub chewed slowly savoring each bite as he ate all his potatoes. Setting his plate down, he drank some of his orange juice and listen to what the adults were saying. They seemed to be organizing who would do which act and when, and then who would sell tickets and at what times. It was nothing he needed to know but still he listened while turning his attention back to his food. Spearing an apple Cherub dipped it into the yogurt. There was another hum of delight – the yogurt was so smooth and creamy and the apple was a little tart yet sweet. Happily he continued to eat his fruit, the flakes of white were good, firm and creamy tasting, they were more like the flesh of a nut than a fruit. The cubes of yellow were heavenly and he hummed in happiness again.

Vincent could not hold back the chuckle this time. They had all been watching Cherub eat; trying to keep conversation going so he wouldn’t know. The little boy was just too cute. Sitting cross legged on the pillows, dwarfed by Vincent and Mudiwa Cherub was hunched over the large
stoneware plate, humming in delight as he ate. Freja was beside herself with happiness as the little boy ate happily. “So,” Vincent said with laughter in his voice. “You like the mango?”

Big green eyes looked up through his black fringe. “Is that what the yellow fruit is? I have never had it before – it's very good. What are the white bits?”

“Coconut; do you like them?” Vincent answered.

“Very much,” Cherub replied honestly. “I'm almost finished; would you like me to clean up?”

“I can always use the help,” Freja said. “Are you full? Do you want some more?”

“It was very good, thank you for breakfast,” Cherub answered politely. “I'm full though.”

“Well then, finish the last of your fruit and juice and then you can help out,” Freja said. “Does anyone else want some more?” Adonis and Mudiwa both held out their plates and between the two of them the last of the food was gone.

Clearing his throat Vincent turned and looked at Cherub. “In a little while a lot of people are going to come here, and we are going to put on a fair. I don’t know if your aunt and uncle reported you missing. In order to keep safe you will need to stay in our tent today. We will all take turns visiting you throughout the day, and we will have some things for you to play with so you aren’t bored. How does that sound to you?”

“I get to be in the whole tent?” Cherub asked in a soft voice.

Vincent blinked. Had they locked this sweet child up? Quickly smiling Vincent replied, “Yes, you will have access to the whole tent.”

“Okay,” Cherub said looking solemn. “I promise to be really quiet and to stay inside.”

Vincent smiled and ruffled Cherub’s soft curls. “Of course you will.”

Cherub helped Freja and Adonis clean up, used the bathroom, and went back to Vincent and Mudiwa’s tent. The two men showed Cherub where he could play and what he could get into. They also pulled the table into the middle of the room for Cherub to use. Mudiwa rummaged through a trunk and with a triumphant grunt placed three books filled with photographs on the table. After they reminded Cherub that they would come and check on him throughout the day and to stay in the tent, Vincent and Mudiwa left to help the vendors get set up.

Seconds later Freja came in talking quickly. “I found three fairy tale books for you to look at, and here is some fruit and a bottle of water.” Setting the books down she was grateful for not having found the time to send them to her grandchildren. After placing the fruit and water down Freja placed her hand gently on Cherub’s small shoulder trying to ignore the soft flinch as she did so. “Are you going to be okay by yourself?” she asked.

Cherub smiled. “Oh yes! I can’t wait to look at the books; I can even read a bit,” he exclaimed. “Vincent and Mudiwa showed me where I can play…”

“Hello, Cherub,” Ria interrupted hurriedly, Naveen following close behind. “I have a bunch of fabric you can play with,” Ria said placing a pile of brightly patterned cloth on the table.

Freja smiled, “I have to go, Cherub, but I will see you later, ja?”

“I'll be here,” the boy quipped, smiling.
“All of the fabric is for you to keep. So you can make a castle out of it or use it for dressing up, or whatever you want okay?’ Ria explained.

Cherub’s eyes grew wide. “Really, are you sure I can have all of this?”

“Really,” Ria answered, saddened at how a few yards of fabric could mean so much to their newest gypsy.

“Thank you.” Cherub sighed tentatively running his hand down the stack of cloth.

“Sorry we don’t have more time to stay, but I want to show you how to work the marionette before we have to leave,” Naveen said softly. Cherub blinked, then looking up he noticed the puppet Naveen was holding. It was a foot-tall Indian warrior dressed in bright yellow with a shiny silver sword. Naveen showed Cherub how to make the puppet work and most importantly how to keep the strings from tangling. Ria and Naveen both ran a hand down Cherub’s arm as they said goodbye promising to see him soon. Cherub was practicing with the puppet when Soto came into the tent. Placing the puppet carefully on the table, Cherub looked up at Soto wondering what the quiet man wanted.

Soto was nervous; he really didn’t have anything for a five-year-old child. It had taken him ten minutes to pick something, and he needed to go and help Adonis check all the rigging. Kneeling down, Soto placed three metal objects, a wooden cube and a wooden sphere on the table. Cherub looked at them in confusion.

“They are puzzles. The metal ones you have to try and take apart, and the wooden ones you take apart and then put together,” Soto explained. Cherub’s brow furrowed as he picked up one of the heavy metal puzzles, and began investigating the pieces and how they fit together. “The puzzles are challenging, and if you haven’t solved any by dinner you can pick one and I will show you how it works, all right?” Soto hoped that would be enough to at least entice the child into trying them.

Bright green eyes smiled into his black ones. “All right,” Cherub said and then paused. “What if I solve one?”

Black eyebrows raised in surprise as Soto’s eyes widened. He liked the boy’s gumption. “For each puzzle you solve – and you have to show me for it to count – I will buy you a sweet.” A determined look came over Cherub’s face as he stared at the puzzle in his hand. “I have to go now, but Adonis will visit in an hour,” Soto said rising gracefully from the floor.

Cherub’s eyes left the puzzle as he looked at Soto. “Have a nice day,” Cherub said unconsciously mimicking his aunt.

Alone in the luxurious tent Cherub looked at all of the items on the table. ‘I have never had so many things to play with,’ he thought feeling overwhelmed. Looking down at the puzzle in his hands Cherub decided to start with it and sat down on the earth-toned carpet, his face set with determination.

Adonis found Cherub seated on the floor with the animal photo book open on his lap. Adonis watched Cherub for a minute; the boy turned the pages of the book slowly studying each photo intently. Adonis cleared his throat in hope of not startling Cherub; luck was not on his side. The slight boy jumped and quickly turned his head to look at Adonis, but made no noise.

“Hello little man, having fun?” Adonis asked cheerfully.

Smiling, Cherub replied, “Yes, lots! I finished one of Soto’s puzzles and I’ve been looking at the
books Vincent and Mudiwa left for me. One has pictures of places all over the world, and another is about outer space, and this one,” Cherub rambled excitedly and pointed to the book in his lap, “has photos of animals!” Adonis smiled happy to see the childish joy on Cherub’s thin, pale face, then frowned remembering what Cherub had just said.

“Wait a minute… you finished one of Soto’s puzzles? Was it one of the metal ones?” Adonis asked in a shocked voice.

“Yes,” Cherub answered simply pointing to the three pieces of metal that had started out being one wrapped around each other. Adonis was astonished; he had solved that puzzle but it had taken him hours.

“Wow, I am impressed,” Adonis mumbled, still shocked.

Cherub beamed. “Thank you.”

Shaking his head, Adonis focused on Cherub. Sitting down next to Cherub, Adonis set down the small box and book he had with him. “I would like to see your favorite pictures from the books.”

Cherub nodded and quickly went to the beginning of the book on his lap. Twenty minutes later Cherub closed the last book. Adonis had told him the names of the animals and places Cherub had pointed out and told him little stories or facts about some of them. Adonis nudged Cherub with his shoulder.

“Now then, how about I show you what I brought and then take you to the bathroom? I am expected to be back at the tent in ten minutes.”

“Okay,” Cherub said now looking serious. He didn’t want to be a burden.

Adonis first set the book in front of Cherub. “This is a sketch book, it's full of blank pages for you to draw on. I haven’t used this one so it's all yours.”

Cherub lovingly picked up the book and flipped through it. The book was filled with thick, white paper. He looked up as Adonis set down a light, wooden box.

“This is filled with colored pencils. There is a sharpener in here too; I think it's near the bottom. When I get a chance I will get you your own set, but for now you can use mine.”

Cherub was amazed at all of the beautiful colors contained in the box. “I will take really good care of them,” he said sincerely.

Adonis almost laughed at the serious little face before him. “I'm sure you will. Now let me take you to the bathroom.” Standing up Adonis held out his hand for Cherub to take.

Once back in the tent Adonis asked, “Do you need anything else before I go, Cherub?”

Cherub pursed his lips and wrinkled his nose as he looked around the room. Again Adonis had to stifle his laughter, ‘Cherub is too cute!’ he thought.

“I don’t think so, I have food, water, and a lot of things to play with,” Cherub replied cheerfully.

Adonis smiled. ‘Such simple things make him so happy,’ he thought with a sigh. “Well then, I will be off. Someone else will check on you in an hour or so and then an hour later we will all sit down and have lunch.”
“Thank you, Adonis,” Cherub said to the golden man as he walked out of the tent.

An hour later Mudiwa stepped into the tent. He had twenty minutes to check on Cherub, take him to the bathroom, and then get changed for his next performance. Looking around the tent he saw there were signs of Cherub but not the boy himself. Having spotted a brightly colored castle Mudiwa walked over and peering inside he saw something that brought a protective smile to his face. Cherub was fast asleep, wrapped in a piece of bright blue velvet with a storybook open under his cheek. Mudiwa thought about picking Cherub up and putting him in the bed, but remembered how the boy reacted to touch. Mudiwa decided to leave the small boy where he lay. Instead, he walked over to the table to see what Cherub had been doing. Two of Soto’s metal puzzles lay solved, which caused an eyebrow to rise; two of the photo books were open and the drawing next to them looked like the photo of the Indian tiger.

Mudiwa checked the water bottle, it was still half full and Cherub had some fruit left. Mudiwa looked around one last time making sure everything was all right, and then left to go and change his costume for the next part of the morning show.
A brave knight and his friend, an Indian Warrior named Punja, were just about to replace the last puzzle piece in the sphere which would free the Dragon King from his prison – when Freja called him to lunch.

“Coming!” Cherub called, carefully setting down the marionette so its strings wouldn’t tangle. Cherub then placed his cloak of blue velvet on the table, and after placing the last piece in the sphere he set the wooden ball on top of the cloak. Cherub walked out of the tent and over to the circle. The Dragon Heart Gypsies sat around a cold fire, tired but happy. There were platters of cut-up vegetables, cheeses, crackers, dips, and pitchers of lemonade placed inside the circle.

Ria, seeing Cherub, beckoned him over. “Come and sit. Can I get you a plate? How was your morning?”

Cherub walked over, a bit nervous now that everyone was looking at him. He began to fidget with the hem of his shirt as he answered Ria. “Yes, please. I had a very nice morning.” Shifting, Cherub saw open happy faces looking at him, all waiting for more information about how he had spent his morning. “I looked at books, drew pictures, played with puzzles, I made a fort out of the fabric and…..” mumbled Cherub looking at the ground.

Handing Cherub a plate filled with food Ria smiled and said. “The white is a raita yogurt and the light brown is hummus. You don’t have to eat anything you don’t like. Please repeat the last bit you said, I couldn’t hear you.”

Holding the plate carefully on his lap, Cherub took a deep breath. “I played ‘knights’ with the marionette.” Puzzled expressions marred every brow except Naveen’s.

“Did you get the marionette to move well for you?” Naveen asked, while letting the other know what Cherub had said. Cherub has just put a piece of creamy white cheese in his mouth so he nodded instead of answering. Naveen’s face lit into a smile. “Brilliant” he said.

“Cherub, when you are done eating I would really like to see what you drew,” Adonis asked hopefully. Cheeks flushed pink Cherub nodded and dipped a carrot stick into the hummus. Bright green eyes widened in surprise; then long black lashes fluttered closed in delight.

This time it was Naveen who smiled proudly as the young boy took such delight in his cooking. Naveen had learned to make hummus from his favorite aunt and it was his specialty.

The others smiled kindly at both Naveen and Cherub, delighted that the thin boy was enjoying his lunch. Each person in the group was planning to make their special dish soon. Conversations stopped as everyone ate, the adults making sure not to eat too much as they all had another show to put on in an hour. Cherub continued to hum his delight at Ria’s raita, Freja’s lemonade and several of the different cheeses and crackers.

As Freja started to clean up, this time with Soto’s help, she said, “Cherub, if you bring me one of the story books I would be happy to read it to you before I have to go back to work.”

“Really?” Cherub jumped up. “I’ll be right back.”

Everyone chuckled at his excitement. Once he was out of earshot Vincent asked quickly, “Has anyone heard or seen anyone looking for a missing boy?” Soft “no’s” were the answer.
“I asked several of the vendors how they were doing while helping them set up and not one said anything about a missing child,” Soto reported.

“Thank you,” Vincent replied. “We will be leaving Monday morning, so please keep your eyes and ears open. Honestly, though, I don’t think they are going to tell anyone.” Vincent ended quickly, seeing the tent flaps flutter.

Cherub came back tightly clutching the sketchpad and a book to his chest. Cautiously he made his way over to Adonis with trembling arms, and held the pad out to him. Smiling joyfully Adonis patted the empty cushion next to him. “Sit here and show me.”

Cherub sat down and opened the pad; there was a picture of a hummingbird gracing the first page.

“This is brilliant! Is this the photo you showed me from the book?”

“Yes,” Cherub answered. “I like the bird – it looks so happy.”

“It’s a humming bird,” Vincent said from beside them, unable to resist. Cherub jumped, not expecting anyone else to be that close. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you,” Vincent apologized. “I’m to nosey for my own good sometimes.”

Cherub smiled as the adults tried to hide their amusement at this true statement.

“It is a very good drawing,” Adonis said. “You have a good eye for details, and I really like how you blended the colors together.”

Cherub’s cheeks flushed pink. “Thank you,” he mumbled to the ground.

Adonis went back to looking at Cherub’s drawings. The next four pages had pictures of a castle, an octopus, a dragon, and a tiger. All were obviously done by a child, yet still showed talent. However, they did not look like anything a five year old would draw. Adonis was impressed and looked forward to teaching Cherub art.

“Can we have a look?” Ria asked. Cherub nodded, embarrassed, then went to sit by Freja handing her the book.

Sharp black eyes focused into slits. What a great way to make sure no one else compliments him on the drawings, Soto thought. This boy really is far too clever. He turned to take Cherub’s drawing. Way too clever, Soto thought, eyebrows rising in surprise at the details in the pictures.

Cherub settled himself next to Freja equally eager to get away from the attention and to be read to for the first time. He had heard his aunt read to his cousin, but he had always been too far away to hear the stories. Now he was going to be the one being read to. I hope I don’t lose this, Cherub thought as he looked around the group before focusing once again on Freja.

Freja looked down at the book handed to her and smiled. She had bought this version of Cinderella for the beautiful illustrations. “Once upon a time...”

Cherub sat enraptured. Freja smiled, the beautiful oil paintings in the story showed Cinderella in seventeenth century France with its amazing and grandiose dresses; they had captured Cherub’s attention fully. He didn’t even notice everyone else getting ready to go back to work. Freja’s voice changed with each character, adding needed sound effects and dramatic pauses.

“Wow!” Cherub sighed as Freja closed the book. Cherub scrunched up his forehead in concentration. “Do you think that would have happened to me? Should I have stayed and been good doing whatever my aunt and uncle said and waited for someone to come and rescue me?”
Freja took a deep breath, “I think these stories are here to give us hope and something to dream of. After we have a dream it is up to us to go out into the world and make our dream come true.”

Cherub smiled and threw his arms around Freja’s neck. Smiling she pulled him tight to her. Letting him go she said, “All right, let’s get you all set up for this afternoon. Are you comfortable being left alone again?”

Smiling Cherub replied, “I will be fine. I had a lot of fun this morning.”

Cherub’s afternoon was much like the morning. He played, looked at books, drew and finished solving Soto’s puzzles. He enjoyed a light tea with the rest of the gypsies, and then spent the rest of the afternoon in Vincent and Mudiwa’s tent fighting evil and drawing pictures.

“Hello, Cherub.” Soto’s crisp accented voice interrupted his play.

Cherub grinned and climbed out from his castle of fabric. “I did it!” Cherub squealed rushing over to Soto. “I figured out all five puzzles!”

Soto raised an eyebrow in disbelief, but kept his tone mild. “Can I see?”

Cherub reached out and grabbed Soto’s hand in his excitement and took him over to the table. There lay the three metal puzzles completely taken apart. “I put the wooden ones back together, but I am pretty sure I can undo them and put them back together again if you want,” Cherub said a bit nervously. Soto hadn’t responded yet, he was just staring at the puzzles.

“You did these all by yourself?” Soto asked sharply.

“Yes, sir.” Cherub said sounding subdued.

Soto shook himself, he hadn’t meant to upset the boy, but this was unexpected. “I would really like to see you put the two wooden puzzles together,” he said warmly sitting down next to the table.

Cherub hesitated, then smiled shyly and sat down. His small hands grabbed the wooden sphere and pulled it apart, then he took a deep breath began picking up the pieces. Soto’s eyes widened as he felt Cherub’s energy ground and center itself. He looks like he is in a trance, Soto thought as Cherub’s fingers nimbly put the sphere back together.

“How are you able to do that so easily?” Soto asked.

Still working on the puzzle Cherub looked up at him and smiled. ‘The puzzle remembers how, and I just had to figure out how to hear it.”

“Ah,” Soto answered and went back to watching Cherub. Does he mean the energy I leave behind when I put the puzzle together? Soto wondered. I do use the puzzles frequently as a form of meditation.

Within ten minutes a proud little boy held up a wooden sphere for Soto’s approval. Soto took the sphere from Cherub’s hands and looked it over. Smiling he said, “It looks like I owe you some sweets.”

“Really?” Cherub asked. “And I get to pick them out?”

Soto laughed. “Yes, really. I can’t take you to get sweets until we know it is safe, but I did bring two for you to choose from for tonight, and then tomorrow I will pick up whatever you want from the vendors, okay?”

“Brilliant!” cheered Cherub as he bounced on his knees.
Grinning, Soto pulled out two Cadbury bars from his pocket. “I have a Cadbury's Fudge and a Curly Wurly. Which would you like?”

Cherub’s green eyes widened and his fingers twitched in excitement. He had never had a chocolate bar before. He had heard his cousin whine for them at the house, but he had never got one. He looked into Soto’s black eyes trying to make sure this wasn’t a trick. He saw only warmth. He looked at his choices again – this was a big decision.

Soto suppressed a laugh at the intensity showing on Cherub’s face, this was obviously a big decision. I wonder if he has ever had a chocolate bar? he thought and his smile died. Quickly he brought it back, so as not to confuse Cherub. Leaning in Soto whispered, “I have an idea. What if I cut each bar in half, and we can each have a quick treat before dinner?” Cherub’s pink lips stretched into a wide smile showing his white teeth. Nodding furiously, he cleared a space on the table for Soto to put the chocolate on. After unwrapping each bar Soto pulled out a small pocketknife and cut each bar in half. “Go ahead,” he said to Cherub while he cleaned off his knife and put it away.

Grabbing a piece of the Fudge bar first Cherub took a bite of the rich chocolate. Emerald green eyes fluttered closed as Cherub’s happy-food-hum reached Soto’s ears. Chuckling, Soto picked up a piece of chocolate for himself and fondly watched Cherub eating his first chocolate.
Chapter Nine

Soto looked down at Cherub and wiped the last smears of chocolate off his face. “Let us clean up in here and then we can go help make dinner,” Soto said as he stood up.

“Okay,” Cherub said jumping up. He began to put the metal puzzles back together, while Soto took down his castle and folded up the fabric. In just a few minutes they were done and walking out to the circle.

“How can we help?” Soto asked Mudiwa and Ria who were the only ones there.

“Hello gentlemen,” Ria greeted. “Tonight we are going to grill kabobs over the fire. I am going to get everything ready in the bus, and Mudiwa is cleaning the cushions and starting the fire.” Mudiwa grunted his acknowledgment of this. “Cherub would you like to help me in the kitchen?”

Cherub smiled, “Yes, I have never had kabobs before.”

“You are in for a treat.” Mudiwa said. Soto walked over to the circle and began to help clean up, knowing the others would be done closing up the fair soon.

Ria held her hand out for Cherub to take. He did so smiling and waved to Soto and Mudiwa as he went to the bus painted with ocean scenes. Ria handed Cherub a bag of mushrooms. “Can you wash these and pull the stem out?”

Cherub nodded and climbed onto the stool Ria had set in front of the sink for him and began cleaning the button mushrooms.

“Perfect. I will also need onions,” Ria began as she set items on the counter talking to herself as much as Cherub. “Pineapple, peppers I think, both red and green, some courgettes and the tofu. Doing all right?” she asked.

“I’m fine,” he said enjoying her distracted speech.

“Good, the mushrooms look great. Okay – ah – here is the tofu, we have three bowls all in a different marinade, and I will start water to boil for the couscous and then chop the onions.”

Cherub grinned; this was so much different than the cooking at his aunt and uncle’s house. He placed the last of the mushrooms on the cutting board. “What can I do now?”

“You are very fast!” Ria exclaimed. “Please wash the peppers and the courgettes next.

“Okay,” Cherub said happily. After washing them he cut the vegetables while listening to Ria talk to herself as she got everything together.

Mudiwa cleaned out the fire pit while Soto began shaking out the rugs and pillows. After a few
minutes of comfortable silence Soto spoke. “I gave Cherub some of the puzzles to play with today – the metal and wooden ones I use for meditation. He solved them. I didn’t expect him to, but Cherub solved them.” Shaking his head in disbelief he looked at Mudiwa who was now staring intently at him.

“How is that possible? They are very complex,” Mudiwa said trying to figure this newest mystery out.

Looking into Mudiwa’s eyes he said softly, “Cherub said he could ‘feel’ how the puzzle went together. That the puzzle knew. The only thing I can figure out is that my energy must be imprinted on the pieces from the many times I have taken the puzzles apart and then put them back together. Almost as if I have left instructions in them.” Confused black eyes seemed to seek answers or confirmation from Mudiwa.

After a moment Mudiwa went back to cleaning the fire pit. Both men lost in thought as they cleaned. As Mudiwa began placing fresh wood in the pit he said, “I wonder if this explains why his drawings were so good. Adonis said that Cherub used his pencils today. Will he draw as well with new pencils? Could he solve a new puzzle – one that hasn’t been touched? How much information does Cherub gain, if any, from other objects?”

“I have no idea,” Soto said, finishing up with the last of the pillows. “I do think we should tell the others. We need to find out if he is simply following a pattern set into the object or if he is learning from them.” Mudiwa nodded in agreement and set to starting the fire.

Cherub held a tray full of chunky cut vegetables and placed them on the long low table on one side of the circle. The fire was wide and low tonight with a metal grill over the top. “Those look yummy. Is there more to carry?” asked Adonis, his hair still damp from his shower.

Cherub grinned. “Yes, there are several trays – I can’t imagine we will eat so much, but Ria is worried there won’t be enough.” His soft voice sounded amazed.

“Come along then, I will help bring the food out. We have been working very hard today I bet we will all eat a lot.” Adonis said as they walked together into the bus. There they found Ria finishing the couscous.

“Ria why don’t you go and take a quick shower while Cherub and I take everything to the fire. Do I need to do anything to the couscous?” Adonis offered.

“That would be perfect,” Ria said happily. “No, the couscous just needs to sit for twenty minutes then it will be ready. Thank you for all your help, Cherub.” Ria ran her fingers through soft black hair in thanks, and walked to the back of the bus to use the shower.

Cherub and Adonis each grabbed a tray and walked out to the fire where Freja and Vincent were sitting letting their hair dry by the fire.

“Good evening, Cherub,” Vincent said. “How was your afternoon?”

Cherub set down another tray of vegetables on the table. “I had fun playing. Ria let me help with dinner,” he said proudly.

The adults smiled. “I am glad you had a fun afternoon, Cherub. Do you need any help bringing
“Don’t you think so?” Freja asked.

“I don’t think so,” Cherub answered looking at Adonis for confirmation.

“There are only a few more items. We can get them all, and you two sit and relax.” Adonis said and placed his large golden hand on the small shoulder as he led Cherub back to the kitchen. Vincent and Freja both smiled at the pair noticing that Cherub hadn’t flinched when Adonis had touched him this time.

A few minutes later everything they needed for dinner was set out on the low table and everyone was sitting in the circle chatting.

“Why don’t we start grilling some kabobs while Ria finishes her shower? They should be done by the time she comes out,” Naveen said.

“Brilliant. I am starving!” exclaimed Adonis.

“Here, Cherub let me show you how to make a kabob,” Mudiwa said holding out his hand for Cherub to take. Smiling the curious boy grasped the rough dark hand and let himself be led to the long table where Soto and Naveen were already working.

Kneeling down on one end of the table Mudiwa began to explain the art of making kabobs. “First you take one of these bamboo skewers, which we soaked in water so they wouldn’t burn in the fire.” Taking a chunk of onion Mudiwa showed Cherub how to get the vegetables onto the skewers without breaking them. Vincent smiled, watching his lover calmly teaching a serious-faced Cherub how to make kabobs. They had never talked about being parents but it was obvious that Mudiwa would be a wonderful father. Vincent felt blessed by the presence of the emerald-eyed child who has already wormed his way into their hearts. Vincent was broken out of his thoughts when a small body settled in next to him.

“All finished?”

“Yes,” Cherub chirped. “Kabobs are fun! Mudiwa said I could help make more when these are done.” Cherub pointed to the grill and platter that were full of sticks with vegetables and tofu. Mudiwa and Naveen watched over their dinner, ready to turn the kabobs and brushing marinade over them every so often. Just as they began taking the kabobs off of the grill Ria came out with a large bowl full of steaming, seasoned couscous.

“Perfect timing, sweetheart,” Naveen said as he took the first kabob off the grill.

“It is a gift,” Ria replied smiling at her husband. “Cherub, what flavor would you like? The honey ginger glaze, savory garlic or spicy?”

“Um, I think the honey ginger?” Cherub questioned not sure which one he would like best.

“Good choice,” Ria said placing some couscous on a plate. Naveen placed a honey ginger kabob on the plate, then passed it to Cherub. Adonis handed out dark red cloth napkins while everyone filled their plates full of food. Cherub waited for everyone to be seated before eating. The adults tried not to be obvious, but they were all waiting for Cherub’s happy food hum. They did not have to wait long, before black eyelashes fluttered as Cherub took his first bite and hummed. Happy chatting filled the air as everyone ate and grilled more kabobs. Adonis was right – there was no food left once they were done eating. Soto passed out tea and the gypsies leaned back into the pillows relaxing and talking. Cherub’s tummy was full as he happily listened to the adults talk, answering the occasional question sent his way. Wiggling back into the pillows behind him, Cherub’s eyes began to close as
the busy day and his full stomach caught up to him.

Vincent stopping talking suddenly as he felt a weight against his side, Looking down Vincent saw Cherub; the small boy had fallen asleep. Vincent smiled and adjusted them into a comfortable position with Cherub tucked into his side and his sweet face pillowed on his chest.

“Is he asleep?” Mudiwa asked Vincent.

Vincent smiled softly, “Yes, deeply.”

“Good, Soto.” Mudiwa said firmly. Everyone perked up and focused their attention on Soto as he told them about what had happened with the puzzles and what he and Mudiwa had talked about.

“What does this mean?” Ria asked, concerned.

“We are not sure,” Soto answered. “It depends on whether he is getting knowledge he can use later or just tapping into the information left behind from the last person who used the item.”

The gypsies were quiet for a moment all lost in their own thoughts when Adonis exclaimed, “Pencils!”

“What?” Mudiwa asked.

“I told Cherub I would get him some colored pencils of his own. We can see how he draws with the new pencils compared to all the drawings he has already done. I think that will give us a good idea of what he is tapping into.” Adonis explained.

“Brilliant, we need to get Cherub clothes and such anyway. We are leaving for Sennen Monday morning. Why don’t we stop in Exeter for some lunch and we can take Cherub shopping then?” Vincent said.

Everyone smiled; this was going to work out perfectly. They spent a few more minutes talking and planning the next few days. Not long afterwards Vincent carried a still-sleeping Cherub into the tent and like the night before placed him in the middle of their bed. Mudiwa and Vincent took turns getting ready for bed, not wanting Cherub to wake up alone.

Vincent came back from the bathroom clad in black cotton sleep pants his lean torso appreciated by Mudiwa’s gray eyes. Mudiwa held out his hand in invitation; Vincent smiled and walked over to the couch. Mudiwa was wearing white cotton sleep pants and his muscular ebony chest gleamed in the soft candlelight of the tent. The two lovers curled around each other enjoying the warmth and love that flowed between them.

“We have never talked about being parents,” Vincent said voicing his thoughts from earlier.

“No, we haven’t,” Mudiwa’s deep voice answered.

Vincent smiled at his lover’s vague answer. “I loved watching you with Cherub today.”

“He is a very sweet boy, and very clever.”

“Yes, he is.” Vincent replied. “How do you feel about us being his parents? I know that everyone will help raise him, but he seems to be ours right now.”

“I think everything is as it should be. Cherub chose our troupe. We would feel responsible for him one way or another. I like the thought of being his father, and I think you will make a very good
dad,” Mudiwa said kissing Vincent’s temple.

“I love the idea of raising a child with you, of having a family of our own,” Vincent said turning to Mudiwa and kissing him lovingly. “Of course we will need to get Cherub his own room.”

Mudiwa laughed; they sat and talked for a while before climbing into bed for the night.
Chapter Ten

Sunday June 15

Cherub woke the next morning feeling warm and safe. Smiling he stretched, surprised when the felt another body next to him. Opening his eyes he calmed down when he saw Vincent sleeping next to him. The tent was lit softly by the early morning sun giving everything an ethereal quality. Looking over his shoulder, Cherub saw Mudiwa sleeping on the other side. Cherub snuggled down into the covers radiant as he thought of all that had happened the day before, and all of the exciting things to come. They were going to leave tomorrow, and go to all sorts of exciting places. Cherub's grin grew as happiness and excitement radiated from the small boy in waves, as he imagined what his future now held.

Vincent rose to consciousness as a light tingling feeling began to envelop him. Opening his violet eyes he could not help but smile at Cherub who was grinning like mad. “The joy emanating from the black-haired imp is definitely what woke me up” thought Vincent. Looking to his lover he saw the ebony man beginning to stir.

“Good morning, Cherub,” said Vincent, his voice deeper than normal from sleep.

Cherub blinked and turned to Vincent’s handsome sleep-relaxed face. Wiggling closer Cherub loudly whispered, “Good morning, did you sleep well?”

Vincent smiled at Cherub’s attempt to be quiet. “I did. You look very happy this morning.”

“I am.” Cherub whispered again, “I was thinking about all the fun I had yesterday, and all of the exciting adventures we are going to have.” Sparkling emerald eyes looked into violet hoping Vincent would confirm his thoughts.

“We are going to have many exciting adventures, and we will get to see many exciting places.” Vincent replied. “In fact I think we should have an adventure right now. We need to wake up Mudiwa,” he said grinning evilly.

“I could shake his shoulder?” Cherub offered.

Vincent shook his head “No, I don’t think that will work. How about…” Vincent leaned over and whispered into Cherub’s ear.

Giggling, Cherub nodded and climbed over Mudiwa. Vincent pulled the sheet down to expose Mudiwa’s torso and grinned at Cherub. Vincent then held up one finger, then two, and after the third they both began tickling Mudiwa’s ribs. Deep rumbling laughter filled the tent, as the man who had been faking sleep succumbed to the wiggling fingers.

Gasping, Mudiwa said, “Okay, okay I am awake.” Wiping the tears from his eyes Mudiwa caught his breath now the tickling had stopped. “I will, of course be getting both of you back,” he said calmly.

Vincent nodded his head in consent. “Of course, but for now it is time to get out of bed. Cherub do you have another set of clothes?” Vincent asked as he walked to get his clothes.
“Yes, but they are not as nice as what I have been wearing.” Cherub answered softly, looking down at the shirt he had worn for two days.

“Why don’t you put them on, and tomorrow we will buy you new clothes on our way to Sennen,” Vincent said trying to control his anger at the child’s relatives, yet again.

Changing the subject, Mudiwa said, “Before breakfast Ria and Naveen lead yoga. Anyone who wants to join is welcome; this includes the rest of the troupe. I know you haven’t met anyone else yet, Cherub, but you are welcome to join us, or play near by.” They had kept Cherub separate from the others, just in case the police came looking for the boy. It was unfair to ask those not involved in the decision-making to lie. “We will need to find a scarf to tie around your head so your scar doesn’t show,” Mudiwa explained as he rummaged through a trunk. With a grunt he stood and walked over to Cherub who was tying a rope around his waist to keep his baggy torn denims up.

“Why do we need to cover my scar?” Cherub asked confused.

“We need to hide you in case someone comes looking for you, right?”

“Right.”

Mudiwa took a deep breath, “Your scar is very unique and it would be easy for someone to figure out who you are just by seeing it. Wearing a scarf is like wearing a disguise; no one will see your scar and you will stay safe.”

Cherub blinked thinking this over then looking into Mudiwa’s gray eyes he smiled and nodded saying, “I want to stay hidden, and I want to stay with you.”

Pulling the small boy into a hug Mudiwa said, “We want you to stay with us and to be safe.” Cherub smiled as the deep voice confirmed what Vincent had said yesterday. “Will you wear the scarf now?” Mudiwa asked pulling back.

Cherub nodded happily and held still so the dark red fabric could be tied over his head. Kneeling in front of the small boy Mudiwa secured a dark red cotton cloth over the top of the boy’s head, so it covered his lightning bolt scar on the pale forehead. Mudiwa’s lips twitched, and he looked the boy over from top to bottom. The ends of Cherub’s black hair stuck out from under the red cloth; his green eyes looked even bigger without his wild hair framing his face. If he didn’t look like a waif before he certainly did now. Baggy clothes hung off of his too-thin frame and his skin looked pale and in need of a wash. “Let me get dressed and then we can go,” Mudiwa said moving behind the folding screen.

Cherub looked up into Vincent’s shining eyes. “Do I look okay with this on?” Cherub asked pointing to the cloth on top of his head.

Smiling, Vincent nodded, “Yes, you look just fine. I dare say Freja and Ria will try and smother you with affection because you look so tiny and sweet.” Cherub wrinkled his nose at this, and Vincent laughed. Then clearing his throat Vincent said seriously and calmly, “Cherub, I know it will take a bit to get used to, but you will have to wear a scarf on your head anytime someone who is not from our circle might see you. Promise me.”

“I promise,” Cherub said earnestly. “Mudiwa said this is my disguise so no one can find me.” Cherub had been wondering something since he got here; looking up through the bits of fringe peeking out of the scarf he decided now was the time to ask.

Vincent could tell Cherub was gathering up his courage to ask something, his face a mask of childish
intensity. Emerald eyes fixed on him and small fingers curled beckoning him closer. Smiling, Vincent kneeled down.

Cherub took a deep breath then placed his small hands on Vincent’s strong shoulders leaning in so he could whisper in his ear. “Is this like a secret identity? Are all of you superheroes?”

Vincent blinked, where had this come from? Continuing the secrecy Vincent whispered, “Why do you think we are superheroes?”

Mudiwa stepped from behind the screen and quirked an eyebrow at the two kneeling figures. Quietly he waited for them to be done.

“I have never seen anyone who looks like someone out of a comic book,” Cherub explained.

“What do you mean? How do we look different?”

Cherub leaned back shocked. “You are all huge! So tall and strong and bumpy!”

Vincent blinked. It was true all of them except Freja were quite tall, and they all did work out daily, practicing different things to be able to do the circus-style acts they did for shows. Vincent mentally shrugged, ‘Maybe the family he came from were short and out of shape?’ Vincent opened his mouth to ask about the bumpy comment, when Mudiwa beat him to it.

A deep voice asked “Bumpy?” startling Cherub slightly, “What do you mean 'bumpy’?”

Cherub was confused as to how to explain. He looked at Vincent’s arms. Vincent's black tee shirt fit tight against his skin, looking like the bumps of hills and valleys. “Bumpy,” Cherub said as he ran his hand from Vincent’s shoulder to his elbow rising and falling as he went over the well-defined muscle.

Both Mudiwa and Vincent’s lips quirked in amusement; they valiantly held in their laughter, as Cherub was very serious about his question.

“That is muscle,” Mudiwa explained gaining control of his voice first. “Everyone has muscles; however the more you use your muscles and the more exercise you do the stronger and more defined they become.”

Cherub’s face fell, “Does this mean your not superheroes?”

Vincent cleared his throat softly to let Mudiwa know he wished to answer this question. “There are many ways to be a hero. I think you will just have to get to know us better and decide for yourself if we are heroes or not. We do not have secret identities, nor do we go out in silly costumes looking for people to save.”

“You saved me!” Cherub blurted out, interrupting Vincent.

Smiling Vincent replied, “We did take the next step in saving you. However you took the first step, you looked for help.”

Cherub blushed a bit and looked down at the ground in thought.

“Why don’t you think about this during the day, right now we need to freshen up and get to yoga,” Mudiwa said picking up two blue tubes, and holding open the tent flap. Smiling, both Vincent and Cherub got up and walked out the tent.
Chapter Eleven

Mudiwa, Vincent, and Cherub walked up to where Ria and Naveen had set up for the yoga class. Several of the transient squibs were laying down their yoga mats on the grass while chatting happily with each other and the group of gypsies that Cherub had already met. As they got closer to the group, Cherub nervously reached up and grabbed Mudiwa’s hand. Seeing the three men arrive Naveen smiled, “Good morning, Cherub. Are you going to join us? Do you need a mat?”

“I would like to try,” Cherub said. “I don’t know if I need a mat.”

Mudiwa answered for him. “Yes, he does need a mat, do you have an extra one?”

“Yes, I will go and get it. We will start in fifteen minutes, go ahead and get set up. I will be back,” Naveen replied cheerfully and walked back to the tents.

Vincent turned to Mudiwa and Cherub. “I need to talk to some people before we start, will you be okay?”

Mudiwa snorted. “Yes, we will be just fine.”

Cherub nodded ‘yes’, but tightened his grip on Mudiwa’s hand.

Vincent walked over to some of the people Cherub didn’t know, while Mudiwa led him to an empty spot near the front. After putting down his and Vincent’s mats, Mudiwa took Cherub over to where some juice and water were set out. “Would you like something to drink? There is orange, apple or tomato juice.”

Cherub thought for a moment. “Orange juice, please.”

Mudiwa poured himself and Cherub juice then began chatting with some of the other gypsies. Cherub quickly drank down his juice and listened to snatches of the conversations. He wasn’t used to being around so many people and he was getting nervous. Setting his now empty glass on the table, Cherub moved closer to Mudiwa who was talking with three people about where they were going to go over the next week. Suddenly two others came up and joined the conversation. Cherub began to panic, his breath coming in short gasps; reaching out he tugged on Mudiwa’s shirt. When Mudiwa looked down at him Cherub held up his arms. Smiling Mudiwa picked up the small boy and placed him on his hip. His smile faded when he noticed how fast Cherub was breathing. “What’s wrong?”

“I don’t know.” Cherub whispered, his breathing calming down now that he was safe and could see around him. Mudiwa looked puzzled, but said nothing and held the small body closer to him.

It only took a few minutes of being above the crowd for Cherub to calm down. Mudiwa held him tightly and breathed a sigh of relief as he felt the small boy calm down and relax. Cherub snuggled in tighter and began looking around. Ria and Freja were talking with two other women one of whom looked very pregnant, while three small children playing around them slipped in between their legs. Vincent was animatedly talking with three men, their hands flying. Cherub noticed everyone was wearing loose comfortable clothing, and there were purple and blue rectangular mats spread on the ground. Mudiwa, the two women and the man he was talking with all laughed, and Cherub giggled.
as he bounced against Mudiwa’s chest. Looking around again he saw Naveen heading their way with what Cherub guessed was a mat, and not far behind him Soto and Adonis chatted while joining the group. Quietly Cherub watched while adults and the few children there had juice, talked, and got ready for yoga, whatever that was. A few minutes later Naveen and Ria were in place and the gypsies quieted and got into place. Mudiwa walked over to their mats in the front right corner where Naveen had set up a mat for Cherub to use. Vincent met them over there and quirked and eyebrow at Mudiwa wondering why Cherub was being carried. Mudiwa smiled and shook his head, he would explain later. Naveen came over to explain to Cherub what they were doing.

“Cherub, we are going to do a type of exercise called yoga. It involves stretching, balancing and breathing. Both Ria and I will be over to help if you need it, and Mudiwa and Vincent can help you too. Yoga is supposed to be about fun, and personal expression, so don’t push yourself, and don’t worry about doing things perfectly. It is called practice for a reason.” Cherub smiled slightly and nodded, still confused but feeling better.

Ria began the practice with slow stretches, offering detailed yet simple instructions for proper alignment. Cherub listened carefully and moved slowly. At first yoga was confusing, but Cherub quickly got the hang of doing the poses the best his young body could, and really impressing everyone who saw him. Naveen had seen kids do yoga before, and normally their positioning wasn’t this good, confusion marred his brow, when suddenly he remembered the conversation last night. As he walked near Cherub he asked, “How is my old sticky mat working out for you? You are doing really well.” Cherub smiled while Vincent and Mudiwa’s eyes widened in understanding, Cherub was gaining information from objects again.

“I really like the mat, it feels funny,” Cherub answered. “I like yoga too, it is fun to make animal shapes!” Naveen smiled, Ria had made sure to call all the yoga poses out in English by their common names, like down dog, lion, and butterfly pose instead of their Sanskrit names.

“I am glad you are having fun. Ria will be pleased that you are enjoying yourself,” Naveen replied before moving on. Enthusiastically Cherub continued the yoga class. About an hour later Cherub was rolling up his mat feeling good, and hungry!

“Cherub, how did you like your first yoga class?” Ria asked.

Cherub smiled. “It was really fun! When can I do it again?”

“We do this every morning,” Ria answered.

Vincent interrupted, “Cherub, let’s go and get cleaned up so we can help with breakfast.” Cherub smiled and held the mat out to Ria. “Naveen let me borrow this; where should I put it?”

“I will take it to him; you can borrow it again any time you need to.”

“Thank you,” Cherub said taking Vincent’s offered hand.

The rest of the day passed much as Saturday had. Cherub played happily in the tent while the gypsies performed and ran the fair. After a simple dinner of soup and crusty bread, everyone, except for Cherub and Ria, helped shut the fair down and pack everything away. Once the last of the local vendors left, the squibs began to take down their tents. All of the equipment had been placed into magically enhanced trunks, which not only held far more than they should, but which had permanent feather light charms on them. The tents were also magically enhanced and would fold up instantly when told to do so.
Several of the transient gypsies left after the work was done. The Dragon Heart Gypsies would all meet on Thursday in Ottery St. Catchpole for the Summer Solstice celebration. Vincent smiled and waved at those leaving tonight as they pulled out of the field. After August only three of the transient squibs would still be traveling with them. The three months they planned to stay in India was just too long, so after the busy summer season was over they would be off to find their next adventure. Turning, Vincent walked back to the circle were the others, and their newest gypsy. ‘Talk about an adventure.’ Vincent thought shaking his head and smirking. Warm voices greeted Vincent as he neared the fire, and the fragrance of ginger biscuits hurried his feet.

“What do we have here?” Vincent asked sitting between Mudiwa and Adonis.

“Cherub and Ria made triple ginger biscuits,” Soto replied while passing him a plate full of warm, dark brown biscuits. Vincent took a few biscuits and settled back into the pillows. Taking a bite Vincent sighed in pleasure; these were his favorite. The three types of ginger made them spicy and Ria always cut the candied ginger into good-sized chunks.

“These are wonderful, thank you, Ria and Cherub,” Vincent said after finishing his first triple ginger biscuit. Mudiwa smiled and handed Vincent a glass of milk.

“You're welcome, Vincent,” Ria said. “Cherub was a big help.”

“Have you had ginger biscuits before?” Vincent asked Cherub who was blushing from Ria’s compliment in between Mudiwa and Soto.

“No, I didn’t even know there was candied ginger! I really like it, but I can only eat small pieces because it makes my mouth hot,” Cherub explained.

“That is what I love about them, they are sweet and spicy at the same time. The regular ginger biscuits are nice, but it is the candied ginger which makes these the best. Well, that and the fact that my family makes them for me,” Vincent said decisively. Cherub’s smile lit his face at being referred to as family.

Changing the subject Vincent said, “Tomorrow morning we leave for Sennen. Now we already plan to stop in Exeter on the way to do some shopping, do we need to do anything else?”

“I made a grocery list while the cookies were baking,” Ria said. “Nothing is urgent, we can always get supplies in Sennen.”

“We will be at the beach, does any one need any swimming costumes, or sunscreen?” Adonis said. Cherub perked up at this. “We are going to the beach? I have never been to the beach.”

Adonis chuckled at the boy’s excitement. “Yes, we are going to the beach. We go there every year and camp. The water is cool, but very nice, so we can go swimming and make sand castles and everything.”

“I don’t know how to swim,” Cherub said in a soft voice, eyes downcast.

“I would be happy to teach you how to swim,” Naveen replied. “When I was a teenager I worked as a lifeguard and taught swimming classes.”

Cherub smiled again, and nodded enthusiastically. The adults went back to planning their trip; soon Cherub’s head started to nod and his eyes began to close.

Mudiwa’s large hand shook him awake as his deep voice penetrated his sleepy brain. “Oh no you don’t. Tonight you need to brush your teeth before falling asleep.” Standing up Mudiwa helped Cherub to his feet and took him to brush his teeth. When they got back the fire was doused and the
circle tidied up. After a round of hugs Mudiwa took Cherub into the tent and tucked him into bed.

“Would you like a story?” Mudiwa asked the sleepy little boy.

“Oh, yes please.” Cherub gasped delightedly.

“What kind of a story?” Mudiwa softly questioned.

“About you as a child,” replied Cherub his big green eyes now focused on the ebony-skinned man.

“All right,” Mudiwa said. “Just let me get ready for bed first.”

Cherub nodded and settled back into the bed while Mudiwa went behind the folding screen to change. A minute later Mudiwa came out in orange cotton sleep pants, and climbed into the bed on Cherub’s left.

Clearing his throat Mudiwa began to speak, his voice rich and soft. “When I was a boy I grew up in Zimbabwe, which is a country in Africa. My tribe runs and protects a wild animal preserve. We have huts for visitors to stay in and we track animals for them to see and take pictures of. One day my older brother Garai and I had tracked down a pride of lions, and radioed my uncle Runako who was driving the tour bus that day. Runako pulled the bus under an acacia tree so the visitors could be in the shade while they watched the lions.”

Cherub was wide eyed and could clearly see the picture Mudiwa was painting with his story. Mudiwa smiled down at him and continued, “Soon a young lioness had the attention of everyone in the bus. She was chasing a hare. The visitors were captivated as she gracefully pursued the hare.” Mudiwa paused for a moment as Vincent, now ready for bed, slid under the sheet; smiling he leaned back and also listened to the story. “No one was paying attention to how close the young lioness was getting until in a burst of desperation the hare ran right under the bus! The lioness, used to seeing our buses thought nothing of it and charged full speed after the hare, she was not going to give up! Under the bus she dove, as the visitors let out a panicked scream and clutched their chests in fright. Garai and I tried to keep our laughter down, but gave up as the visitors began to laugh at their own foolishness. Looking to the other side of the bus they saw the young lioness strutting back towards the pride, the hare hanging from her mouth.”

Cherub giggled as Mudiwa finished his story.

“Do you have pictures of the per’serve, and your brother and uncle?” Cherub asked stumbling over the word preserve.

“Yes, I do. I can show them to you tomorrow while we are driving if you like,” Mudiwa said trying to remember where he had put his photo album. “Now, however, it is time to go to sleep.”

Cherub smiled, and after a moment’s thought hugged Mudiwa, then Vincent, and snuggled into the bed.
Chapter Twelve

Monday, June 16

Cherub excitedly sat in the Bus waiting for the adults to finish. After waking up this morning Cherub helped Mudiwa and Vincent tidy the tent. When they left the tent, Vincent reached up to the top of the opening and touched a small star, muttered some odd words then ‘poof’ then tent folded up instantly. Cherub had looked around the camp and saw all the other tents were now also gone. Just as they had the day before they joined the other gypsies for yoga practice. Cherub grinned remembering how much fun he’d had doing yoga; Naveen got them to do ‘donkey pose’ where their hands were on the ground and they kicked their feet into the air. Cherub giggled – the adults had looked so funny!

After breakfast the last few things were packed away and into the buses. Cherub was amazed at how much could fit in the buses! He smiled brightly watching the adults talking and getting ready to leave, he was going away! Far away from the Dursleys, away from Little Whinging – away! And Vincent said they would have dinner on the beach! This was so exciting Cherub began bouncing slightly in his seat.

After saying goodbye to the last of the transient gypsies Vincent walked over to his family. Mudiwa closed up the back of the bus. ‘He is so beautiful,’ Vincent thought as he watched the morning sun glinting off the sleek, ebony skin. Vincent adored Cherub, but he missed having Mudiwa to himself at night. As Mudiwa helped pack the other buses the muscles of his body shifted and rippled under his skin. Vincent missed feeling all of that power under his hands. Vincent increased his pace; once he stood next to his lover Vincent ran his hand up the powerful back.

“Is everything ready to go?” Vincent asked huskily.

“Yes, that was the last of it.” Mudiwa said as he shut the door. Turning he wrapped his arms around Vincent and kissed him deeply. Both men sighed as firm lips and agile tongues danced together. Vincent placed one hand behind Mudiwa’s smooth head, and the other hand grabbed his hip pulling him closer. The kiss deepened reaffirming their love and connection. Pulling apart only when oxygen was needed the two men held each other close. Mudiwa ran his fingers through Vincent’s long auburn waves.

“Soon,” Mudiwa said, his voice soft and deep, “We can trade the wild orchids we collected to Jacobs’ wife and Jacobs can alter our tent. Then we will have our bed back.”

“We will have to spend some time alone while we’re at the beach. I really need to feel you against me all naked and hot,” Vincent growled as he squeezed Mudiwa tightly then reluctantly let him go.

Mudiwa smirked, his gray eyes sparkling. “It will be a hardship, but I will do my best.”

Vincent laughed, taking Mudiwa’s hand he looked around to see the others waiting with knowing grins and laughing eyes. “Yes, all right, is everyone ready to go? Then let's close the circle.” Vincent hopped into the bus Cherub was waiting in. “Cherub, we are going to release the circle and then we will be ready to go.”

“Great!” Cherub said bouncing again. Vincent chuckled as he walked out to the field sitting in the
center just as he had that first night. Once everyone was in place they thanked the directions and the Earth and then let the energy go. A warm wind swept through them as the power Cherub had created was released. Blinking, Vincent stood feeling more energized than just a moment ago. Vincent watched as Freja, Adonis, Ria and Naveen walked towards the buses, they seemed radiant with energy. Turning as a large hand was placed on his back, Vincent smiled at his lover.

“We will need to start training Cherub soon. He has such strength and power,” Mudiwa said. Vincent nodded and together they walked to the others. They could hear the others talking about the extra energy they had received when they released the circle.

“Everyone okay?” Vincent asked. He hadn’t felt anything bad, but he didn’t want to assume no one else had.

“Of course!” Ria scolded gently. “That sweet boy has nothing but goodness in him.” Vincent smiled and shook his head, so quickly this little scrap of a boy had them wrapped around his finger.

“Good, well then, is everyone ready to go?” Vincent asked. He hadn’t felt anything bad, but he didn’t want to assume no one else had.

“Everyone okay?” Ria scolded gently. “That sweet boy has nothing but goodness in him.” Vincent smiled and shook his head, so quickly this little scrap of a boy had them wrapped around his finger.

“Good, well then, is everyone ready to go?” Ria, Freja and Naveen were riding together in the Ocean bus, Soto and Adonis were taking the Buildings bus, and Mudiwa, Cherub and Vincent had the Forest bus. Climbing in Vincent turned to Cherub and asked, “Ready to go?”

“Yes!” Cherub squealed. Mudiwa and Vincent laughed and settled in. The bus ride was very exciting for Cherub as they passed by places he had never seen. The two men were patient and answered all of his questions, of which there were a lot. Vincent was driving the bus, and he noticed that Mudiwa kept touching him, not that this was bad or unwelcome, but it was becoming distracting. A warm hand would run up his thigh and squeezed the muscle near the top making him want to moan with pleasure, then Cherub’s small voice would excitedly ask a question, pulling him out of the warm lusty thoughts he was having and into ‘parent’ mode. After this had happened several times Vincent began to suspect Mudiwa of doing it on purpose. Vincent had his right hand on the steering wheel and his left on the armrest; Mudiwa sat to his left in the passenger seat. Suddenly Mudiwa’s right hand was on top of his left. Warm fingers slipped in between his. Vincent inhaled sharply as Mudiwa began to move. Slowly Mudiwa slid his rough fingers over Vincent. The digits slipping in and out of contact, sliding back and forth as every inch of the hands connected. Mudiwa dragged his fingertips over Vincent’s hand up to his wrist then slid them down to caress the soft underside, stopping for a moment to feel Vincent’s pounding heartbeat before moving on and running his fingers over the palm of Vincent’s hand. Using every ounce of control he had Vincent focused on the road, his body hummed with desire as Mudiwa continued to explore his hand. ‘God this is so erotic!’ Vincent thought as Mudiwa’s palm connected with his own and their fingers interlaced.

Vincent sighed with relief as he saw a sign for a service station just a mile ahead. Growling low in his throat Vincent turned to Mudiwa, and just as he was going to demand they pull over for a bit an excited voice broke through his lust-filled mind.

“Oh, look – sheep! There are even babies! And look, look! Black sheep too!” Cherub shouted tapping the window excitedly. Slowly Mudiwa dragged his fingers along the inside of Vincent’s palm and wrist as he answered Cherub in a deep, calm voice.

“Yes, they are sheep. There are sheep farms in Sennen too, maybe we can visit one. What do you say Vincent?”

Vincent’s eyes narrowed, the man was playing with him! Teasing him on purpose, oh this was war! Clearing his throat and calming down Vincent joined the conversation. “I believe Mr. and Mrs. Atchison have sheep. We usually stop there for produce; they always have the best tomatoes.”

While Mudiwa and Cherub talked about what they could do in Sennen Vincent began to plot.
The three buses arrived in Exeter and parked in the prearranged space within ten minutes of each other.

“How was the drive, little man?” Adonis asked as he stepped out of the bus and stretched.

“It was really fun! We saw sheep and big churches, and all sorts of things!” Cherub said.

“I am glad you had fun; ready to go shopping?” Adonis asked.

Cherub was nodding ‘yes’ when Freja spoke up. “Wait! let me make sure your headscarf is tight enough.” Ria had found a piece of dark blue cotton which Cherub was currently wearing. He stood still while Freja fussed over him. “Where is Vincent?” Freja asked standing up and looking around.

“Right here,” Vincent said stepping off the bus and running his hand across Mudiwa’s back. He had thought of running his fingernails over his lover’s back, however he didn’t want to give away his plan too early in the game. “So, what is the plan? We are meeting at Antonio’s for lunch at 11:30 aren’t we?”

“Yes, I am going to the book store until then,” Soto said trying not to smirk as he watched the energy flowing between his two friends. ‘Maybe I should take Cherub for a while after lunch,’ Soto thought.

“I need to pick up some art supplies,” Adonis said. “After that I will just wander around till lunchtime.”

“Ria and I are going clothes shopping to the fabric store, and we have to post some letters,” Naveen explained.

“Does anyone have post they would like us to drop off?” Ria offered. Adonis and Freja both said ‘yes’.

Vincent spoke while slowly rubbing his hand up and down Mudiwa’s side. “We are planning on taking Cherub clothes shopping. Is there anything else we need to do?” Vincent asked turning his head so his breath touched Mudiwa’s neck as he spoke.

Mudiwa held back a shudder at the caress of warm air. “No, we do not need anything else.”

Cherub looked from person to person watching how they interacted, it was so different than what he was used to. The Dursleys had a ‘company mask’, as Cherub called it. One minute they would be yelling at him then when the phone rang or someone was at the door they acted the perfect, polite and proper way. It was creepy. No one here was acting any different, except Mudiwa and Vincent, but they seemed to be playing with each other somehow.

“I don’t need much,” Cherub piped up not wanting to be greedy or a burden.

“Well, we will just see about that,” Freja said smiling down at Cherub. “I am coming along to make sure you get everything you need. Not to worry, we won’t overdo it,” She said seeing Cherub’s worry. “I have a feeling you will be growing soon anyway.”

Cherub smiled at the thought of growing, he didn’t like being so small. Everyone split off and agreed one last time to meet at Antonio’s at 11:30.

It was just a short walk to the clothing store and Cherub held Freja’s hand tightly the whole way there. As they opened the door a bell chimed and a perky, gray-haired woman approached them.
“Welcome to Sylvia’s; can I help you?”

“Hello,” Freja said, as Cherub hid himself behind her legs. “Where is your children’s section, please?”

“Oh, right this way,” the sales lady replied eying the poorly-dressed little boy and wondering what had happened.

Cherub held tight to Freja’s hand as they walked through the store. Looking back to make sure Vincent and Mudiwa were still there he saw them walking very close to each other, their arms and legs brushing against each other. Cherub was puzzled, they were usually so graceful.

“Here we are. If you need anything else please don’t hesitate to ask,” offered the perky sales lady. Then she went off to help another customer.

“First we need to work out what size Cherub wears, I will grab a few shirts in different sizes, and you two get trousers,” Freja said as she walked over to another rack.

“Come here, Cherub.” Vincent said pulling him closer to the rack, and to Mudiwa. Then in a graceful slow move Vincent dropped to his knees in front of Cherub and Mudiwa. He reached over Cherub's shoulder running his arm across Mudiwa’s thigh to grab a pair of denims off the rack.

Mudiwa was stunned; Vincent had just dropped to his knees right in front of him! Swallowing hard as he felt Vincent’s arm rub against his thigh, he almost moaned.

“Mudiwa do these look like they would fit?” Vincent asked.

Mudiwa took a breath and looked down. Vincent was still on his knees; big, beautiful innocent eyes staring up at him. Pink lips parted slightly in a smile, so close to… Wait – innocent, oh, he was being played. His grey eyes narrowed, twinkling with mischief as he looked back down. Vincent’s smile grew wider, the game was on.

Mudiwa shifted his hips forward slightly toward Vincent’s face, “I think those are a little small.” Reaching over Vincent, his hip brushing against Vincent’s temple he grabbed another pair of denims. “Try these.”

Vincent took a deep breath and re-focused on Cherub. “Those do look better. Let's try these on.” Standing, Vincent managed to run his shoulder and arm up Mudiwa’s thigh, groin and chest before taking Cherub over to Freja.

The next forty-five minutes were filled with teasing touches, hidden caresses and shopping for Cherub. Vincent and Mudiwa were paying for the clothes while Cherub changed into one of his new outfits. Smirking at their behavior Freja looked at her watch; they had twenty minutes until they met the others for lunch. Freja decided to take Cherub to see the pet shop, and maybe the toy store, while those two hopefully didn’t get caught doing anything they shouldn't.

Vincent barely kept from panting as Mudiwa pressed the front of his body against Vincent's back. He moaned softly as he felt Mudiwa’s hard cock against his ass through their trousers.

“Almost done?” Mudiwa asked. His soft lips brushing against Vincent's ear and a shiver ran down Vincent’s body. God, he was losing control. Mudiwa backed up as the sales lady brought over two of the bags. Turning to face Mudiwa, Vincent reached his arm around Mudiwa’s back and with his voice deep and sultry answered, “Yes,” as he ran his finger nails down Mudiwa’s broad back.
Instantly Mudiwa stiffened and sucked in a breath as his body shuddered. He was seconds from grabbing Vincent and throwing him across the counter when the sales lady spoke.

“Here are the rest of your bags. Have a great day.”

Vincent and Mudiwa just looked at each other breath coming in desperately controlled pants, eyes dilated, and bodies taut.

“Thank you very much,” said Freja. Then turning to Vincent and Mudiwa she asked, “Would you two please take the bags back to the bus so they don’t clutter up the table during lunch.” Both men blinked at her, not understanding. Freja gave an exasperated sigh. “I am taking Cherub to the pet shop; you two have twenty minutes before we meet for lunch.”

Understanding filled their eyes, and grabbing the bags they left, eying each other hungrily.

“Honestly! You would think they were seventeen with how they act sometimes,” Freja said exasperatedly but with obvious affection. Holding out her hand to Cherub she said, “Ready to go and see the pet store?”

“Yes,” Cherub said nervously. “Are they all right?”

“They need some time alone. That is all. Now let’s go and see the puppies and kittens, ja?” Cherub grinned and nodded.
Chapter Thirteen

Mudiwa and Vincent were devouring each other. Lips pressed and rubbed together as tongues explored and tasted. Thankfully they’d had the presence of mind to close the curtain and lock the bus door when they first entered. Now they both were mindless with need, bodies thrumming with desire as hands ran over firm muscle and groins rubbed together.

Vincent ran his hands down Mudiwa’s back and then under his tight black tee shirt. Moving his mouth from his lover’s, Vincent kissed along Mudiwa’s strong jaw up to his ear, worrying at the tender lobe and being careful of the small gold hoop. Vincent got his hands ready; they were poised high on Mudiwa’s shoulder, his fingers flexed into claws.

Mudiwa whimpered as Vincent pressed his nails into his warm skin. Pulling back, Vincent looked into Mudiwa’s lust-filled eyes and held them as he slowly, oh so slowly, dropped to his knees, dragging his fingernails down the muscular back. Mudiwa shivered and moaned, unable to break eye contact even as his lids fluttered in pleasure.

Once on his knees Vincent dragged his nails over Mudiwa’s firm round ass and across his thighs to the front of his trousers. Untying the dark red cotton he pulled it down over the hips while nuzzling Mudiwa’s firm, quivering belly. Mudiwa moaned softly as his freed erection hit Vincent’s chin as if demanding attention. Vincent chuckled evilly, pondering for a moment whether to torture his sexy lover, but they didn’t have the time. Pulling back from the hot body in front of him Vincent briefly caught Mudiwa’s eye then in one swift move took the hard, dark cock all the way into his mouth. Mudiwa shouted in pleasure, his hands fisting the auburn hair. Vincent moved up and down, his tongue pressing against the vein along the bottom of Mudiwa’s cock and swirling at the tip, and then down his hot wet mouth would go again and Vincent’s nose would be buried in Mudiwa’s black pubic hair. Pausing a moment Vincent relaxed his throat and began to suck, enjoying the feeling of having all of Mudiwa’s large cock in his mouth. It had taken him many fun tries to be able to deep throat his lover, and now he was very good at it. Pulling back, Vincent ran his hands over Mudiwa’s ebony thighs and over his ass. Mudiwa’s body was trembling with pleasure and the effort to hold back. Vincent didn’t want him to hold back – they didn’t have the time – and he really wanted to feel the sense of power he got when his lover was fucking his mouth and coming down his throat with abandon.

Looking up again Vincent waited for Mudiwa to look down; he hummed to get his attention.

Mudiwa’s eyes snapped open when Vincent hummed around his cock. God, his lover was so good at this. Looking down Mudiwa saw lavender eyes looking up at him; oh it was so erotic to watch his lover move up and down over his hard aching cock. Vincent’s pink lips were stretched wide over Mudiwa's dark length. Mudiwa stiffened as he felt the tips of Vincent’s fingers at his shoulder blades. Their eyes were locked together and Mudiwa began to tremble waiting for the wave of sensation. He could see Vincent’s grin around his cock as he sucked him down his throat. Then the fingertips tightened and Mudiwa threw his head back shouting in pleasure. Wicked fingernails quickly moved down his back and over his ass, as he emptied himself down Vincent’s throat, his whole body shaking with pleasure.

Vincent slowed down his movements as he swallowed the last of Mudiwa’s seed. He loved the bitter, salty flavor and hummed in pleasure causing Mudiwa to shudder. Slowly he removed his mouth from the softening cock, licking it clean to cause those hot little gasping breaths that Mudiwa was doing right now. Grinning, Vincent sat back and redid Mudiwa’s trousers before helping him to
lie down onto the floor.

Mudiwa took in a deep breath and looked at his lover. Vincent’s lips were swollen and shiny. His eyes filled with love and lust. Growling, Mudiwa reached out and grabbed Vincent's hair pulling him into a greedy kiss. Mudiwa growled again as his tasted himself on his lover's tongue. Rolling them over in the small space of the bus, Mudiwa latched onto Vincent’s neck sucking and biting enough to drive him crazy, but not enough to leave a mark.

Vincent gasped and began to writhe beneath his lover. Wicked teeth bit his tender flesh followed by a sensual mouth to sooth and excite. Fire seemed to burn through his body as Mudiwa continued torture his neck. Strong, rough hands moved under his sky-blue tee shirt, teasing the skin as they moved higher. Vincent moaned loudly as fingers pinched and teased his nipples. Mudiwa swiftly moved his mouth from Vincent’s neck to one of the now-hard little nubs, sucking on it causing Vincent to shout and arch against the hot mouth. Mudiwa began flicking his tongue quickly over the pink nipple while pulling down Vincent’s black trousers. Vincent’s whole body was overwhelmed with pleasure, his nipples seemed connected directly to his cock, which was now free and leaking. Mudiwa moved over to his right nipple sending more waves of ecstasy through his body. Vincent arched trying to get some friction on his aching cock, as he moaned and begged his hands gripped Mudiwa’s head to hold him in place. Mudiwa knew his lover was close – his nipples and neck were both so sensitive and his lover was so deliciously responsive that this wouldn’t take long. Releasing the pink nub with one last flick of his tongue, Mudiwa kissed and licked his way down to Vincent’s hard, leaking cock. Licking the tip slowly Mudiwa savored his lover's taste.

Vincent's breath was now coming in short gaps; his body trembling as Mudiwa’s hot breath flowed over the tip of his cock. “Please,” Vincent gasped, “please.”

Vincent screamed and arched again as Mudiwa enveloped his cock in one swift move. Mudiwa set a furious pace, not allowing Vincent to calm down. He moved quickly up and down the hard length sucking and licking as he went. Vincent trembled and moaned beneath him, arching and grabbing Mudiwa’s hands that were holding his hips down, interlocking their fingers. Mudiwa smiled as Vincent began to babble, “yes.. god..oh... ohh, Mudiwa please.” Going all the way down Mudiwa buried his nose in Vincent’s curls then hummed, Vincent arched off the floor screaming as he came down his lover's throat. Falling back onto the floor, Vincent trembled as the last of his orgasm moved through him. Mudiwa licked him clean then, fastening up his trousers, moved up and kissed him tenderly. For a few quiet minutes they lay on the bus floor, enjoying being together and calming their breathing.

Mudiwa chuckled, “It is a good thing we had permanent silencing charms put on the buses.”

Vincent glared and swatted his arm. “Just you wait. Tonight I will make you test the strength of these charms!”

“I look forward to it,” Mudiwa leered. With a deep sigh he stood and offered Vincent his hand. “We should get going, we were supposed to be at the restaurant five minutes ago.”

Taking Mudiwa’s hand Vincent stood then straightened out his clothes. It wouldn’t help, both of the faces were flushed, eye shining with pleasure and lip swollen, everyone would know what they had done.

Cherub sat nervously, in a dark red vinyl booth at Antonio’s. Freja and Ria were sitting to his right looking at the patterns Ria had bought, whatever those were. Adonis, Soto and Naveen were on his left looking at the books Soto had bought. Vincent and Mudiwa were late; Cherub's eyes were firmly
focused on the front door.

He’d had a lot of fun this morning, getting clothes, and looking at the pet store with Freja; a pretty little snake had even talked to him, but there were too many people everywhere. Cherub did not like being around all these people. He did not know who they were or what they would do, and what if he got lost? Cherub began to shiver and pulled his legs up to his chest wrapping his arms around them. There was so much noise and he wanted Vincent and Mudiwa – they held him and kept him safe. As another minute passed dark thoughts began to run through Cherub’s head, thoughts of being unwanted and abandoned. The glasses on the table began to rattle as Cherub got more upset.

Soto noticed the rattling first and looked up; he could see swirling, sickly gray energy all over the table, where was it coming from? Looking around quickly Soto spotted Cherub curled in on himself, gray waves seeping from him.

“Adonis, grab Cherub and give him here,” Soto stated firmly. At this point the others had noticed the glasses shaking. Adonis didn’t say anything, he just picked up the small boy and handed him to Soto. Soto took a deep breath as he wrapped his arms around the trembling child, he was not as good at this as Vincent, but he could choose what kind of energy he sent out of himself.

“Shush, I have you. You are safe,” Soto said. He smoothed a hand over Cherub’s back while concentrating on emanating calming, loving, pink energy. “Can you tell me what’s wrong?”

Cherub continued to tremble, but the dark thoughts stopped. Feeling safe and warm Cherub relaxed into Soto’s chest and took a deep breath. The glasses on the table stopped shaking and the others breathed a sigh of relief.

Soto continued to hold Cherub allowing him to calm down some more before asking him again what was wrong, when Cherub’s soft voice asked, “They are coming back, right?”

Holding Cherub closer Soto said, “Yes, of course they are coming back. They wouldn’t leave you. None of us will ever leave you.”

With a sob Cherub threw his arms around Soto’s and buried his face in his neck. Soto continued to soothe him while the others silently looked on with sadness in their eyes. Naveen smiled comfortingly at his wife, then turned to look out the window; Mudiwa and Vincent were headed to the restaurant.

Softly Naveen said, “Cherub, look out the window.”

Looking up Cherub saw Vincent and Mudiwa. Squealing he squirmed out of Soto’s lap and ran out of the restaurant. Looking out the window they saw Cherub fling himself at the two men.

Vincent and Mudiwa had just reached the brick patio in front of Antonio’s when the front door opened and a small blur came straight at them. Mudiwa caught Cherub as he leapt up at them crying and clutching them tightly. Quickly both men wrapped their arms around the upset boy. Mudiwa moved one of his hands to Vincent’s arm, stroking it in an effort to help ground his lover as he struggled with the unexpected onslaught of emotions. After a few minutes Cherub began to calm down and Vincent got his bearings.

“I am sorry we are late,” Vincent said gently. “You need to know we would never ever leave you.” Mudiwa quirked an eyebrow at this as he felt Cherub nodding his head against his chest. Looking around Mudiwa saw a bench and guided them over to it. They sat down and once Cherub was
calmer, Vincent gently guided Cherub's face up so he could look him in the eye.

“This has been a lot for you to deal with. If we had known you didn’t like crowds we could have done this differently. Right now I think the best thing to do is to get some food and water in you. Does that sound okay to you?”

Cherub sniffed, “I’m sorry.”

Vincent pulled Cherub into his arms and held him close. “There is nothing to be sorry for. This is all new, and we will all have to work things out together. Now let's go and get some lunch; I am starving!”

Cherub giggled and tightened his hold on Vincent’s neck hoping he wouldn’t be put down. Vincent smiled and stood up, effortlessly carrying the precious boy back inside.
Chapter Fourteen

Cherub was set down in the booth and scooted over to Soto making room for Vincent and Mudiwa to sit. Naveen had joined his wife on the other side of the table so there was plenty of room. The waiter had brought a pitcher of iced water, and there were now glasses and small plates at every place setting. Cherub smiled and snuggled in between Soto and Vincent. The adults were chatting about their shopping. Soto picked up Cherub’s glass and filled it half way, “Here, Cherub, you need to drink something.”

“Thank you, Soto,” Cherub said. Once the water touched his lips he realized how thirsty he was. Quickly he drank the water; he wanted more, but wasn’t sure if he could ask, so he set the glass back down on the table. While still talking Soto refilled his glass and handed it back to Cherub. Smiling, Cherub drank a bit more then leaned into Soto’s side.

“So,” Freja smirked at Vincent and Mudiwa, “are you two feeling better now?” Cherub looked up interested in how they were; they had acted so strangely in the clothing store. Cherub was puzzled as both men blushed and everyone else laughed.

“Cherub, where did you go after the clothing store?” Vincent asked trying to get the attention away from himself. Mudiwa snorted at Vincent's ill-disguised change of subject.

Cherub’s eyes lit up as he sat up straighter and answered excitedly. “Freja took me to a pet shop. There were so many animals! We saw fish, mice, hamsters, rats, and rabbits. The lady who worked there let me pet a rabbit, and play with the kittens and puppies. They are so soft! Then we saw the snakes. I couldn’t hold them, but this one snake said…”

“Oh!” Cherub exclaimed, and sheepishly pulled away. Soto wrapped an arm around the boy’s shoulders and pulled him in close. Cherub relaxed against Soto’s side, and waited to find out what Vincent would pick for him.

“Let’s do the cheese and macaroni for Cherub.”

“Wonderful,” the waiter said and left for the kitchen.

Everyone got salad and breadsticks and began to eat, smiling when a familiar hum came from Cherub. After the initial hunger had been calmed and they began to eat more slowly Naveen asked,
“Cherub, how was clothes shopping?”

Cherub swallowed the bite he was chewing. “It was a lot of fun. I got jeans, trousers, tee shirts, shirts, socks, jumpers, a jacket, pajamas, and swimming trunks! Freja helped me pick out shoes; I got trainers, sandals, and smart shoes for nice places,” he explained excitedly.

Adonis, who still wanted to tease Vincent and Mudiwa, asked, “Were Freja, Vincent and Mudiwa a big help?”

“Well,” Cherub began slowly, “Freja helped me choose colors and which things I would need. Umm… Vincent and Mudiwa went and got things, but I don’t think they were feeling well. They were acting funny and kept bumping into each other,” Cherub finished not wanting the two men to get into trouble for not being more helpful. A slow snigger built up as Mudiwa shook his head and Vincent buried his face in his hands. Did I say something wrong? Cherub was confused. Wanting to help he added, “They are much better now.” The dam broke and everyone started to laugh.

Cherub wasn’t sure what to do. This didn’t seem bad, and even Vincent and Mudiwa were laughing although it was a different kind of laugh than the others. Cherub scooted closer to Soto who seemed the most composed of everyone.

Once Adonis caught his breath he turned to Cherub, “Well done, little man. These two need someone to keep an eye on them.” Wiping his eyes, Adonis sniggered one last time and turned his attention back to his salad.

Confused green eyes looked into black ones. “Everything is just fine,” Soto said softly. “When you’re older you will understand. For now why don’t you eat some more salad?” Cherub smiled and nodded.

Cherub’s eyes widened when the waiter set a large plate in front of him. It was heaped with cheese and macaroni. He knew what it was because it was Dudley’s favorite. Cherub had never been able to try any, but what Dudley ate never looked or smelled this good. Once everyone had their food and the waiter had left Cherub looked around. Everyone had huge plates of pasta in front of them with different sauces and shapes of noodles. Cherub hadn’t known there were so many kinds.

“Cherub, don’t worry about eating everything. We only eat about half and take the rest with us for dinner tonight,” Freja said, smiling because she knew there was no way Cherub was going to be able to eat much. Cherub smiled his thanks to her and picked up his fork.

Everyone waited for the verdict as Cherub’s black eyelashes fluttered closed and a deep, long moan of pleasure emerged. Yes, Cherub liked Antonio’s as much as they all did. With quiet chuckles the adults began their main courses, many with their own sighs and moans of pleasure.

After ordering some desserts for taking away to have with their afternoon tea, everyone split up and headed back to the buses. This time, Freja went with Soto, and Adonis joined Mudiwa, Vincent, and Cherub. Mudiwa drove and Vincent sat in the passenger seat. Adonis sat by Cherub on the couch, talking to Mudiwa and Vincent about where they should go on their way to India. Cherub had settled himself in Adonis’s lap and was tracing the Celtic knot printed on his brown t-shirt.

Adonis looked down as he felt Cherub go limp, and smiled. The boy had fallen asleep. Adonis had thought he would, which is why he had placed Cherub on his lap to begin with. Tightening his arms around the small, warm body Adonis continued discussing where they should stop in Turkey.
“Wake up, Cherub. We’re here.” Adonis said softly. Cherub opened his eyes and looked around. He could see the other two buses parked on either side of theirs, and he could hear the others talking outside.

“Where are we, Adonis?” Cherub asked.

“You slept through the whole of the rest of the trip. We are at the beach.”

“Really?” Cherub jumped up from Adonis’s lap and ran out the door. In front of the buses was a wide flat area, a couple of fire pits and then a small hill.

“Just over the hill,” Adonis said from behind him. Cherub turned and smiled then ran up the hill, stopping at the top with a gasp. The ocean was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. Waves flowed in and out, cresting white at the tops. The water was a bright blue, and became deeper blue the further out it went. Cherub could see boats of all kinds gliding across the water. Feeling a hand on his shoulder Cherub turned. “It is so beautiful! Can I really play in the water?”

“Yes,” Mudiwa answered, “we will be here for four days, and we can spend much of our time down at the water.”

Cherub threw his arms around Mudiwa’s legs. “Thank you,” he said.

Reaching down Mudiwa picked up the small boy. “You are more than welcome. Now let’s unpack and have some tea then we can head to the beach.”

Cherub’s smile was nearly blinding, “Brilliant.”

The magically enhanced tents didn’t take long to set up, and soon everyone was gathered in the circle of pillows waiting for their tea to steep.

“Is there any work we need to do this week? Any letters to be written, equipment to be repaired?” Vincent asked looking around the circle.

“I wrote to everyone who normally comes to the Solstice Celebration letting them know when we would be set up, and what items of interest we have for them,” Adonis said. “Other than planning our route to India I’m fine.”

“All of the equipment passed inspection,” Naveen said.

“Freja and I have some of our standard kid’s items that we need to finish working on, but other than that, no,” Ria said.

After a moment of silence, Cherub asked, “What is the Summer Solstice?”

It is the longest day of the year,” Freja began. “On the Solstice the sun is at its peak. We celebrate the changing of seasons, as after the solstice the days get shorter and shorter until Winter Solstice, which is the shortest day of the year. On the Summer Solstice we celebrate all of the physical accomplishments we have made – like breaking a bad habit, getting a new job, learning to do something new. It is a time to honor the Earth for all she has given us, and to be grateful for all we have been gifted.”

Mudiwa continued, “On the Solstice I like to review what I am doing with my time, money, energy, and relationships. Where can I make improvements? Do I like how things are going in my life? With the sun being the greatest influence at this time the focus is on the physical, everything is growing
and creating. At the Winter Solstice it is a time of Moon energy, reflection. How do I feel about myself? Are my thoughts and actions similar? What do I want or need to work on within myself?”

Seeing Cherub’s confused face, Vincent smiled and added, “We have a big celebration in the Wizarding village of Ottery St. Catchpole. We sell and trade things we have gathered on our travels. After tea we will do a performance. Then there is a huge dinner, where everyone brings food to celebrate the abundance and prosperity in their lives. Afterwards anyone who wants to join in helps create a special circle, and then we all sit within it. At this time we honor those who bring joy and happiness into our lives. Some people simply say thanks to the person, sometimes usually within families small gifts are exchanged to represent something that you want to honor about the other person.” Vincent laughed. “Don’t worry I know it is a lot. There is no right or wrong, and we will all go over it again with you as we get closer.”

Cherub smiled and nodded. Naveen began pouring the tea and Soto passed out polystyrene boxes with the desserts they had bought from Antonio’s. “Here, Cherub,” Soto said, “I got this one especially for you.”

Cherub smiled and opened the box, there was a slice of creamy white cake – or maybe pie, Cherub wasn’t sure – and it was covered in cherries. Taking the fork Ria had brought along with his tea, Cherub took a small bite. Cherub’s eyes widened and he gasped, then humming in pleasure he began to savor his dessert.

Mudiwa arched an eyebrow. “What did you give him?” he demanded of Soto.

“Cherry cheesecake.”
Chapter Fifteen

Cherub shivered as another wave swept over him. Smiling he splashed and giggled as the sand swirled about his feet and legs as the water retreated. Looking up Cherub smiled at the adults laughing and playing in the water. They kept coming over and sitting with him, helping him catch shells in the waves and playing; then they would go back out to swim in the water. The sun was getting low in the sky; they had been in the water for hours. Cherub, shivering, looked around and smiled at Mudiwa as he walked closer.

Mudiwa smiled and then getting a closer look at Cherub began to frown. “Why didn’t you say you were cold?” he asked as Cherub, still smiling, shivered in the surf.

“I like the sea, and I am not that cold.” Cherub said.

Mudiwa snorted and reaching down plucked the boy out of the waves. “You're freezing! Bloody hell, your lips are blue!” Mudiwa pulled Cherub close and began to walk back to camp.

Vincent quickly caught up. “Are you well?” he asked Cherub.

Cherub smiled at Vincent from Mudiwa’s shoulder, and shuddering with cold replied, “I’m fine.”

Vincent snorted. “Well you will be after a hot bath!” Rolling his eyes Vincent vowed to keep a closer eye on Cherub from now on. Cherub just sighed contentedly and snuggled into Mudiwa’s warm chest.

Thirty minutes later Cherub, Mudiwa and Vincent, were warm, clean and sitting down in front of the fire. Adonis brought out the leftovers from lunch, and everyone began to eat. Cherub was starving! Swimming was hard work. Just as everyone had finished eating, six owls landed inside the circle. Cherub squeaked and moved closer to Freja. The owls all had pieces of paper tied to their legs. The others moved forward and removed the papers; four of the owls left while the other two settled in to wait.

“It’s okay, Cherub,” Freja said. “Wizards use owls to send post. They won't hurt you.”

Cherub looked with interest at the two owls. One was brown with darker brown speckles. He seemed like a friendly bird, hooting and cheerfully taking a bit of food from Naveen. The other owl seemed dignified and severe. He was a beautiful gray with black markings. Mudiwa held out a piece of bread and the owl almost seemed to scowl at it before being polite and taking the bread. Cherub smiled at the two owls, and clicked his tongue to get their attention. Oddly enough it was the gray owl that came to Cherub. He stood in front of the small boy looking regal and slightly annoyed. Cautiously, Cherub reached out his hand to pet the beautiful owl. The adults held their breath wondering how the owl would react. The owl sat still and allowed the boy to run his hand over his soft gray feathers. Cherub’s eyes lit up with joy and wonder. He was petting an owl!

Smiling, the others turned their attention to the post they had received.
Reading the scrolls he had been handed Adonis began to relay what they said. “Mr. Flourish- of Flourish and Blotts bookshop has a fourteen-year-old grandson Mitchell who is a squib. He would like us to take him with us for at least a year. He wants him to gain experience and meet other book dealers. He will continue to buy books from us, but is hoping his grandson will make connections for rare and unusual books. His owl is the brown one waiting for a reply.”

“Certainly he can come with us. Please, tell Mr. Flourish to bring Mitchell with him to the Solstice celebration. What else do we have?” Vincent said.

Naveen got them to get fresh parchment and ink while Adonis continued. “Let’s see, Mr. Jacobs is very excited about the new orchids and he will be arriving at 10am on Friday morning to collect them and to enhance our tents. Mrs. Weasley says she is looking forward to seeing us and is cooking all our favorites for the celebration. She is also hoping we can set aside something Muggle for Mr. Weasley as a gift.”

Soto nodded at this; he had found something Arthur would go crazy over. “Ah… Professor Snape wants to know what potions ingredients we have collected, and if they are any good.”

They all snickered at this, and Freja held her hand out for the letter and for the parchment, quill and ink that Naveen had returned with. They all helped collect things, but she kept track of their potions ingredients.

Adonis continued, “Quinn and Isabelle Prewitt have written to us.” Everyone smiled at this. Quinn and Isabelle had traveled with them for three years, then fallen in love and decided to settle down. That had been two years ago. They usually came to the Solstice celebration and it was always nice to see them. “They say that they miss doing yoga and would like to study to become yoga teachers, so they can bring it to their village.”

“There are many ashrams and schools on our way to my village.” Ria exclaimed excitedly, she really missed both Quinn and Isabelle.

“Perfect,” Adonis said. “They also want to bring their sixteen-year-old niece and their fifteen-year-old nephew.”

“That will work out well,” Mudiwa said thoughtfully. “This way Mitchell won't be the only teenager.”

Cherub had sat quietly petting the beautiful gray owl while he listened to everything. He didn’t know how he felt about new people joining them. Next to him Freja quickly wrote out a list for Professor Snape. Across the circle, Naveen had just finished the letter to Mr. Flourish and tied it to the owl’s leg. Cherub watched and memorized as the owl gracefully yet powerfully took to the sky. Cherub turned back to the group as Adonis began speaking again.

“The last letter is from Mr. Diggory. Apparently his son Cedric is interested in swords and he is hoping we will set aside any swords or books on swords we have.”

“How old is the boy?” Ria asked disbelievingly.

“I believe he is seven or eight this autumn,” Adonis replied. “I know we have books on swords, the technique, history, making and such. We also have practice swords, real swords, and decorative swords. They are popular at the Historical Fayres so we always keep a good stock of them.”

“What is a Historical Fayre?” Cherub asked.

Ria smiled kindly and answered, “They are gatherings of people who want to celebrate, act out and
honor our history, specifically the time period of the fourteenth to seventeenth century. It was a
rebirth for Europe and so many amazing inventions, discoveries and art happened during this time.”

“We will be attending one in Tewkesbury next weekend,” Mudiwa added.

“They are a lot of fun,” Naveen exclaimed. “People dress up in costumes, and there are booths full of
wonderful food, beautiful arts and crafts, battle reenactments and plays, and all kinds of things.”

Cherub’s eyes lit with excitement; there were so many wonderful adventures ahead of him! He
continued to pet the beautiful gray owl and listened to the adults talk.

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“Cherub, I have finished with my reply to Professor Snape, and I need to give it to his owl.” Freja
said softly.

“Okay,” replied Cherub stroking the owl one last time he leaned back and watched as Freja took the
rolled-up paper and tied it to the outstretched leg of the patient, yet barely tolerant owl. As soon as
the scroll was secure the owl took off.

“Bye!” Cherub called after it, waving. The adults smiled then looked shocked when they heard the
owl hoot back. “He said goodbye!” squealed Cherub.

“Yes, he did,” said Freja. “I am surprised; he normally ignores all of us.”

“Really?” asked a puzzled Cherub. “He was very friendly to me.”

“Well,” said Vincent, “he must be able to tell how special you are.” Cherub blushed. “It is getting
late. Why don’t you say goodnight to everyone, Cherub, and then I’ll get you tucked into bed.”

Cherub nodded and nervously went around the circle and got hugs from everyone. Cheeks pink with
embarrassment he took Vincent’s hand and headed off to bed.

After brushing his teeth and getting into a pair of his new pajamas, Vincent tucked Cherub into the
bed. “Well last night, Mudiwa told you a story, would you like me to tell you one tonight?”

Cherub beamed. “Yes, please.”

“All right, what kind of story?”

Cherub’s brow wrinkled in thought. Shyly Cherub asked, “Will you tell me a story about the sea?”

Vincent smiled and settled in next to Cherub and began. “My Grandparents started the Dragon Heart
Gypsies after being forced to leave the world in which they had been born. My father was born into
the clan, as was I. I have always traveled with this gypsy clan, all over Europe, the Middle East,
Asia, Northern Africa, and a few times even into sub-Saharan Africa and Australia.

"When I was seven years old my family camped right here, on this very beach, for the week before
Summer Solstice just as we are now.” Cherub’s eyes were wide with amazement, as he hung on
every word.

“I was building a sand castle on the beach when I felt someone in pain.” Cherub nodded in
understanding. Vincent noted this for later.

“Looking around I saw a small dark seal had washed up onshore. Hurrying over I saw that the seal
was still just a baby, and had a bleeding fin. I called for my mother and her and young Freja to come
over. Quickly we began to tend to the seal. My mother asked me to send calm healing energy to the
tear, letting him know that we would take good care of him. While she and Freja applied a healing
paste to the seal’s flipper. We could see other seals bobbing out in the water watching us. For three
days we tended the seal, catching fish for it and healing the wound. Several times a day the seal’s
mum would come up onto the shore and nurse her babe, but never did she take him with her.”

Cherub’s breath caught in his throat, Vincent’s voice became deep and whispery. “On the third night
I sat on the beach talking to the young seal, as the rest of my family made dinner and began to pack.
We were leaving the next day. The seal was much better and if he was careful he would recover. As
the sun set and the only light was from a half moon two seals moved onto the beach towards us.
They stopped a few feet away, and then the most amazing thing began to happen. The two older
seals began to shift, and a human-looking man and woman slipped out of the sealskins. They were
Selkies.”

Cherub gasped and moved closer to Vincent. ‘Naked, they rose out of the water. ‘Thank ye,’ she
said to me, ‘for keeping watch over my pup.’ ‘Aye,’ said the man. Their voices were smooth, deep
and hypnotic like the water they came from. Bending down the woman gathered her pup in her arms
while the man picked up their skins. ‘You’re welcome,’ I replied shakily. The Selkies grinned at me.
‘We will see you next year. Say hi to your mum and da for us.’ And they walked off into the night,”
Vincent finished.

“Did you? Did you see them again next year?” Cherub demanded climbing onto Vincent’s lap.

Vincent laughed at the boy’s enthusiasm. “Yes, every year that group of Selkies comes to this cove.
You will get to meet them in the next few days.”

“Oh, I can’t wait,” squealed Cherub.

Vincent laughed. “Well you will have to. Now back into bed and get some sleep.”

“Goodnight,” Cherub yawned, as Vincent tucked him back in and kissed his soft, pink cheek.

“Sweet dreams,” Vincent whispered and left the tent. Walking towards the fire he saw that everyone
but Mudiwa had gone to bed. The firelight flickered deep orange against the ebony skin, and Vincent
felt his body tingle with desire. This afternoon and been fun and released a lot of tension, but he
wanted to make love to Mudiwa. Walking towards the fire with purpose Vincent was not surprised
when his lover stood and extended his hand.
Chapter Sixteen

Vincent sighed in pleasure as Mudiwa’s hot, hard body lay down on his. The sand was cool and rough beneath him and the waves swept over their feet and legs. Their lips met in a slow, sensuous kiss, tongues exploring each other’s mouths and tangling together. Hands roamed over hard muscle slowly bringing pleasure and increasing the passion between them.

Mudiwa had one large hand cradling the back of Vincent’s head his fingers wrapped in the long auburn locks. His mouth trailed down Vincent’s jaw to his neck sucking, kissing, and licking the soft, warm skin. Vincent squirmed moaning in pleasure as his lover ran a hand across his shoulder and down his chest. Mudiwa slowly and softly caressed Vincent’s pink nipple causing it to harden and his lover to shiver at the delicate touch.

Mudiwa was slowly driving him crazy. His large, firm fingers were brushing over Vincent's nipple sending waves of pleasure through his body. Vincent held on as long as he could, enjoying Mudiwa’s attentions. Finally the lightness of touch and the lack of attention on his cock pushed Vincent over the edge. Wrapping his arms around Mudiwa’s back, Vincent firmly dragged his fingernails down his lover’s muscular back. Mudiwa moaned and crashed his lips to Vincent’s, moving between his lover’s legs pressing their hard, aching lengths together. Moaning into the kiss, Vincent bent his legs, framing Mudiwa’s slim hips and bringing their cocks closer. Hands roamed pinching, teasing, scratching, and caressing as their frotting became more and more intense. Precome slicked their cocks making them slide smoothly together. Gasping for air they broke apart. Hips frantically arched towards each other, muscles tightened and quivered as they became overwhelmed with pleasure. Clutching each other they came – hot, wet spurts hit their stomachs making their movement even more slippery and they slid against each other through their orgasm. Hands moved softly and soothingly over damp, quivering flesh. Their breathing slowed, as they lay on the cool sand the waves cooling their heated flesh. Turning to look at each other they smiled.

“That was wonderful,” Vincent sighed.

“Yes,” Mudiwa agreed, “I always look forward to having sex with you on this beach.”

“It is a good ritual.” Contentedly they looked up at the stars enjoying the silence.

Cherub struggled to keep on his feet as he ran through the forest. The trees loomed overhead blocking out any possible light. The wind howled around him as he ran making him shiver from the cold and the sounds it carried. Loud, crunching feet stomped through the underbrush getting closer and closer no matter how fast Cherub ran. His uncle's voice echoed all around him. “Come here, you stupid worthless freak! There is nowhere to go. No one to run to.”

Cherub gasped in pain as those words hit his heart. ‘Vincent, Mudiwa, where are you? Why am I all alone?’ Cherub thought as he tried to run, his uncle getting closer and closer. Tears filled his eyes and spilled down his cheeks making it hard to see. His bare foot caught in a tree root and he tumbled to the ground. High, cackling laughter made him turn; a figure loomed towards him. Cherub scrambled backwards trying to get away. Suddenly two red eyes appeared and Cherub screamed as he was surrounded with a sickly, green light.

“Shush, you’re okay I have you,” Vincent whispered softly over and over to the shaking little boy.
Arms tightened as Cherub whimpered and buried his face deeper into Vincent’s chest. Vincent looked down at the messy, black hair and smoothed it from the sweaty face. They had all been sleeping peacefully when Cherub started panting and thrashing about. They had tried to wake him, when suddenly he screamed. Vincent had scooped the trembling, sobbing boy into his arms, and held him tight trying to soothe him. Leaning back into Mudiwa Vincent took a deep breath trying desperately not to get caught up in Cherub’s terror.

Softly Mudiwa spoke, “Cherub, take a deep breath and open your eyes. You’re safe, and we are here with you. Come on, sweetheart; open your lovely green eyes so you know that you are safe.”

Cherub sniffed and reached his arms as far as he could around Vincent and Mudiwa. Clinging tightly Cherub moved so his cheek was pressed against Vincent and slowly opened his eyes. The room was dark, but he could see the familiar sheets and furniture. Taking a deep breath he loosened his hold just a bit as he got his bearings.

Smiling Mudiwa breathed a sigh of relief. “That’s right, you are safe here with us. Take deep, slow breaths and feel yourself calm down.” Mudiwa spoke in a soft, hypnotic voice and Cherub’s breathing instantly slowed; the feeling of fear that had threatened to overwhelm Vincent’s empathic senses was slowly released. “Well done, Cherub, well done. Do you remember that we are at the sea? Can you hear the waves crashing against the shore?”

Cherub lifted his head up from Vincent’s chest and tilted it to the side, listening. Slowly a soft smile lit his face. “I can hear the waves,” he whispered. Mudiwa got up from the bed and got a clean handkerchief and a glass of water. Cherub greedily drank the water letting it soothe his sore throat.

“Let’s get you cleaned up,” Vincent said taking the cloth from Mudiwa. Cherub sat patiently and let them fuss for a moment. “Now what happened?” Vincent asked.

“I’m sorry,” Cherub mumbled looked down at the bed and twisting the hem of his pajama top.

Gently Vincent placed a finger under Cherub’s chin and raised his face. “You have nothing to be sorry for. You had a nightmare; we all get them from time to time. Why don’t you tell us what happened in yours; I am sure it will make you feel better.”

Cherub looked skeptical, but did as he was asked.

It had taken a bit to calm Cherub down, but now he was once again sleeping peacefully in between them. “The red eyes and the green light – do you think that was Voldemort?” Vincent asked.

“It sounds like it. Do you think it was just a memory?”

“I don’t know,” Vincent replied shaking his head. “Do you think this is our fault?”

Mudiwa’s brow furrowed in confusion, “What do you mean? How could this be our fault?”

“Well, we weren’t here when Cherub went to sleep. Maybe he didn’t feel safe and that caused the nightmare. This is the first one he has had.”

Mudiwa reached over the sleeping boy and ran his hand soothingly through his distraught lover's hair. The emotions Vincent had picked up hadn’t left him yet, making him react more strongly than normal. “You know that is not true. Cherub has been through a lot, and he is processing and healing from everything. Dreams are a normal part of this process, especially for children.”

Vincent frowned, that sounded right but still, “Maybe we shouldn’t leave him alone until he is better.”
Mudiwa rolled his eyes, “Vincent, Cherub needs time alone, just like everyone else.”

“Well yes, but...” Vincent began.

“Vincent,” Mudiwa said firmly, “what did your mother always say was the most important thing for a child?”

Vincent smiled and sighed, “Happy, healthy, sane parents.”

“Exactly, and that means time alone. Also time for meditation, we will both need to be as grounded and centered as possible while Cherub heals, and learns to trust and love.”

Vincent thought about that for a moment. “You’re correct, as usual, and using my mum against me is completely unfair.”

“Becky is a very wise woman. We should visit her while in Switzerland. Have you written? Does she know about Cherub yet?”

Vincent's eyes widened as he groaned, “Bloody hell, she is going to be so angry with me.”
Chapter Seventeen

Tuesday June 17

After breakfast Cherub explored around the campsite. He had been told not to go too far and to stay away from the water. The adults had things to take care of before they could play. Naveen said he would be done in two hours and then they could do swimming lessons. Cherub saw a beautiful blue butterfly flitting through the air and decided to follow it. Cherub was so focused on the butterfly that he gave a startled gasp as a flash of silver caught his eye. Soto had a sword in his hand and looked like he was battling an invisible opponent. He was shirtless, but wore thick black pants, and odd black shoes, which separated his big toe from the rest. Soto’s muscles shifted and flowed as he moved, the dragon painted on his upper arm and shoulder seemed alive as he moved. Cherub was mesmerized; quietly he found a place to sit and watch.

Soto felt really good, he loved to practice his martial arts, he found them calming and centering. Turning to get a drink of water, Soto saw Cherub sitting nearby completely focused on him.

“Hello, Cherub, what are you doing?”

“That was so cool, what are you doing?” Cherub asked breathlessly.

Soto smiled, “I was practicing martial arts.”

“What kind of sword is that?”

“A katana.”

“Can I sit and watch you?”

Soto thought for a moment looking at the hopeful little boy. Making a decision Soto nodded. “Cherub, you have two choices, you may continue to sit and watch. Or I can teach.”

Cherub’s eyes lit up. “Really, you would teach me to use a sword like that?”

“Yes, also I will teach you how to defend yourself,” Soto replied simply.

Cherub’s brow furrowed. “Like from my uncle?”

“Yes, like your uncle. Remember you are not alone now, we will all help keep you safe,” Soto said firmly. Cherub was staring at him with a strange look. “Do you have a question?”

“Yes, what is that dragon on your arm?”

Smiling Soto beckoned Cherub to him. Bending down so Cherub could see it better he explained. “It is a tattoo. You may touch it.”

Cherub reached out and touched the white dragon, all he felt was smooth skin and hard muscle. “Is it permanent?”

“Yes the ink is under my skin, it will fade over time but never go away.”
“It is beautiful.”

Soto bowed his head. “Thank you, now shall we get started?”

Cherub grinned. “Yes.”

Naveen had finally finished his work. They now had a set price list for the upcoming events, and a complete inventory for magical and non-magical items. For the rest of the week they would work on making jewelry, perfumes, bags made of leather and fabric, along with ‘potions’ and ‘spells’ for the non-magic pagan visitors. Walking around the campsite Naveen looked for Cherub so they could begin their swimming lesson. As Naveen walked around the buses he saw Soto flipping Cherub over his shoulder. Naveen gasped as Cherub landed with a soft thud then rolled over his shoulder and onto his feet. With a wicked little grin Cherub squealed and attacked Soto. Smiling, Soto grabbed him and easily flipped him again. Naveen smiled and watched as Cherub played and learned to do falls and rolls. It wasn’t long until they finished up; Cherub asking questions as they stretched and cooled down.

Naveen walked over. “Hello, gentlemen, how are you doing?”

“Hello, Soto is teaching me ninjitsu. Is it time for our swimming lesson?” Cherub chirped.

Naveen smiled at Cherub’s enthusiasm. “Yes, when you are done here.”

Cherub looked to Soto and asked, “Is there anything else I need to do?”

“No, we are done,” Soto replied. “You did very well. I train every day we do not have a performance. You are welcome to come anytime.”

Cherub’s face lit. “Really? It was so much fun! Do you want to come swimming with us?”

Soto thought for a moment then nodded. “I just need to get my suit on.”

“Let’s meet by the circle in five minutes,” Naveen suggested. “I will grab the towels.”

“Brilliant!” Cherub exclaimed, and ran off to the tents. Naveen and Soto laughed and followed at a more sedate pace.

Everyone looked up as Cherub tore through the campsite and into the tent. Puzzled looks were turned to Soto and Naveen.

“Swimming lesson,” Naveen offered.

Smiling the others went back to what they were working on. A few minutes later, Cherub was bouncing in place waiting for Naveen and Soto.

“Cherub, come here please,” Freja said holding a small bottle in her hand.

“Yes, Freja,” Cherub said moving to stand in front of her.

“I want you to drink some of this potion. It will keep you from getting sunburned. It doesn’t taste
very good, but you can have some water to wash it down.”

Obediently Cherub held out his hand. Freja gave him a glass of water then measured out a dose of the potion. Cherub scrunched up his face at the taste, and quickly drank the water, but didn’t complain.

“Thank you, sweetheart,” Freja said.

“You’re welcome. I hate being sunburned; it hurts a lot,” Cherub said.

“Well, we have plenty of the potion and it allows you to get tanned, so that will help protect you from the sun too.” Freja smiled. “Now, you have fun swimming and listen to Naveen, okay?”

“Okay,” Cherub replied.

“Ready?” Naveen asked, Soto standing next to him.

“Yes!” shrieked Cherub as he ran off to the beach. Naveen and Soto shook their heads and ran after him.

The sea was calm and cool as the three got into the water. Soto swam off to cool down and to allow Naveen to teach Cherub with out interrupting. They would play after the lesson.

Naveen waded out into the water until it came up to Cherub’s shoulders then he knelt down and began to explain. “Okay, the first thing I want to do is see how well you can hold your breath. So duck under the water and hold your breath as long as you can.”

Cherub nodded and taking a deep breath he sank under the water. He held his breath as long as possible and then came up quickly, gasping for air. Naveen picked him up. “Are you all right? You didn’t have to hold your breath that long.”

“You said to hold it as long as I could,” Cherub said confused.

“That is true, I did,” replied Naveen. “However I do not want you to hurt yourself. It is important to try your best, and at the same time to know your limits.”

Cherub’s brow wrinkled in confusion. “Okay,” he said uncertainly.

Naveen chuckled, “Next time hold your breath only as long as it is comfortable.”

“Oh, okay.”

“Now, how about I teach you to doggy paddle.”

The rest of the lesson went well. Cherub learned to stay afloat doing the doggy paddle, and floated on his back for a little bit. Naveen was a calm and patient teacher. He explained things very clearly, and Cherub felt very safe with him. Naveen kept the lesson short, as he didn’t want to overwhelm Cherub or tire him out.

“You did very well, Cherub. I am so proud. How about we play now, and I can teach you more tomorrow.” Cherub beamed under the praise.

“Soto,” Naveen called. “Would you like to play a game with us?”

Soto swam over. “Sure. How was the lesson, Cherub?”
“Great! I can do the doggy paddle and float on my back!”

“Really, let me see.” Cherub happily showed Soto what Naveen had taught him.

“Very good. I am impressed you learned so quickly.” Soto said reaching out and ruffling Cherub’s wet black hair. “So what are we playing?”

“Well,” Naveen said slowly, “I thought we could play catch.”

“We don’t have a ball,” Cherub said looking around.

Soto, having seen the mischief in Naveen’s light brown eyes, smiled. “I guess we will just have to use you then.” Grabbing Cherub around the waist Soto swam further out. When the water reached his chest, Soto turned Cherub to face him. “Ready?” he asked.

Cherub was excited and nervous. He had no idea what was going to happen, but he nodded anyway.

“Hold your breath,” Soto said and then threw him to Naveen. Cherub squealed then splashed into the water just in front of Naveen. Easily Naveen plucked him out. Cherub wiped the water off of his face and grinned.

“Again?” Naveen asked. Cherub nodded, then shrieked as he was once again tossed into the air.
Chapter Eighteen

Vincent calmly walked toward the beach. Lunch was soon, and before they ate a stronger circle needed to be put up. Last night while Vincent was putting Cherub to bed the others had placed a simple circle around their camp, however after talking about Cherub’s nightmare it was decided that a stronger circle might be necessary. Not knowing if an outside force had influenced Cherub’s dream, they felt it best to guard against the possibility. Reaching the top of the hill, Vincent could now see the sparkling blue sea. Smiling he walked towards his family. Soto, Naveen and Cherub where lying down on their blankets warming up in the sun. Vincent could hear Cherub’s laughter as he walked closer.

Cherub reached out with his small hand and gently took one of Naveen’s curls in his fingers. Slowly he stretched out the curl so it was straight then letting go giggled as it bounced back into a soft, deep brown ringlet. Naveen smiled indulgently, his eyes closed, enjoying the warmth of the sun on his back. As Vincent got closer, Soto opened one black eye to see who was approaching.

“Is it time for lunch?” Soto asked alerting the others to Vincent’s presence.

“Soon,” he answered, “but first we need to put up a stronger circle. Cherub, how was your first swimming lesson?”

Soto and Naveen looked at each other, it was obvious Vincent didn’t want to talk about why a stronger circle was needed. Silently they picked up their things, while Cherub animatedly talked about how they had spent the morning.

Once the three swimmers were dressed, everyone took their positions and Freja began casting the circle. Cherub again sat in Vincent’s lap, this time with the instructions to think about how he wanted to feel beginning with the group, and to not touch the energy with his body, but instead imagine sending his thoughts and happy feelings into the pentacle. Cherub had eagerly agreed, and was now breathing calmly in imitation of Vincent’s breath. Cherub thought about all of the fun he had been having, and how safe and happy he was. As he felt the circle complete, and the others call in their direction and element, Cherub began to send out his thoughts and energy into the pentacle.

We are safe and happy. There is yummy food, and fun books, and a soft warm bed, Cherub thought and sent into the energy created by the others. I am wanted. I belong here. I am safe. I have a family. Cherub’s thought stuttered on this part. He still worried they might send him away if he did the wrong thing. But Vincent had told him to think of happy thoughts and what he wanted. So Cherub continued to send those thoughts and feelings out. Once all the directions and elements had been invoked, and the star and circle complete, Cherub’s energy began to change it once again. Unlike Friday the change was gradual and gentle. Slowly the different energies began to meld and turn to brilliant white light. Everyone participating was infused with this wonderful light.

Once Vincent felt their spell complete and take hold, he gently began to rub Cherub’s arm to bring him out of the meditation. As Cherub’s awareness returned to the physical, the intensity of the spell lessoned, and the protection and magic they created became muted and unnoticeable to others. Everyone began to become aware of his or her surroundings. Filled with energy and love they blinked their eyes and smiled. Thoughtfully they all walked back to the circle of pillows and sat down, silently drinking the herbal tea Ria had thought to leave out and ready.
Cherub smiled happily tucked into Vincent’s side. He liked putting up circles – it was fun, and it made him feel all tingly. Looking across the circle Cherub caught Freja’s eyes and smiled blindingly. Freja smiled back and began to laugh; the energy filling them all was almost too much and they all bubbled over with laughter letting go of the overflowing energy. A few minutes later the laughter died down, and everyone straightened themselves up and wiped the tears from their eyes.

“Well, Cherub it seems like you have added some wonderful energy to our circle yet again,” Mudiwa said.

“Yes,” Adonis added, “you certainly do add to our circle, little man. I am glad you decided to join us.” Cherub blushed and hid his face in Vincent’s side. Vincent chuckled and wrapped his arm around the small boy.

“How about some lunch?” Ria asked. Naveen and Adonis jumped up to help, while Freja and Soto set up the small table over the cold fire pit.

“Cherub, how are you feeling?” Vincent asked.

Cherub looked up from Vincent’s side. “Good, happy; did I do okay?”

“You did perfectly,” Vincent assured him.

“Yes,” Mudiwa added. “Our circle is very strong now, you added a lot to our protection and happiness.”

Cherub smiled at Mudiwa, he liked the thought that he could be helpful.

Ria, Naveen and Adonis returned setting plates and bowls on the table. There was a plate full of sandwiches and a bowl filled with a green salad. Naveen made a plate for Cherub; it had some salad, a cucumber sandwich, and a strawberry jam sandwich on it. “If you want more just ask; there is plenty,” Naveen said as he handed Cherub the plate.

“Thank you,” Cherub replied politely. Then he was humming happily as he ate his lunch.

After cleaning up from lunch, Freja approached Cherub. “Would you like to spend some time with me this afternoon? I was thinking I could start teaching you to read, and I can read some stories to you.”

Cherub smiled, he wanted to learn how to read, but before saying yes he looked to Vincent and Mudiwa. They smiled at him and nodded their okay. “Yes, please,” Cherub answered excitedly.

Freja smiled and held out her hand, which Cherub took. Together they walked over to a small grove of trees, where Freja had hung her hammock. Cherub looked at it suspiciously he had never seen such a thing, but judging from the small table near it covered in books they were going to get in it somehow.

Freja laughed at the confused scowl on Cherub’s face as he looked suspiciously at the hammock. “It will be fine, trust me.” Pulling one side down Freja sat on the edge and held her hand out to Cherub. Cautiously he walked forward and let Freja pick him up. Freja frowned briefly at how light he was, but calmed herself as she took in his bright green eyes, sun-pinked cheeks, and healthy golden glow. It had only been four days, and yet he already looked much better. Soon he would begin to put on weight and height. Freja set Cherub down on the other side of the hammock, which he gripped tightly as it began to swing from side to side. Suspicious green eyes met laughing ice-blue as Freja
settled herself down and repositioned Cherub so they were reclined against the pillows instead of lying down.

“IT is a strong hammock,” Freja assured him. “We are safe, and it is fun to swing in the breeze as we read.” Cherub nodded against her shoulder, feeling better now that he was tucked against her slender frame. Reaching over the side Freja grabbed a ‘Bob Book’ and opened it up to the first page. Cherub avidly listened as she explained the sound and read the words. Once she had done it once, Freja encouraged Cherub to read along with her. Cherub reached up to hold the book with Freja, and found the unfamiliar shapes began to form into letters and words, which he recognized. Happily he read along with her. They did this with the first three ‘Bob Books’.

Freja then placed the box between them and encouraged Cherub to read the next one on his own. Smiling Cherub took the box and got the next book out. They were new – Soto had picked them up just for him, Freja had said. Opening the book, Cherub began to read. It was a bit harder than the first ones, but it was a level two book so he stuck with it, carefully sounding out the words and beaming proudly at Freja when he finished it. Freja enveloped him in a warm hug, Oh goddess, she thought, he can learn from touch. Smiling at Cherub as he went for another book, Freja encouraged and helped him as he spent the next twenty minutes reading out loud to her.

“Was this really your first time reading,” Freja teased.

Cherub grinned. “Yes, they wouldn’t let me near Dudley’s books. I did well didn’t I? It looked so hard when Dudley was trying.”

“You did very well. Obviously you are simply much cleverer than your cousin,” Freja said firmly and with conviction. Cherub grinned and hugged her tightly; he felt so lucky to be here.

“How about I read to you for a while?” Freja asked.

“Oh, yes please,” Cherub said enthusiastically.

Freja smiled and picked up ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ as she read the breeze from the sea pushed the hammock back and forth. In the middle of the third fairy tale, Freja looked down to see Cherub fast asleep on her shoulder. Setting down the fairy tale, Freja picked up the novel she was in the middle of. Happily she read while running her slender finger through soft, wild black hair.
Cherub sighed happily. His belly was full of good food. Everyone around him was happy and laughing. The waves were slow and steady, the moonlight making them glow. Turning his attention to Adonis, Cherub listened to the story he was telling.

“It had been raining the whole game, and I was the only one not covered in mud. So I run down the field swiftly dodging the other team. Flying over the puddles and mud. I didn’t even slow down as I reached the goal, and one smooth kick later my team had won the match,” Adonis said his whole body moving as he spoke. “I jumped into the air shouting my triumph to the sky. When I landed, my face still looking at the clouds and with a smile so wide my jaw hurt, my foot slipped on the wet uneven ground, and down I went face first into the mud!” Everyone laughed at this image, include Adonis. “I am told,” he gasped out while laughing, “that my face was a sight to behold, the look of shock barely noticeable for the mud and muck dripping down it.” This started fresh gales of laughter.

“It looks like I came a bit late,” said a rich, unknown voice. Cherub, who had been sitting close to Adonis quickly moved into his lap, and twisted the hem of his t-shirt, while watching the newcomer. His pure white skin glowed in the moonlight; his hair looked to be black, as did his eyes. Vincent had quickly stood and wrapped a blanket around the man while greeting him fondly.

“This is Vincent’s Selkie friend, Jacob. Did Vincent tell you about him?” Adonis said trying to soothe the nervous boy.

Cherub relaxed, “Oh, yes he did.”

“Let’s go and say hello.” Cherub nodded and got up. Holding Adonis’s hand he walked over to the Selkie. As they walked closer Cherub could see an adult seal and a baby watching them in the waves.

“Jacob, I would like to introduce you to our newest member. This is Cherub. Cherub, this is my friend Jacob, the one I told you about last night,” Vincent introduced.

Jacob smiled warmly at the small child; he would ask Vincent about him later. “Hello, Cherub, it is nice to meet you.”

Jacob smiled and gestured towards two seals in the waves. “Let me introduce you to me wife and son.” Together they all walked over, “Cherub, this is my wife, Miriam, and my son, who does not yet have a human name.”

Cherub waved shyly, “Hello”

“Our son is too young to change yet, but the two of you could still play together in the water.” Jacob said.
“Here Cherub,” said Vincent handing him a ball.

Cherub smiled and taking the ball sat down near the baby seal. “Would you like to try playing catch?”

The seal nodded, so Cherub scooted away a bit and rolled the ball across the water, the seal sat up as high as he could and hit the ball back with his flipper. Cherub squealed and jumped to the side to catch the ball. Quickly he sent it back and a furious laughter-filled game began.

Jacob took Vincent’s arm and led him away from the water. “We need to talk.”

Vincent looked puzzled, “What about?”

“Cherub has such a pure heart and soul, I felt this when I touched him. There is another out there, his opposite. I saw him going back to face him at sixteen. I am sorry,” stated Jacob.

Everyone turned as Cherub laughed. Solemnly they looked at each other. After just a week, the thought of giving him up even ten years from now broke their hearts.

Freja cleared her throat. “Every child leaves eventually, even if for a short time. We will do what every parent does. Love, guide, nurture and do our best to prepare him for what is to come.”

“Yes,” agreed Vincent, “we all know who he is and what he will have to do. However for the next ten years he is ours. Now no more of this; we have good friends here. Let’s sit by the fire and catch up.”

Cherub plopped back onto the sand. “I don’t think I can do any more, my arms ache,” he said breathlessly. Turning to look at the small brown seal he continued, “That was a lot of fun. I hope you will be here tomorrow maybe we can go swimming. I am just learning how, but we can still have fun.” The little seal snorted in agreement and shuffled closer, his mum still in the water looking on. “You look so soft, I hope it isn’t rude to ask, but can I pet you?” Cherub asked hopefully, not wanting to offend his new friend. The seal quirked his head and then with a small nod scooted up and placed his head on Cherub’s tummy. Shyly Cherub placed his hand on the seal’s back and gently rubbed it over the fur. “Oh you are so soft,” he exclaimed. Sighing, Cherub pondered, “I wonder what it is like to swim deep in the sea. I bet you get to see all sorts of sea creatures.” Suddenly Cherub’s mind was filled with images of amazing sea creatures, sunlight streaming down through water, yummy fish, playing with other Selkies is the waves, and frantically swimming away from a large black and white whale.

“Wow,” breathed Cherub, as the information poured in. Instincts the Selkie was born with about swimming, ocean currents, hunting, and Selkie magic, including telepathy, filled Cherub’s mind and body.

Miriam, who had been watching the two children looked on curiously. She knew that some of the human friends of her mate had special gifts, but this didn’t seem quite right. Suddenly Cherub came out of the trance, and still petting the seal said, “I know how it feels to be chased by a whale,” and sent images of his uncle and cousin to his new friend.

Jacob laughed at Freja’s story as Vincent and Mudiwa blushed, when suddenly they looked to the water, “Miriam says something is wrong with the boys.”

Quickly Jacob, Vincent and Mudiwa stood and walked over. The others held back, not seeing any problem, and knowing it would take a day before Miriam felt comfortable around them again.
“What is wrong?” Jacob asked out loud, so everyone could hear. “What do you mean they are talking?” Coming closer he saw Cherub petting his son, and laughing, then pausing and laughing, then a gasp. It certainly seemed like they were talking.

“Cherub, is everything okay?” Vincent asked as he got closer.

Far too quickly Cherub answered, “I’m fine, I am not cold at all.”

Mudiwa snorted in amusement, “Then why are you shivering? Let me see your face.”

Cherub turned slowly, he knew he would have to go in now, his new friend had told him his lips looked blue.

Mudiwa looked down into wide, abashed green eyes and blue lips. “Cherub, it isn’t safe for you to get this cold. They will be here for the week, right Jacob?”

“Yes, we always stay for the week. Tomorrow afternoon we will come back and the two of you can play in the water when it is warm out.” Grinning, Jacob shook his head at the obviously cold small boy.

Cherub pouted, “Do I have to go in?”

“Yes!” all three men stated firmly. Sighing Cherub turned his attention to the baby seal, saying goodbye. The seal scooted over to his mum, and Cherub stood walking over to Mudiwa and Vincent. Mudiwa scooped up the boy, and walked towards the fire, they still needed to ask about them talking.

“You know my son still needs a human name. Would you like to pick it, Cherub?” Jacob offered.

“Really? Oh, yes please. Can I think about it and tell you tomorrow?” he replied already going through names in his head.

“That would be just fine,” Jacob said. “It seems like you and my son were having quite a conversation?”

“Oh yes, he showed me all about the ocean and the different creatures that live there. It was brilliant!” Cherub beamed.

“When did this happen?” Jacob asked.

“When we were sitting together. He let me pet him, and I said something about wondering what the sea was like, and suddenly there were all these pictures in my head.”

“That sounds amazing,” Mudiwa said, “but for now it is time to get you in a bath, and then into bed.” Mudiwa knew the others needed to talk about this and that Vincent would fill him in later. Cherub said goodnight and let himself be led off to bed.
Chapter Twenty

Thirty minutes later Mudiwa returned to the circle sitting next to Vincent. “What did I miss?” he asked.

“Cherub’s asleep already?” Vincent said, surprised.

Mudiwa grinned, “I gave him a quick bath, then read three pages of a book and he was fast asleep.”

“We told Jacob about how we met Cherub, and what we know. Then Jacob told us about how Selkies communicate through telepathy. As far as we can tell, Cherub ‘learned’ how to speak telepathically while he was touching Jacob’s son. What that means for later, who knows.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Freja, “I forgot in all the excitement. This afternoon I was teaching Cherub to read. At first I held the books with him, and he did seem to gain some of my knowledge, as he has done with other things. Then I had him hold the books on his own. Now Soto got me these books yesterday, and I have not touched them all. Cherub did have a bit of trouble, but they were the next level. However he did not seem lose what he had learned from me.”

Jacob looked puzzled. “Do you think he will be able to communicate telepathically tomorrow?”

Freja shrugged, “I don’t know, but I think it is a possibility.”

Everyone was quiet for a bit. Then as the conversation continued they talked about Cherub and all of the things they done over the past year. The friends laughed and talked well into the night.

Wednesday, June 18

Wednesday morning was much the same as the day before. They practiced yoga, had a light breakfast, then Cherub went off with Soto to train in the martial arts. It was about ten o’clock when a now clean and excited Cherub was ready for his next adventure.

There were three bicycles set out, one of which had a child seat attached to the back. Cherub looked around wondering where everyone was, when Vincent, Mudiwa and Soto walked over.

“Ready for some fun?” Vincent asked. Cherub nodded furiously. Vincent chuckled, “all right then. You, Mudiwa and I are going to the Atchison’s farm today. We can look at the animals and get some produce. Soto will ride with us, but he is going into town. He is making dinner tonight and needs to get some ingredients.” Cherub nodded showing he understood, and smiled up at Soto.

“Do we need anything else?” Mudiwa asked, but before anyone could answer Freja came over.

“Wait, Cherub needs to take some sunscreen potion. Do you need any food or water?” Freja asked as she gave Cherub a dose of the potion, and pulled out a white headscarf, tying it around Cherub’s head.

“Thank you, Freja, I had forgotten about the potion and the scarf,” Vincent said. “We did remember food, water and helmets.”
“I am glad I could help, you boys have fun.” Freja said giving Cherub a kiss on the cheek and walking back to the buses.

Cherub squealed as they soared down the road. They were biking on a long, flat stretch of road so they were side by side. Mudiwa on the left and Soto on the right. They had ridden slowly leaving the campsite, but now on the open paved road they speeded up. The countryside was beautiful. Lovely green meadows sprinkled with wildflowers. Birds and rabbits flitted about, and Cherub was so happy.

After a bit, Cherub could see a small town off to the right. When a road came in view Soto waved and headed into town. Not much farther down the road was a little lane on the left that they turned into.

“Hold on,” Vincent shouted. Cherub grabbed hold of Vincent’s shirt. Looking ahead he couldn’t see the road, but he could see a farm in the distance and below them. At the top of the hill Vincent and Mudiwa paused making sure the lane was clear, then down they flew down it Cherub shrieked in fear and delight, as the wind whipped by him and the scenery became a blur. At the bottom they coasted for a while then finally slowed enough that they had to pedal again. Cherub’s eyes were bright and his cheeks flushed. Mudiwa smiled at the obvious happiness on the boy’s face. Nodding to Vincent, Mudiwa let him know that Cherub was fine.

Cherub looked around him in amazement. There were chickens, ducks, sheep, pigs, a huge garden, a barn and even a tractor! Mudiwa chuckled as he set the oblivious boy on the ground. Cherub took the water he was handed and drank while he continued to look around.

“Hello!” called a voice. Cherub turned towards the house to see a woman in denim overalls and a large, floppy, tan hat. “I was hoping we would see you two today; and who is this you have with you?” she asked as she walked closer.

Vincent smiled, “Hello, Mrs. Atchison, this is Cherub, a new troupe member. Cherub, this is Mrs. Atchison; she and her husband own this farm, and they grow the best tomatoes around.”

“Oh, pish,” she said swatting playfully at Vincent while smiling down at the young boy hiding behind Mudiwa’s legs. “Hello, Cherub, it is nice to meet you. Are you going to help pick the vegetables?”

Cherub, still holding onto Mudiwa’s leg, shifted from behind him and closer to the exuberant woman. “We get to pick them, off the plants?”

“Yes, you do. We have tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes, potatoes, lettuce, cabbage, peppers, radishes, and different herbs. You are in luck today, our peaches are now ripe and ready to pick.”

“That sounds like a lot of fun,” Vincent said. “What do you think, Cherub? I bet we can see the animals too.”

Cherub turned large green eyes to Mrs. Atchison. “Really? I can help and see the animals too?”

“Well of course you can, sweetie. Now let me get some baskets and we will begin.”
Soto smiled at the familiar chime of the fish market door. He had bought everything he needed and getting fish was the last item on his list. He looked into the case; everything looked really good and several pieces looked good enough for making sushi with. Soto watched as Paul and Selena finished up with the customer they were waiting on. Ria had asked for prawns if they looked good, and walking down the case he saw three types of nice fresh-looking prawns. He turned as he heard the door being locked and the closed sign turned over.

“Hello, Soto, we were hoping you would come into town today. Do you have some time? The kids are with Paul’s mum,” Selena said pulling Soto into a hug. Soto took a deep breath and then smiled as he felt Paul come up behind him and wrap his arms around them both.

“No one is expecting me back until tea.”

“Perfect,” they said leading Soto to their house behind the store. Soto smiled as they fell upon the bed. He loved Sennen.
Chapter Twenty-one

Smiling, Cherub ran to the beach; Freja had told him the Selkies were already there. He had picked up the ball they played with last night and was looking forward to a fun afternoon with his new friend.

“Hello, Cherub how was your afternoon?” Jacob asked once the small boy was close.

“It was so much fun! I got to pick all sorts of vegetables and peaches. Mrs. Atchison let me pet, lambs, chickens, cats, pigs, and her sheep dog Pesky!” Cherub bounced in place as he excitedly described his day. “I thought of a name for your son if you still want me to name him?”

Jacob smiled, “Yes, I still want you to give him a human name.”

Cherub twisted the hem of his shirt and looked down at the ground nervously saying, “Um, well, I was thinking that the name Jaime would be nice.” Cherub looked up at Jacob through the bits of his wild black fringe that peeked out from under the white headscarf.

Jacob smiled at the small boy’s nervousness. “I think Jaime is a fine name.”

Cherub’s smile lit his whole face as he turned to the small seal. “Hello, how are you today? Your dad asked me to give you a human name. I picked Jaime. Do you like it?”

The small seal tilted his head in thought. “Jaime, yes, I like it. Tell me about your day.”

Cherub smiled and sat down in the waves. He tossed the ball to Jaime and then began to share his day. It was much easier to send pictures and feelings than words, so Jaime got to experience Cherub’s day in detail.

“Wait,” Jaime said, “what are those beautiful glowing things?”

“These?” Cherub asked showing the memory of small, delicate creatures. They flitted about the plants on the farm, caring for the plants and helping them grow beautiful and strong. They glowed in soft sunset colors, their translucent wings catching the sun as they moved. They seemed to be dressed in wisps of cloud and their small arms and legs were sun-kissed bronze.

“Yes,” replied Jaime.

“They are a type of fairy I think. They taught me all about how the plants grow, and what they need. There were even fairies for the animals – although they didn’t come up to me.” Cherub paused for a moment collecting his thoughts. “Some of the fairies landed on my hand, and told me about themselves and the kind of magic they do, just like you did. It was amazing; they even let me practice when no one was looking. I couldn’t really see a difference, but they said the plant was stronger after I helped.”

“I never knew there were different types of magic. Next year when you come you will have to tell me if you find out about any more.” Jaime said excitedly.
Cherub smiled, “I will. Why don’t I see if one of the adults will come into the water so we can go swimming?”

“Why do you need one of them?” Jaime asked; he sounded confused.

Cherub shrugged, “They told me I did.”

The adults in question were sitting up on the dry sand talking and watching the two boys, keenly aware that Cherub retained the ability to communicate telepathically with the Selkie.

“Jaime and I want to go swimming, will someone come in with me, please?” Cherub asked from the water's edge.

Adonis smiled, “I will.”

“Thank you.”

Adonis stayed near Cherub, while letting him move freely. It took a bit for Cherub to work out the way his body moved with the information Jaime had given on swimming. Soon, however, he was off and playing alongside the small seal as if he had been born a Selkie.

Adonis looked on in wonder; who knew what amazing things Cherub would learn and accomplish with this gift?

Cherub sat in-between Jaime and Mudiwa waiting for Soto and Adonis to bring out dinner. Miriam had changed into her human form that afternoon, and now sat on the other side of Jaime talking to Ria. Like all Selkie, Miriam had dark hair, which was curly and long, deep brown/black eyes, pale skin, and an ethereal beauty that could easily entrance.

The long, low table they used when they had kabobs was set up and there were several covered dishes whose enticing aromas were making Cherub squirm in anticipation. Looking up he saw the outlines of Adonis and Soto in the soft twilight. They both carried large wooden trays. Cherub didn’t recognize the small round pieces of food covering the trays.

“Do you know what it is,” he asked Jaime.

“No, but da’ said it is really good and to avoid the green paste,” replied Jaime looking at all of the food.

Soto walked over to Cherub and Jaime and, smoothly kneeling before them, handed them each a plate.

“This is sushi; my parents taught me how to make it when I was a little boy in Japan,” Soto explained. “It is rice, nori, and either fish, cucumber or avocado in the center.” Soto pointed out. “To add different flavors to the sushi we have tamari and pickled ginger. I will come back with a bowl of noodles for each of you.”

Miriam picked up a piece of the sushi, lightly dipped it in the tamari and held it out for Jaime. The baby seal sniffed the foreign food then carefully took it from his mother.

“Yum! Cherub this is good – try the kind with the pink center.” Jaimie said as he took another bite from his mum.
Cherub, encouraged by his friend and the adults around him so obviously enjoying their meal, popped a piece of sushi in his mouth. Carefully he chewed, the delicate flavors flowed over his tongue, and he hummed. This was good! Picking another piece he carefully dipped it in the tamari, then decided to try the ginger. His eyes widened in surprise at the sharpness of the pickled ginger slice, but the cool creaminess of the sushi complemented it perfectly.

“Have you tried the ginger? It is really good,” Cherub asked his friend.

The rest of the meal the two friends talked and gave their critique of the new foods. They both loved the sushi. Jaime thought the noodles were okay, while Cherub hummed his approval loudly. With every hum from Cherub, Soto smiled.

When Cherub was finished eating he turned to Soto. “Thank you for making dinner tonight, Soto, it was wonderful.”

“Thank you, I am glad you enjoyed it.” Soto said inclining his head.

“Yes, Soto, it was wonderful.” Ria said. “You have such luck getting fresh fish. And the prawns you brought me are beautiful. What is your secret?”

Soto smiled softly, “I have friends who own the local fish market, they help me out.”

Vincent inwardly smirked. Soto was a very private man, however in certain towns they regularly visited Soto seemed to find something, which left him feeling very relaxed and content.

Cherub fell asleep that night curled up in Vincent’s lap while Miriam and Jacob told stories of the Selkies. The last thing Cherub remembered was Freja laughing as Miriam admitted that the reason for the myth that a Selkie could only visit a human once every seven years was to keep human women from expecting more than a night with lecherous Selkie men.

Thursday, June 19

The next day Cherub and Jaime spent every free moment together. They played in the waves, hunted through the tide pools looking at different creatures, and swam until they couldn’t move. Both boys promised to see the other next year and to share all the new things they had learned as they tearfully said goodbye.

Cherub sniffed, his eyes filled with tears. “Do we have to leave?”

Vincent gently wiped the tears from the soft cheeks. “Yes, we do. That is one of the good and bad things about being a gypsy. We move around from place to place, meeting all sorts of interesting people and making many friends. Some are just friends for a moment, and some will be our friends for a lifetime.”

Mudiwa sat behind Vincent and took Cherub’s small hand. “Think of your sandcastle. You had fun building it, and it was lovely to see, but then things changed and the tide washed it away. Life can be like that; moving and changing things. The idea is to enjoy what you have right now, and cherish the memories of the people you have known, the places you have gone, and the things you have done.”

Cherub sniffed again then nodded. Yes, he would see Jaime again, and he would do lots of new things and meet lots of people so he would have plenty to tell Jaime next summer.

Vincent smiled as he felt Cherub calm down. “Let’s get you to bed, little one; tomorrow is a big
day.”
Chapter Twenty-two

Friday, June 20 Ottery St. Catchpole

Cherub sat on one of the long wooden tables lining the tent. The tent opening was tied back and bright sun filled the space. The tables along the wall would hold books and trinkets the gypsies had collected over the past year. The tables in the middle would be covered in clothes, linens, potion ingredients and plants. Cherub was placing books onto the raised shelf at the back of the table. It was high enough that two rows of books could easily be displayed. The adults were either setting up or getting more boxes. Cherub could hear greetings being shouted out as the transient members of the troupe slowly arrived.

Cherub was happy to be helping, and to have something to distract him in the new place with so many people about. Slowly one by one he took books out of the wooden crates and lined them up trying his best to make sure the titles were right side up. However not knowing fully how to read, and with all the different languages the books were in, it was challenging. Suddenly a shadow crept over Cherub and turning he saw an unfamiliar person standing in the doorway. The figure was tall, slender and dressed all in black; it looked like the man was wearing a thick dress, but Vincent had told him that wizards wore robes. Cherub gripped the book tighter as the figure slowly turned taking in the room with a gaze Cherub was sure he could feel. As the person turned Cherub could see he had black, shoulder-length hair and a large, hooked nose. A deep, cultured voice filled the tent.

“I am looking for Miss Freja Nef,” he said curtly.

Cherub blinked. “Professor Snape?”

Stalking into the tent, robes snapping, Snape advanced on the small boy kneeling on the table. Cherub’s green eyes were wide and he looked up into the professor’s sharp, pale face and black eyes.

“You have me at a disadvantage as I do not know your name,” Snape stated.

“Oh, sorry sir. My name is Cherub and it is a pleasure to meet you,” Cherub said, sticking out his small hand just as Freja had taught him to.

Snape smirked at the small boy and gently took his hand. “Professor Severus Snape.” His students might be surprised at his politeness, but Snape got the best potions ingredients from the gypsies and after two weeks free from students he could hold his tongue around a polite child. “I am here to look at potion ingredients, which Miss Nef owled me about. Do you know where I can find her?”

“You have the beautiful gray owl, right? He was so sweet and let me pet him.” At Professor Snape’s sharply raised eyebrow Cherub hurried to answer the question. “Freja and the others are unloading boxes right now to bring in here. Um… I think it would be best to wait here if that is okay with you. I have set out some books you can look at and the small table over there has some glasses and a pitcher of lemonade if you would like some.” Cherub said wanting to be polite.

Snape inclined his head and began looking over the books Cherub had already put out. The small boy had bright green eyes and wild black hair stuck out from under a dark blue headscarf. He reminded him of someone, but he couldn’t place whom; as soon as the thought came it left and Snape focused on the books.

Cherub continued to set out books; he was nervous in the strange man’s company. He hoped
someone showed up soon. The man had looked at him for a moment as if he recognized him, but the magic from the circle swirled around them, protecting him, and Professor Snape went back to looking at the books.

Seeing the boy’s attempts to hide his nervousness Snape decided to make ‘shudder’ small talk in hopes it would calm him. “So, Cherub, how did you know who I was?” Yes, he told himself, this was for the boy and not to satisfy his own curiosity.

“Oh, well, I was asked to keep an eye out for you. I was told you were tall and had black hair and eyes. Umm, and they said your robes snapped around you as if spelled to do so.” Snape smirked at this. “They also said you were the only one coming by this morning. And, um… well, Adonis, he said you had a nice bum.” Snape’s eyes widened and his whole body froze with shock. Cherub continued to place books on the shelf.

“Cherub, sorry it took us so long. Oh, Professor Snape! I hope you haven’t been kept waiting too long. Can I get you some lemonade?” Freja said while placing a large box onto one of the middle tables.

“No, thank you, Cherub already offered. Are those some of the ingredients,” Snape answered.

“Yes, please feel free to begin unpacking. I will go and get the rest. Thank you, Cherub, for welcoming Professor Snape.”

Cherub beamed, “You’re welcome.”

Snape began unpacking the box when another was set down on the table. “Hello, Professor Snape, how are you today?” Snape looked up into cheerful golden eyes. Remembering Cherub’s comment Snape fought not to blush. Unfortunately he was unsuccessful.

“Good day, Mr. Dyonysius. I hope the year has treated you well?”

Adonis blinked, he’d had a small crush on the Professor for a while now, but he had never actually talked with him. Smiling he replied, “Yes, it has been a very fine year thank you. And you? Did the little hellions leave you in peace this year?”

Snape snorted and continued to unpack the potions ingredients, trying not to blush again. “I survived and the imbeciles only blew up my Potions class room three times this year. But of course there were spectacularly incompetent individuals who destroyed cauldrons weekly.”

Adonis chuckled, he adored the man’s sarcastic nature and casually leaning over he checked out the man’s bum again… very nice. Leaning in to comment Adonis was interrupted when the others arrived with even more boxes.

“Here we are, this is the last of the boxes that you are interested in.” Everyone greeted Snape and began unpacking. Cherub sneezed as dust and unusual smells filled the room. Cherub finished with the table and climbed down going over to the next table and crate. He was half way finished when he pulled out an old, worn, brown leather book. Picking it up he was filled with feelings of fear, anger, hatred and pain. Cherub screamed and threw the book onto the floor. Everyone turned to see what was wrong. Professor Snape happened to be closest and instinctively moved to help.

“What happened? Where are you hurt?” Snape demanded and he grasped the small, pale hands in his own, his long, potion-stained fingers inspecting for any injury.

Cherub sniffed, “Bad book.”

“What I touched that book it felt bad.”

“What kind of bad?”

“Like when Uncle Vernon would be angry and coming towards me,” Cherub whispered to Vincent.

“I can find nothing wrong with this book,” Snape said picking it up and flipping through it. The book had odd stains on it and was obviously a diary of some kind. Turning to the front page, Snape’s eyes widened. “This is the diary of Daphne Wickliff, who was rumored to be insane and cruel. Miss Wickliff devoted her life to studying Dark Arts, necromancy and demonology. I am not sure why Cherub reacted so intensely.”

Vincent nodded still holding Cherub close. “Thank you, Professor. Cherub, sweetheart, have you felt anything from any of the other books?”

Cherub sniffed and nodded. “Yes.”

Mudiwa stepped up. “Cherub did any of the others feel bad?”

Cherub thought for a moment. “Yes, though not nearly as bad.”

Vincent picked Cherub up and walked over to the other table. “Can you point to them?”

Cherub pointed to a deep maroon book. Snape used his wand again and finding the book to be free of curses and potions he picked it up. “Another diary: Quennell Malfoy. It is written in Latin.” Snape looked up at Vincent. “I will take them both.” The gypsies all looked at each other, obviously not comfortable with letting these books go. Snape cleared his throat. “I guarantee they will only be used for my personal curiosity. No harm will come from the knowledge in these books.”

Lavender eyes looked straight into obsidian. “We trust you,” Vincent decided. Severus Snape had been coming to this festival since he was a child. His mother had always brought him and Vincent remembered playing with him when the other boys would run off. Snape stopped coming when his mother died, he must have been about fifteen, and they didn’t see him again until after Voldemort was gone. Snape inclined his head and went back to the potion ingredients.

Snape was certainly curious about the boy. He knew several of the squibs seemed to have learned to focus what little magic they had into parlor tricks and being able to read the crowds. That must be it; the boy is too young to know how to deal with the ability properly. Cherub was a bit younger than most abandoned squibs these days, but he belonged here with Vincent and his troupe. Snape knew that to be true.

An hour later Snape was ready to go. He had purchased most of their potion ingredients and had added several books to the pile. He gave a box of potions to Freja and re-spelled the crates and containers with preservation and containment charms as part of the payment.

“Do you need anything else, Professor?”

“No, Miss Nef, I have everything I require,” Snape replied.

Freja finished tallying everything up. “Are you coming back tomorrow night for the Solstice celebration?”
“No, I have been invited to Malfoy Manner.” Snape paused for a moment in thought. “I don’t suppose you have anything appropriate for a six-year-old boy?”

Freja smiled. “Actually, we do. Adonis will you please get the box of throwing balls Ria and I have been working on?”

“Of course, they are in the ocean bus, right?”

“Yes, thank you.”

Adonis returned and set a plastic box down on the table opening it up to reveal small cloth balls with ribbon streaming off one end. Snape quirked an eyebrow and took out a bright yellow ball. The fabric was silky and shimmered in the light, the yellow, orange and red ribbons draped across his wrist. “What are they for?”

Adonis pulled a flame red ball from the box. “They are filled with buckwheat hulls, so they are light and won’t hurt if you get hit with one. The kids throw them up in the air or back and forth, to celebrate the sun. Cherub, catch.” Adonis waited until Cherub was facing him, and threw the ball in a high arc right into his hands. Cherub squealed as the pretty toy flew through the air. He easily caught it in his small hands and sent it back to Adonis.

“What do you think?”

“I am sure the children will adore them for all of two minutes then either lose them or tear them apart,” Snape sneered. “I will take twenty.”

“Cherub, will you please bring me a bag from the package over on the far wall,” Adonis asked. Cherub happily grabbed a bag and presented it to Adonis who picked Cherub up and set him on the counter. “Do you want to pick them out, Professor?”

“I think not.”

“Well, Cherub, do you want to pick out twenty for Professor Snape?”

“Oh, yes!” Cherub began sorting through the box and picked out a bunch of the bright toys. He carefully placed them in his lap, and then one by one put them into the bag, counting carefully. Adonis smiled at Cherub’s thoroughness. Once he was done Cherub proudly handed the bag to Snape.

Snape inclined his head, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Cherub watched Snape walk over to Freja and conclude his business. He turned to Adonis and loudly whispered, “How can you tell he has a cute bum?”

Adonis groaned and covered his face with both hands. Looking up he watched Professor Snape walk out of the tent hoping the man hadn’t heard, but then the stoic man turned and smirked at him. Adonis blushed beet red.
Cherub clung to Mudiwa as he observed the chaos around him. The rest of the troupe had arrived and they were now catching up over tea. It had been a very busy day and Cherub was feeling overwhelmed and tired. Turning slightly he buried his face in Mudiwa’s sky blue cotton shirt. Mudiwa’s arms tightened making him feel safe and protected. Mr. Jacobs, after seeing his wife coo over the orchids, made a room for Cherub in Vincent and Mudiwa’s tent. Then he went and made a room in Ria and Naveen’s tent for the new baby. Cherub hadn’t seen his new room yet; Mr. Jacobs said they had to wait twenty-four hours for the magic to settle and the space to become permanent. On the outside of the tent now there was a turquoise patch, which represented his room.

Cherub hadn’t seen his new room yet; Mr. Jacobs said they had to wait twenty-four hours for the magic to settle and the space to become permanent. On the outside of the tent now there was a turquoise patch, which represented his room.

Cherub took a deep breath, inhaling Mudiwa’s spicy, earthy scent. His own room; Cherub smiled, he’d never thought he would have his own room. Vincent said he could decorate it any way he wanted. Snuggling against the hard, warm body Cherub relaxed some more.

Mr. Flourish had also come today, buying the majority of the books and dropping off his grandson Mitchell. Cherub peeked over Mudiwa’s shoulder; yes, there he was. Mitchell seemed nice: shy and a bit scared but nice. Right now he was talking with Camellia and Justin Prewitt the niece and nephew of Quinn and Isabelle Prewitt. Cherub sighed… so many new names. Camellia and Justin’s black curls bounced around as they talked to Mitchell, whose honey blond hair lay straight and unruffled. Cherub giggled; he’d never realized someone’s hair could tell so much about their personality.

Turning to look in the other direction, yet still staying hidden, Cherub watched Vincent talking with Quinn and Isabelle. Quinn also had black curls which he kept short on the sides and long on top. It made him seem young and carefree. Isabelle wore her sunshine blond hair just past her shoulders, where it flowed softly with the wind. Cherub turned back and saw Vincent smiling at him. Blushing he smiled back and gave a little wave. Vincent wiggled his fingers back.

Mudiwa laughed, sending shivers through Cherub’s small body. Turning he looked at who Mudiwa was talking to. Excluding those who were just joining the troupe these three were the only ones who were staying past August the first. Cherub had decided to focus on those staying and tune out the rest of them. There was just too many people and emotions floating around.

Small hands gripped the tight shirt as Cherub turned to fully face the people Mudiwa was talking to. Dario, Luca and Elena were siblings from Italy, Cherub gathered from listening to their conversation. They all had thick, wavy brown hair, deep olive skin and turquoise eyes. Their voices were rich with their Italian accent, yet Cherub could understand them easily. Cherub liked the three siblings; when they caught his eye they would smile or wink but other than that they left him alone. They seemed to be able to tell he needed time to adjust.

Vincent had been watching Cherub and was worried. Mudiwa was keeping him safe, but Cherub didn’t seem to be adjusting well to all of the people and after this morning’s episode with the books Vincent had an idea why. Walking over to his lover Vincent said, “Hello; mind if I borrow Cherub for a minute?”

Mudiwa quirked an elegant eyebrow. “Go ahead.” He released the small boy.
Cherub looked up at Vincent then smiled as Vincent knelt down and scooped him up. Cherub wrapped his arms and legs around him and buried his face in the thick, chestnut hair. Vincent held Cherub tightly and walked to the edge of their camp.

“Cherub, I want you to try something for me. I am going to change my empathic abilities and I want you to see if you can feel how I do it and try to do it yourself, okay?”

Cherub scrunched up his brow but nodded.

“All right; so this is my empathy on high,” Vincent explained as he lowered his shields letting everything in. It was chaotic and Cherub felt unsettled and began to squirm.

“Is this how you are feeling already?” Vincent asked. Cherub nodded and clung tighter. “Shh, it will be okay. Now see if you can do this.” Vincent took a deep breath and pulled in his energy. “This is medium,” Vincent waited while Cherub mimicked what he had felt Vincent do.

Once Cherub’s breathing calmed and he opened his eyes, Vincent asked, “Is this how you feel when holding onto one of us?” Again Cherub nodded. “Very good. So now we are going to take it down a bit more, okay?”


Taking another deep breath Vincent imagined a bubble around him. He made the bubble strong and flexible; it surrounded him two feet away from his body. The bubble protected him by still letting him know what others were feeling and what was going on around him, but not letting those feelings touch him or affect him. Vincent took his time and slowly, meticulously created the bubble one step at a time for Cherub to follow. Once Vincent had his bubble created he grounded his energy into the earth, helping to keep his empathic abilities contained and not reaching out to others.

Slowly Vincent opened his eyes and looked down at the child wrapped around him. Cherub’s face was blank, his breathing slow and controlled. A moment later long black eyelashes fluttered and emerald green eyes looked gratefully into lavender ones. “I can’t feel everyone now,” Cherub exclaimed and hugged Vincent tightly.

Vincent laughed with relief. “I am so glad, Cherub. Anytime you need help grounding and pulling in your powers just let me know. I will always help you. Do you feel strong enough to go back to the group now?”

“Yes. Do you think I can play with the other kids?” Cherub asked pointing to where the three other kids were playing football.

“How about I go over there and introduce you,” Vincent said standing and taking Cherub’s hand.

An hour later a sweaty, rosy-cheeked Cherub plopped down into Vincent’s lap.

“Oof, did you have fun?”

“It was brilliant!” Cherub would have continued, but Freja pressed a cool glass of lemonade into his small hand. Smiling his thanks Cherub gulped it down. Freja shook her head and refilled his glass.

“Cherub,” Mudiwa said calmly, “we need to talk about tomorrow. There will be a lot of people here, and we need you to stay next to one of us at all times. We don’t know if anyone here is looking for you, so we need to keep our ears open, okay?” Cherub nodded and Mudiwa continued, “Like we
talked about before you must always wear your headscarf. Most people won’t even ask about it.”

Cherub interrupted, “What if they do ask? What if they want to know where I come from and why I
am traveling with you?”

Soto chuckled, “Well you will just have to wear the mask they make.”

Cherub looked puzzled so Soto beckoned Cherub to come and sit in his lap, hoping the contact would help impart the complicated idea. Once Cherub was settled Soto continued. “We are going to play make believe, have you played that before?” Cherub nodded. “Perfect, now the key is to discover what other people want you to be and to be that thing.” Cherub looked at Soto as if he had just asked him to bite the head off a chicken. “Trust me, okay; just listen. The wizards and witches coming here tomorrow know that we are all squibs. While they enjoy being around us we do not really fit into their society, they fear what we are too much to be comfortable with us.” Soto shook his head – this was not the time to get into all of that. “Anyway, they will see you and assume that you are the squib child of a powerful and Dark, pure-blood magical family.”

“Why Dark?” Ria asked.

“Well there are Dark spells and potions that can be done to tell if a child is a squib. They are not well known, and they usually hurt the child to some degree.” Vincent filled in.

Everyone was quiet for a moment, and then Cherub spoke. “It doesn’t seem like that will be hard. Big crowds scare me, and I don’t like people I don’t know touching me. I don’t know what most of the things around me are, so I will look lost and confused. That is what you see me needing to act like, isn’t it?” Cherub asked Soto.

Soto smiled, “Yes, that is what you need to act like. But I also need you not to correct people, and I need you not to offer any information, just say that you don’t want to talk about it. Can you do that?”

Cherub laughed, “I think I can do that. It doesn’t seem too hard. It really isn’t that different than how I act now.”

Soto smiled. “That is the key to a good mask. It doesn’t change everything about you, it just hides those things you wish to keep close and only let a few people know.”

“Like about feeling the books?” Cherub asked puzzled.

“Yes, exactly. No one else needs to know about that, or about the fact that you can see our circle. They will see you as powerless, having no magical ability, no gifts and no hope. Can you pretend that?” Cherub looked deeply into Soto’s eyes and was caught in their black intensity. His breathing became sharp and shallow, much like on the first night they met. Images and feelings flew between them, and then they both blinked. Cherub smirked, “I get it. I can do that.” As quickly as it came the adult look passed from his face and Cherub grinned, happy to know what they wanted him to do.

The next day a subdued little boy stood amongst the gypsies, his big green eyes darted around uncomfortably and kept an eye on everyone. He fidgeted with the odd Muggle clothes and shifted closer to those he knew, as if he wasn’t sure about taking their hands or seeking out their comfort. Soto leaned down and whispered, “Perfect, Showtime.” Cherub took a breath and looked up as a large group of redheads walked towards them.
Chapter Twenty-four

Saturday, June 21 Summer Solstice

After a flurry of hellos and hugs Vincent said, “Mr. And Mrs. Weasley I would like to introduce Cherub. Cherub, this is Mr. And Mrs. Weasley.”

Cherub stuck out his small hand as Freja had taught him too. “Hello, Mr. Weasley, Mrs. Weasley; it is a pleasure to meet you.”

“Oh, you poor dear!” Mrs. Weasley exclaimed. Then remembering herself added, “Such a polite young man. Hello, Cherub, it is very nice to meet you. Come and I’ll introduce you to my children.” Shifting a few feet, Cherub could now see the seven red-headed children. “This is our oldest Bill, then Charlie, Percy, Fred and George, Ron and our youngest Ginny.” Mrs. Weasley said pointing out each of her children. “Kids, this is Cherub. He is new so I expect you all to behave,” their mum said firmly with an extra hard look at the twins who were looking as sweet and innocent as possible. This earned a chorus of “Yes, Mum.”

Once their mum walked away to look at the tent the Weasley kids approached Cherub. “Hello, I’m Fred and this is George; Mum always gets us mixed up.” Cherub tilted his head. No… this was George, but he nodded his understanding remembering to keep things to himself.

“Don’t listen to these berks,” said Bill taking pity on the small boy. “We just call them Gred and Feorge.”

“Oi!” shouted the twins. Cherub smiled up at the handsome teen.

“Come on! I want to go and see if they have anything on Dragons,” Charlie said. “I’ll take Ginny, and Bill you take Ron, and Percy you keep an eye on the twins.” Bill quickly scooped up Ginny, and Charlie grabbed Ron’s hand so quickly that Percy didn’t have time to protest.

“Right then,” Percy said imperiously. “I will have none of your normal shenanigans.”

The twins exchanged an evil grin, “Of course not, dearest brother…” said Fred.

“…. we will be on our best behavior,” finished George.

Percy stuck his nose in the air and they walked to the tents. Cherub followed behind and watched as George placed a lizard into Percy’s pocket. Cherub's eyes widened, and he looked up meeting Vincent’s calm lavender gaze. Vincent winked at him and smiled. Cherub sighed; everything was okay.

It wasn’t long before more people arrived. Some looked in the tent, some stayed at the outside tables. Many just talked with their friends and acquaintances they hadn’t seen in a long time. Cherub saw Charlie looking through the books, and he remembered several dragon books he had placed earlier. Taking a deep breath he walked over to the bigger boy and tugged at his sleeve. Cherub’s nervousness instantly vanished as Charlie’s friendly freckled face turned to him and he smiled. “Yes, Cherub?”

“I know where there are some dragon books, I helped unpack them,” Cherub offered.
Charlie’s smile grew and his brown eyes crinkled. “Lead the way.”

Cherub smiled and took Charlie and Ginny over to the far table where he pointed out a group of books with deep red covers. Charlie set Ginny down. “Stay right here,” he told her and picked up the first book.

“Hi,” Ginny said softly, her soft brown eyes looking at the boy in front of her with interest. “Where are your mum and dad?”

Cherub was trying to think of an answer when Bill interrupted. “Cherub, Charlie said you might know where a book on curses would be?”

Cherub blinked, “Curses?”

“Yes, um – strong protective, sometimes harmful spells,” Bill tried to explain. Cherub’s brow crinkled in thought and his lips pursed. Bill stifled his laughter at the cute sight.

Sparkling green eyes looked up. “I think I know where one might be,” and he led Bill and Ron to a different table. Soon Bill was looking at several books.

“Why are you wearing that scarf on your head?” asked Ron.

“Really, Ron how rude,” sniffed Percy as he picked up a book on etiquette.

Ron rolled his eyes. “Um… I’m six; how old are you?”

“I’m five,” Cherub said, guessing. He knew Dudley was still five and that they were the same age. Looking up he saw Percy about to reach into his pocket. Grinning he pointed at Percy to get Ron to turn around. The twins saw this and grinned. Ron turned just in time. Percy reached his hand into his pocket to see if he had enough money for the book, and let out a high shriek. Everyone turned as Percy flung the lizard from his hand.

Cherub gasped as the small creature sailed through the air towards Mrs. Weasley. Without thought, Cherub reached out and snatched the small creature from the air.

“Bloody hell!” shouted Ron.

“Ronald, Language!” reprimanded Mrs. Weasley. “Fred and George, what is the meaning of this!”

“What…”

“…we didn’t…”

“… do anything!”

“Come here right now.”

The twins walked to their mum, heads hanging as if to show they were really sorry. As they passed by Cherub, Fred whispered, “Nice catch, mate.” And George held out his hand to take the lizard.

“Thank you, Cherub for catching that poor creature,” Mrs. Weasley said.

“You’re welcome, Mrs. Weasley.” Cherub said blushing as she began to lecture the twins on their behavior.
Cherub sat between Ron and Ginny transfixed as Charlie and Bill told of their last Quidditch match against Slytherin. He really didn’t understand what Quidditch was, but as all the other kids knew, Cherub kept this information to himself. Cherub laughed and Bill stood up and began acting out the game. “Now I need someone to be the Slytherin seeker,” Bill called out.

“Me, me!” called out a boy with brown hair and soft gray eyes.

“Right then Cedric, you stand here,” Bill instructed as he continued with his story.

“When I get to Hogwarts I am going to be on the Quidditch team,” Ron stated as they watched the older boys.

“It looks like a lot of fun,” Cherub said cautiously.

“It’s brilliant,” breathed Ron watching his older brothers.

Once the story was done, Bill saw the seven squib kids amongst those listening to his story. Feeling bad he asked, “So what kind of games can we play here?”

Mitchell shrugged and looked to Camellia and Justin. “What about tag?” Justin asked. Everyone jumped up as Fred and George called out “We’re it!”

All of the adults turned as one as the kids began shouting and running. Vincent smiled to see Cherub playing with the rest of the children.

“Poor little one,” Mrs. Weasley sighed standing next to Vincent. “A foundling I assume, most likely from a Dark family seeing how young he is. I told my kids not to ask him any questions, but if they bother that sweet little boy you let me know.”

It took everything Vincent had not to laugh at how accurate Soto’s description was, of how the witches and wizards would see Cherub. Clearing his throat Vincent said, “Thank you, Mrs. Weasley; that is very kind of you.”

“Oh, pish. Has he seen you all perform yet?”

Vincent smiled, “No, he hasn’t been with us very long. This afternoon will be the first time. In fact I should gather the others so we can get ready.”

“Go on, I am happy to keep an eye on Cherub, he can sit with us too if that is okay,” Mrs. Weasley offered.

“Thank you, that is very kind. Let me go and ask him.” Vincent walked over to the game and called for Cherub.

Cherub heard someone call his name; skidding to a stop he turned and saw Vincent waving at him. Smiling he raced over to Vincent, and then remembered the game they were playing just before launching himself into Vincent’s arms. Stopping just in front of Vincent, Cherub tried to catch his breath, eyes bright and cheeks flushed. “Yes, Vincent?”

“Cherub, we have to get ready for the performance. Mrs. Weasley has offered to watch you and let you sit with her family during the show. Is that okay?”

Cherub grinned. He liked the Weasley kids, they were nice, and Fred and George were great fun! “Yes, they’re really nice.”
Vincent reached out and ran his hand across Cherub’s arm. “You have a good time and we will see you after the show. You are doing great.”

Cherub smiled at the compliment and ran back to the game. Vincent sighed wishing he could hold Cherub for a minute, but their game didn’t allow for that yet. Walking back he smiled at Mrs. Weasley.

“Cherub said yes. He seems to be getting along with your children. Thanks again.”

“It's my pleasure, he seems like a sweet young boy, and rather attached to you already.” Mrs. Weasley patted Vincent on the shoulder. “Don’t fret. Next year you will all be a strong, happy family. I can tell.”
Chapter Twenty-five

Cherub sat in between Fred and George, waiting impatiently for the show to begin. He had never been in the big tent, and as the light was extinguished Cherub gasped and grabbed onto both twins. Slow, deep music started. Cherub was grateful when Fred and George scooted closer, as strange forms moved across the stage. Something silver glinted in the background, and as the lights came up, Cherub was wide-eyed watching Adonis roll onto the middle of the floor. He was inside a large silver wheel! Cherub watched in amazement as Adonis was able to make the wheel turn, spin and roll at his command. It was beautiful, and looked like a lot of fun. Everyone clapped as he finished, and a group came out to do a juggling routine to happy music. There were so many balls flying through the air Cherub didn’t know were to look. How could they do that?

The music changed again, this time soft and delicate. A spotlight shone down on Ria who was standing on a thin wire up in the air. Cherub, feeling frightened, grabbed the twins again.

“How could they do that?”

“Hush now, we have seen her do this before,” whispered George reassuringly.

“Hey mate, no worries, she’ll be just fine,” agreed Fred. Cherub nodded and relaxed his grip, but didn’t let go. Simultaneously the twins moved so they could hold Cherub’s hands in theirs.

Soon Naveen joined Ria on the wire, and they skipped, balanced, jumped rope and – oh, God – rode a unicycle. Cherub clapped loudly and breathed a sigh of relief when they got down.

Wild music filled the air as three clowns came running onto the stage. Cherub and the twins laughed so hard they were holding each other up. As the clowns left the music stayed the same and Freja walked out with a bunch of hula hoops. One by one Freja spun the hoops around her waist, arms, legs and neck. By the end there must have been a dozen hoops spinning all over her. Cherub couldn’t imagine how she was able to control all those hoops!

Clowns played along the edge of the stage while five tall wooden poles were placed into the ground. Light, playful music filled the air, and Cherub clapped as Soto, Adonis, and Vincent along with Dario and Luca, two of the three Italian siblings staying with them, came out and immediately began climbing up the poles. They climbed effortlessly up the smooth wood, tiptoeing to the top then sliding back down again. Cherub, Fred and George watched open-mouthed as they climbed the poles using only their arms. Then they climbed upside down, and together jumped from one pole to another.

“Bloody hell, they’re strong,” muttered George, getting a smack on the head from his mother. Both Fred and Cherub muttered their agreement not taking their eyes off the men.

Elena performed next, wrapping her body around itself so tightly Cherub wondered how she could breathe. After more clowns, a jumping-rope act, amazing acrobats, and Naveen rolling about on a huge ball, Mudiwa and Vincent took the stage. The lights were completely focused on the two men and sultry classical guitar music filled the air. Together they balanced off each other, moving slowly and so powerfully it was breathtaking.

Mrs. Weasley smiled indulgently as her brood plus Cherub loudly rehashed every moment of the
performance. They all walked over to an empty part of the field where a large mound of wood waited to be lit when darkness fell. “All right you lot, now calm down. Your father and I are going to strengthen all of the spellwork on the buses and equipment. I expect you all to play nicely and stay out of trouble. Once we are done, we will pop over the house and pick the food for dinner. We should be done within the hour. Bill, Charlie, Percy, I expect you to watch the younger ones. Fred and George I expect you to behave.”

After getting the response she wanted Mrs. Weasley left to join the other adult wizards and witches. Every year the Dragonheart Gypsies performed for Solstice in exchange for having the charms and spellwork on their buses, trunks and other equipment reinforced. It was a happy exchange on both ends. While this was happening, the gypsies got changed and began putting out tables, blankets, pillows and food for the evening meal.

The kids began acting out what they had seen, tossing their sun balls into the air, rolling across the grass, attempting to do flips and twirls. And of course Fred and George were trying to do the balancing act that Vincent and Mudiwa had done.

“I wish we could learn how to do those things,” sighed Ron as he plopped down onto the grass.

“Wouldn’t that be brilliant!” exclaimed Charlie.

“Think of all...”

“...the cool things...”

“... we could do,” said Fred and George together.

“I wonder if they will teach me?” said Cherub thoughtfully.

Fred and George grinned. “That’s the ticket, do you think we could come with you?” asked George. “We could go with you instead of to Hogwarts – stuffy old school,” continued Fred.

“If only,” muttered Percy under his breath causing Bill and Charlie to snicker.

“How did you all like the show?” interrupted Adonis.

“It was brilliant!”

“Wonderful!”

“Amazing”

“Can we run away...”

“... and travel with you?”

Adonis laughed and shook his head, as everyone spoke at once. “Thank you; get a written note from your mum and dad and we’ll talk about it.”

Adonis looked at Cherub and relaxed. They had all been worried about their newest family member, hoping his shields were holding up and he wasn’t drowning in other people’s emotions. Thankfully it was a rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed, happy boy who looked back at Adonis. “Cherub, dinner will be soon. Why don’t you come with me and get cleaned up and then you can help set up, okay?”

“Okay,” Cherub answered reaching out for Adonis’ hand as the younger Weasleys sighed in disappointment.
“Don’t worry, I will bring him back soon,” chuckled Adonis, happy that the children had all gotten along so well.

Once they had stepped into the large bathroom, Cherub turned and threw himself at Adonis. “That was amazing! Will you teach me? Where is everyone?”

Adonis grunted as the small body hit his, then chuckled at the onslaught of questions. “I am so glad you enjoyed it. Yes, we will teach you anything you want to know. The others are getting cleaned up just like we need to. Mudiwa and Vincent are right there,” Adonis said pointing the steam billowing out of the now open shower door.

Mudiwa and Vincent emerged from the shower, hard bodies wet and glistening. Each had a fluffy towel and they were drying off while they chatted. Cherub scampered down. “You were brilliant!” Cherub exclaimed as he stood in front of the two men, eyes shining with happiness.

Mudiwa smiled and wrapped the towel around his waist so he could pick Cherub up. “Thank you, are you doing okay and having fun?”

“Yes, the Weasleys are really nice and funny. And I’m feeling good, but I am even better now,” Cherub finished in a whisper. Mudiwa hugged him close and smiled as the small arm tightened around his neck. After a moment Vincent came up and tapped Mudiwa on the shoulder.

“My turn! Anyway you need to get dressed.”

Cherub smiled and turned to Vincent. Carefully he reached out and touched the silky, deep purple shirt Vincent was now wearing. Vincent smiled and took him in his arms. Cherub sighed as he rubbed his face against the fabric.

“Silk feels nice, doesn’t it?” Vincent asked with a chuckle.

Cherub smiled. “Yes, it does. You all wear the bestest clothes.”

“Thank you. Now it is time for you to get cleaned up. Do you need a shower? Adonis should be done in a minute.”

“I don’t think so,” Cherub said thoughtfully.

“All right then, why don’t you take off your shirt and scarf and go and wash your hands and face,” Vincent said setting Cherub down and steering him towards the sinks.

Cherub quickly did as he was asked. When he looked up Mudiwa was holding out a towel for him while Vincent was combing out his long hair. Mudiwa then took a brush and began brushing out Cherub's wild black hair. Cherub sighed in pleasure. Looking in the mirror he smiled at Mudiwa and then his eyes widened. “What are you wearing?” he asked turning around to get a proper look.

Mudiwa towered over him; a tight, flame-red shirt covered his chest, and tied securely around his trim waist was a skirt of bright sunny yellow with wisps of orange and flame red swirled throughout. Mudiwa chuckled, “It is a sarong. Men in my village wore them all the time, as they do in other parts of the world too.”

Cherub looked confused and carefully reached out to touch the bright fabric. The sarong was smooth and cool to the touch. Looking over Mudiwa again, he smiled. “I like it.”

“Me too,” quipped Vincent as he walked by and ran his hand over Mudiwa’s firm arse.
Mudiwa shook his head. “Well, thank you. Now Cherub, let’s get you finished up. We grabbed a clean scarf and shirt for you,” Mudiwa said holding out a bright yellow cotton shirt and a white scarf with little beads that looked like suns hanging from the edge. Cherub smiled and stood still while Mudiwa got him ready; Vincent was quickly braiding his long hair.

Cherub smiled at his reflection in the mirror as he shook his head back and forth watching the suns dance and sparkle around his head.

“Looking good, little man,” said Adonis as he came up to the mirror and began to comb out his hair.

Cherub smiled at Adonis, who was wearing white. The slacks were of a thin material that moved with the man, while the t-shirt was form fitting, showing all of his muscles.

“You too,” Cherub replied. “I think white makes you look even more gold.”

Adonis smiled, “That’s the idea, little man.”

“Are you two done preening?” Vincent teased. “It is time for dinner.”

Cherub looked puzzled, not knowing what preening was. Adonis simply stated, “Well, seeing as I can’t improve upon perfect… let’s go.”

“How very modest of you,” Mudiwa said as he left the room. Cherub giggled and took Mudiwa’s hand.

The others were waiting outside of the buses. Cherub looked around and not seeing anybody flung himself into Ria's arms. “I was so scared! You were up so high!”

“Oh, sweetheart, I am sorry I scared you. Did you enjoy it anyway?”

“Yes,” he sniffed then grinned. “Will you teach me?”

“Of course, sweetheart, anything you want.”
Chapter Twenty-six

“I think I’m big enough to get my own food,” grumbled Ron as he picked at the grass.

“She too!” piped up Ginny.

Cherub just smiled at them. “It sure smells good,” he said trying to keep them focused on happy things.

Before they could answer a soft dreamy voice interrupted. “Hello, can I sit with you?”

Cherub looked up at a small girl with light blonde hair and wide, soft gray eyes. “Sure, I’m Cherub, and this is Ron and Ginny,” he said politely.

“Luna,” she replied dreamily. “Did you enjoy casting the circle? I really liked it. The energy felt so nice, and I am hoping we attracted some glimmer-gnomes, they love earth magic, you know.”

Ron snorted, “I’ve never heard of glimmer gnomes.”

Luna looked at the boy carefully. “Well I am not really surprised by that.”

“Oi,” cried Ron indignantly as Ginny giggled. Before things could get ugly the adults showed up.

“Here you go, Ron, Ginny.” Mrs. Weasley said kindly as she handed each of her children a plate.

“Here you are, Cherub,” said Vincent. Cherub smiled as he took the plate. His eyes widened as he saw all of the food piled onto it. “I wasn’t sure what you would like so I go you a bit of everything.”

“Everything is so tiny,” Cherub said as he looked at his plate.

Mrs. Weasley laughed. “Most people make finger foods for the Solstice – it is just easier to eat them.” Cherub nodded in understanding.

“Cherub,” Vincent said, “we are going to be just over there with some of the other adults if you need anything, okay.”

“Okay,” he said. Mudiwa walked towards them and bent down in front of Cherub holding two glasses in his large hand. Carefully, Cherub took a glass and looking inside found it contained lemonade. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Mudiwa replied.

Soon the rest of the Weasley children were sitting down along with Cedric and several other kids Cherub hadn’t met yet. While Cherub ate he looked around seeing several other groups of adults and children talking happily. Members of the troupe were scattered about the different groups, however the kids and new teenagers were sitting together not mingling with the magical children. He hoped it was okay he was sitting with the Weasleys; turning back to his plate Cherub picked a crescent pastry. Biting into it he moaned as a savory mushroom filling hit his tongue. Opening his eyes he looked into the startled sky-blue eyes of Bill and blushed.
Bill smiled, “I have never before heard anyone hum when they eat, and my brothers certainly enjoy their food.” Bill tilted his head to Ron and the twins stuffing food quickly into their mouths. Cherub wrinkled his nose at their bad manners.

“Have you tried the little quiches?” Charlie asked as he pointed to a small tart on Cherub’s plate.

Cherub shook his head and picked up the quiche. It was light and fluffy; Cherub hummed again. Charlie smiled proudly. “Our mum made those and the chocolate chip biscuits.”

“They’re very good,” Cherub said picking up another one. As he looked around his eyes got wide as he watched one of the twins tip some dark blue liquid into Percy’s drink. The liquid turned dark and then went back to the pale yellow color. Bill and Charlie chuckled darkly as they watched the other twin pour some into Ron’s drink too.

“Act normal or they’ll catch on,” Bill whispered. Cherub nodded and went back to eating, absently humming as he watched. Within a few minutes both Ron and Percy had taken several sips of their drinks and began turning blue. It was slow at first – just a light blue tinge to their coloring – then it became darker until they both were bright blue, even their hair. Percy and Ron looked at each other and snickered seeing that the twins had struck again, then looking down at their own hands, they screamed. Everyone else began to laugh. Soon Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were standing there scolding the twins on their behavior. Fred and George argued that it was only Percy and Ron, so it didn’t count as pranking a person, this led to more shouting.

Cherub wasn’t sure what to do. He didn’t like all this shouting, it scared him. Setting his mostly empty plate down he pulled his legs up to his cheek and curled up, making himself as small as possible.

Bill, who had been happily watching his brothers get into trouble, turned as he felt Cherub moving beside him. Seeing the small boy curled up into a ball, Bill wrapped an arm around him and explained, “We are a loud family. Don’t worry, everyone will be fine. The twins will have their pocket money taken away for a few weeks, and most likely their room searched for more pranks, but that is it; nothing bad will happen.” Bill smiled as Cherub uncurled himself and leaned into his side.

Mrs. Weasley had seen her eldest comforting the small squib boy and instantly toned down her yelling. “Well, this is supposed to be a fun evening, so we will discuss this back at home. You two will empty your pockets right now. Do you know how to turn your brothers back to their proper color?”

Fred and George quickly emptied their pockets, they’d known this was coming so it wasn’t a big deal. “It will go away in half an hour,” Fred said.

“Yeah, no harm done, mum,” George said as he turned his pockets out showing they were empty.

“No harm done – I’m BLUE!” shrieked Percy. Ron wanted to agree, but wound up laughing as Percy’s face turned purple in his anger.

“Well now you will be back to normal soon. If you are all done eating why don’t you join the other kids in whatever game they’re playing,” Mr. Weasley said cordially trying not to laugh at his blue sons. The others popped up and took off. Percy went a bit slower grumbling about horrid younger brothers. Ron sat where he was, sulking. Cherub felt bad for him and walked over.

“Are you coming? It looks like they are playing hide-n-seek, and I bet being blue will really help you hide,” Cherub encouraged not wanting Ron to miss out on the fun.
Ron smiled looking at the dark sky around them. “I bet it will help, thanks, mate.”

An hour later Freja called everyone over to sit around the large fire. “Today is the longest day of the year. A day to celebrate the sun and earth and all they have given us. It is a day to celebrate what we have created in our lives, and show gratitude for all the abundance in our lives. Placed around the fire you will find parchment and quills; please join us in writing down the good things that have come into your lives in the past year: the things you have accomplished, the things you have grown, and the gifts and blessings the sun and earth have given you. Once you are done, come up to the fire and toss your parchment in. You can add a prayer, thank a specific deity or simply let the parchment go.” Freja’s voice was joyous and encouraging and everyone went to get parchment and quills. When they sat back down they sat in small family groups, laughing and talking as they fondly remembered the past year. Cherub sought his family; finding Naveen he quickly walked over and reached for his hand.

Naveen smiled. “Everything okay? Do you want to write something down?”

Cherub looked up; Naveen’s eyes glowed like amber in the firelight. “I don’t know how to write.”

“Oh, well that is not a problem, you can either tell me and I will write it down for you, or you can draw pictures.” Naveen explained as he walked to a stack of parchment and quills. Once they got their supplies they moved back a bit and sat down.

“Where are the others?” Cherub asked looking around.

“They usually walk around and help people figure out what kinds of things to write down. They will all migrate back here in a few minutes. So what do you want to put down? Or do you want me to do mine first, so you can get an idea of what to do?”

“You first please.”

“All right then,” began Naveen, “I am grateful for all the abundance that has come into my life, material, spiritual, physical, and emotional. I have had good health, and seen many wonderful places. I am grateful and proud that Ria and I have decided to expand our family and we will be having a baby in December. Let’s see… I have read ten pieces of ‘classic literature’ this year, I am rather proud of that. Does that give you some ideas?”

“I think so,” Cherub said looking thoughtful. “Is it okay if the stuff I am grateful for has only happened in the past two weeks?” he asked shynly.

Naveen wrapped an arm around the young boy. “Yes, that is just fine. You being here with us is one of the things I am most grateful for.” Cherub smiled and blushed then turned to his paper and began to draw. As he was drawing the others joined them and quickly went to writing their own papers.

“I think I am done,” Cherub said cautiously not wanting to have done anything wrong.

“Will you show us?” Freja asked softly.

Cherub blushed, “Okay, I hope I didn’t mess up.”

Freja smiled, “There is no messing it up. It is a personal expression, Cherub, there are no rules. No right and wrong.”

Cherub nodded and held up his parchment. “I drew a bowl, ’cause I am grateful for all of the yummy
food.” He began pointing at the pictures one at a time. “The seal is for Jacob, Jaimie, and Miriam. The tomato is for the trip to the farm. The bus is for traveling. The shirt is for all my new clothes. And the fire is ’cause that is the first time I saw all of you.” Cherub finished twisting the hem of his shirt with his free hand.

“That is lovely,” Ria sighed.

“Very well done,” Mudiwa agreed. The others nodded their agreement.

“If I may make a suggestion?” Vincent said carefully. “I think it would be nice if you draw something to show how brave you were escaping the Dursleys and finding us. That took a lot of courage and you should be very proud of yourself.”

Cherub blushed and looked at his parchment, and chewed on his bottom lip. “How do you think I should draw that?”

“When you think of being here with us what image… what picture comes to mind?” Vincent asked.

Cherub closed his eyes, a frown marring his forehead. A few minutes later Cherub opened his eyes and drew a big sun with rays spreading out in all directions. Looking up he saw Vincent smiling at him.

After everyone was finished they all gathered in a large group facing the fire and one by one people got up and told stories. They told stories of creation myths, of adventures, of classical heroes and magical animals. Cherub was once again sitting in the middle of the Weasley children. The first stories were funny, but the third was scary and Cherub crawled into Charlie’s lap. Feeling foolish he looked up and saw Ron and Ginny in Bill’s lap and the twins in between Bill and Charlie. Smiling, he snuggled into the older boy and listened to the story. Cherub gasped in awe along with Charlie at the next story of the firebird, and a Chinese dragon myth. A particularly long tale of Hercules found Cherub leaning against Charlie’s shoulder, eyelids drooping. It wasn’t long before the small boy had fallen completely asleep.

Charlie smiled down at Cherub and turned to Bill, who had Ron and Ginny asleep on him. The brothers shared a smile. At the end of the tale, there was a pause for people to use the loo, get something to drink and for younger children to get home to bed. The stories would continue in half an hour.

Mudiwa walked over to where Cherub was curled up on Charlie. “Thank you for taking such good care of him,” Mudiwa said as he picked up the precious bundle.

“My pleasure,” Charlie said politely. “I hope we will see him again.”

“Oh yes, Cherub is a permanent addition to our clan,” Mudiwa answered.

Mudiwa walked over to their tent and lay Cherub down in their bed. The next week they would collect furniture for Cherub’s new room; until then they would keep Cherub with them. Mudiwa carefully removed the boy’s shoes, socks, shorts and scarf, then tucked him in. Cherub’s eyes fluttered open, “Wha’?”

“Shush, you fell asleep, I’m just tucking you in. Vincent and I will be back in a little while, okay.”

“’kay,” he mumbled and snuggled into the covers.
Chapter Twenty-seven

October 30th, 1986

Vincent looked down onto the pumpkin patch where Cherub, Mitchell, Camellia and Justin were hunting for the perfect jack-o-lantern pumpkin. Vincent relaxed back into his chair as he watched the hunt. He loved his mum’s place. The crisp mountain air was clean, fresh and lightly scented by all of the plants growing around them. His mum owned the whole valley and grew a variety of flowers and herbs, which were dried or processed into essential oils and sold to both the magical and Muggle companies. There was a small squib village, which processed all of the plants. The farm itself was tended and protected by a werewolf pack, which lived further up the mountain. Vincent was pulled out of his thoughts when his mum sat down handing him a cup of coffee.

“So how are things going?” his mum asked her voice warm and smooth with a touch of the accent unique to those who spent years traveling all over the world. Vincent turned to face his mother. Her light lavender eyes were shining and her short, honey-blond hair curled around her face. Five years ago when his father had died from a heart attack he hadn’t been sure his mother could ever be happy again.

“Really well, we were booked solid all summer and autumn. After we leave here we're going straight to India. Adonis was able to book a few shows along the way, and even got us into a few festivals in India close to Ria’s village. There are sixteen of us traveling to India. Several of the people who toured with us this autumn said they would like to join us again in the spring when we return.”

“I am glad things are going well; you shall have to let me know the route you are taking so I can meet up with you and see the new baby.” Becky took a deep breath before she continued: “Cherub seems like a sweet boy. He is so polite and well behaved.”

Vincent snorted, “Oh yes, Mum; very well behaved.”

Her eyebrow arched in disbelief. “Are you really complaining that he is good?”

Vincent sighed and ran a frustrated hand through his hair. “No… yes… I don’t know. It just isn’t right. Cherub has been with us for three months, Mum, three months and not once has he done anything wrong. None of us have had to correct him, scold him, put him in time out – nothing!”

Vincent sighed in agitation and looked at his mum with pleading eyes willing her to understand. “I know I should be happy, but he is six years old, he should get into mischief. I feel like he doesn’t trust us, that he is still afraid we will hurt him or send him away. Other than being consistent with our rules and behavior I don’t know what else to do.”

Becky patted her son’s hand. “Being a parent is full of challenges and heartache. It is never easy. I am not sure how to help Cherub, but I do know that when he looks at you his eyes light up.”

“Thanks Mum,” Vincent said gratefully.

“Do the other kids get into trouble?” Becky asked after a moment.

Vincent thought about it, “Well, they are good kids, and old enough to control themselves most of the time. I think so far it has been simple things, like being a few minutes late, staying up and talking
when they were supposed to be asleep. I am sure Camellia and Justin have bickered, they are siblings.”

“Does Cherub see any of this?”

“Not really, we travel in different buses, although sometimes one of the teens is sent to our bus. I can tell they have been separated because they were fighting or getting into mischief together, but they tell Cherub they want to play with him, so he doesn’t know they are in trouble.”

Becky pondered this for a moment. “Well how can Cherub know he is safe if he does something wrong, if he never sees what a typical punishment is?”

Vincent blinked, he had never thought of that. Looking down into the pumpkin patch he watched the kids for a moment. “Maybe I could get Camellia, Justin and Mitchell to do something rather bad in front of Cherub.”

Becky smirked. “Well we had better start planning hadn’t we?”

Cherub ran into his room and began searching through his trunk for a sweater. Smiling as he looked around his room, Cherub pulled the sweater over his head. Cherub loved his room; it had dark blue fabric walls with magical creatures embroidered all over them. His floor had a large, deep, green rug decorated with plants and flowers. Cherub had a small table with an oil lamp on it set next to his futon. His duvet was rich purple with little silver stars on it. Cherub’s room reminded him of a fairy tale. Shutting the lid to his trunk he smiled as he touched the three locks. One opened to his clothes, the second to his toys, books and art supplies, and the third was currently empty. Turning away from it he ran back out to join the others.

It had been a fun yet busy day so far. They had picked pumpkins to make jack-o-lanterns. Having never made one before Cherub was terribly excited and had spent quite a while picking out his pumpkin. Finally he settled on a large, round pumpkin that came up to his knees. Mudiwa had helped him carry it back to the house. Ms. Dragonheart, Vincent’s mum, had covered several picnic tables with old newspapers and trays. They cut the top off the pumpkins and scooped out all the stringy stuff. Cherub and the other kids separated the seeds from the slimy stringy bits; the adults scraped out most of the flesh inside the pumpkin leaving just enough to hold it up. Once that was done the flesh was set to bake, and the seeds washed, seasoned and roasted.

After they cleaned up the mess and ate lunch they made their jack-o-lanterns. Soto helped Cherub with the cutting. Vincent and Mudiwa bickered about if they were going to make a silly face or a scary face. Finally Ms. Dragonheart had enough and scolding them both sent Vincent to get his own pumpkin. Cherub laughed again at the image of Vincent pouting and stomping off to get a pumpkin of his own. Cherub was amazed at all the fun and scary faces everyone made on their pumpkins. After that, they picked huge turnips and carved designs on the outside before the adults hollowed out the insides. Tonight they would all be filled with candles to keep the scary spirits away. Cherub shivered as he neared the group, he didn’t like the idea of scary ghosts and such being around. Watching as everyone played on the lawn while waiting for tea he remembered what Freja had told him about Samhain now called Halloween.

“It is a day when the veil between life and death thins, and those who have died can come back and talk to us. It also means that angry spirits and daemons are roaming about more freely. That is why we make jack-o-lanterns out of pumpkins and turnips, and light big bonfires to scare them away.”
Freja had explained.

No one else seemed nervous so Cherub assumed that the jack-o-lanterns and fire worked. Cherub settled in next to Adonis and watched Justin, Mitchell and Camellia playing ball. Cherub frowned, they were really close to the table, and there was juice and two pies already set on it. They knew better than to play ball so close to the table. Cherub scooted closer to Adonis; he didn’t like it when people broke the rules – it scared him. Suddenly Mitchell gave a great kick, hitting the bottom of the small table and knocking it over. The pitcher broke with a crash and the pies and juice went everywhere. Adults seemed to come from every direction. Cherub tried his best to look small and stay out of the way.

“Is everyone all right?” Ms. Dragonheart asked in a rush.

“Yeah,” mumbled Mitchell.

“What in the world happened?” asked Vincent. Cherub looked up at this. They want to know if they’re okay and what happened? Uncle Vernon never asked, he just started shouting and hitting, Cherub thought, watching as the three teens stood in the center of the adults with their heads hanging down.

“I guess I kicked the ball too hard,” Mitchell admitted.

“You ‘guess’, Mudiwa restated firmly. “What were you doing playing ball near the food anyway? You know that is not allowed.”

Cherub held his breath; this couldn’t go well.

“We didn’t think it would be a big deal,” said Camellia.

“I am sorry I knocked over the table,” said Mitchell.

“Well,” said Vincent, “thank you for apologizing, but there will still be consequences for your actions.” The teens sighed and their shoulders slumped even more. Cherub began to tremble slightly as he stared wide-eyed at what was happening. “Firstly you will clean up all of the mess, and be sure to get all of the glass! We will have a lot of children here tonight and I don’t want any of them to get hurt. Secondly you will help in the kitchen for an hour to replace the work you ruined. And thirdly there will be no ball for a day.”

The three teens moaned and whined as they began to clean up the mess.

Cherub clutched his legs as he rocked back and forth. They weren’t yelled at? he thought in amazement. They weren’t hit or hurt in any way. I tripped and spilled a single glass of milk and Aunt Petunia smacked me across the face and threw me in my cupboard for two days. Tears began to run down his cheeks. Cherub had always thought that the Dursleys had treated him unfairly, but now seeing this… Seeing how people he loved and respected had handled the misbehaviour and the consequences of it, Cherub didn’t know what to do. Tears began to run down Cherub’s soft cheeks.

Cherub felt himself being picked up and held in familiar arms. “Shush, it’s all right. Everyone is all right,” Vincent whispered as he rocked Cherub back and forth.

Mudiwa began to gently rub Cherub’s shaking back. His voice was deep and soft as it washed over Cherub. “We are here. It’s okay love, everything is okay.”

Cherub sniffled as his tears slowed down. “The Dursleys were mean to me.”
Vincent felt his eyes fill with tears. “I know sweetheart, and I am so sorry they hurt you.”

Cherub thought for a moment. “You said they had a consee’quence what is that? Is it a punishment?”

Mudiwa continued to run his hand on Cherub’s back as he answered. “A punishment is making you pay for what you have done. A consequence is the natural outcome of your actions. A punishment would be like getting spanked for knocking over the table and a consequence is cleaning up the mess.”

Cherub pondered this for a moment and settled into Vincent’s arms. After a moment his soft voice asked, “If I did something wrong would I be punished or would I get a consequence?”

Vincent hugged Cherub tighter. “You would get a consequence.” Cherub nodded his head against Vincent’s cheek and just lay there for a moment.

“Time for tea.” Ms. Dragonheart yelled.

“Ready for tea?” Mudiwa asked.

“Yes, please,” said Cherub wiping his face with his sleeve. Vincent carried him to the table. There wasn’t any pie, but there were biscuits, sandwiches, juice and several pots of tea. Camellia, Justin, and Mitchell were sitting there pouting slightly, but talking to each other and putting food onto their plates. Cherub smiled: everything is going to be just fine, he thought as he settled into his seat.
Cherub was bouncing with excitement and tightly clutching Vincent’s hand as new people began to arrive. All morning they had been preparing for the big Halloween party tonight. They had all pitched in. Tables and chairs had been set up. Two big piles of wood had been set up in an empty field for the bonfire later that night. The pumpkin and turnip jack-o-lanterns were set up all over the place with a candle inside ready to be lit. Cherub had spent most of his day in the kitchen helping to make cookies, pies, cakes, bread, soup, and more. Shaping the colorful marzipan figures had been his favorite part. Now it was time for the villagers and the werewolf pack to join them. Ms. Dragonheart said there would be games, then afternoon tea, and after that they would do a ritual during which the kids could run off and play if they chose to. Then dinner, which Cherub was really looking forward to; all of that pumpkin had been cooked into treats which he had smelled baking all day!

Cars began to turn up dust on the narrow road into the valley. Cherub bounced even more and moved closer to Vincent at the same time. He heard a car park and doors slam shut and a minute later Cherub saw their first guest.

“Marcus,” Vincent called out happily to the young man coming up the walk. He was broad and well muscled with short, dark brown hair. Next to him was a young woman with light brown hair which curled around her shoulders, following them were two children, a young boy and a little girl both with honey-blonde curls. Vincent walked towards them and Cherub followed along close behind. When they met Vincent wrapped his arm around Marcus’s shoulders. “How are you, Vivian? Looking lovely as ever, and look how much your children have grown!”

“Marcus!” Freja squealed and ran towards them.

“Mum,” he said setting down his packages and rushing to meet her. They hugged fiercely. “Oh, Mum, it is so good to see you.”

“I have missed you. Look how handsome you are. And Vivian,” Freja said turning towards her daughter in law. “You look just lovely. How are you feeling, dear?” she asked as they embraced.

“I am good, Mum,” Vivian said with a heavy Swiss accent.

“I am glad, now where are my grandchildren?” Freja asked turning to the two children. Kneeling down Freja held out her arms and the two blond children rushed into them.

Cherub couldn’t tell what they were saying as they began to speak in German; Cherub had been told that not everyone spoke English.

“Cherub, I would like you to meet my grandchildren. This is Albin, he is five, and this is Gisele she is three. Albin, Gisele this is Cherub, he is new to our troupe.”

“Hello, it’s nice to meet you,” Cherub said with a small wave.

“Hello,” said Albin and Gisele together with thick accents.
Freja led her family over to her tent with the promise of gifts and catching up. “We will be back in time for tea, Cherub; keep an eye on the boys for me.”

Cherub giggled and pointedly stared at Vincent who was trying to look innocent. Soon most of the village had arrived, everyone chatting and laughing. Cherub walked over to the house and hid behind some rose bushes watching all the commotion. He was so caught up in watching everyone he didn’t hear the people approaching from behind.

“Well what do we have here?” asked a deep, gravelly voice.

Cherub squeaked and jumped up spinning around at the same time. There were a group of about ten people standing there. They all wore clothing of brown and green, mostly made of thick warm material and leather. Cherub was wide-eyed with fear and he looked into the amber eyes of a large stocky man in front. His dark brown hair was curly and wild, with a few leaves and twigs in it showing they had walked through the forest to get here.

The man smiled and reached out his hand. “I am Lucas Nef.”

Cherub could feel an unusual energy coming off the man, but Freja had taught him to be polite and the man had the same last name as her; maybe he was part of her family. “Nice to meet you, my name is Cherub,” he said holding out his hand.

Just as their hands connected Cherub heard Soto yell, “Cherub, no!”

Suddenly Lucas was pushing energy into him, it was wild and angry and it felt like it was trying to control him. Cherub didn’t like it and pushed at the energy with all his might. Lucas flew back from the small boy landing on his back a few feet away staring in shock at the boy. Cherub was gasping for breath as his knees hit the ground hard. Seconds later Soto was in front of him one arm around his, the other cradling his jaw.

“Look at me,” Soto demanded. “Cherub, look at me; you're fine, everything is okay. Just breathe nice and slow. That’s it, nice and slow. Vincent is heading this way and he will help you ground again. Just breathe and look at me.”

As soon as Vincent got there he sat behind Cherub and pulled him into his lap. “It’s okay, sweetheart, just close your eyes and ignore everyone else but me. We are going to do the same meditation that we did this morning.” They both closed their eyes, and began to breathe in sync.

“What in the hell did you do, Lucas?” shouted Freja as she stormed up to the group, her family not far behind.

“Hey, Dad,” said Marcus looking at Lucas with sympathy.

“Hello Marcus.” Turning to Freja he hid his flinch as he looked into her icy blue eyes. “I don’t know what happened. I just shook his hand.”

Freja placed her hands on her hips and glared. “And did you try and alpha him and shove your energy into him?”

Lucas sighed, “Yes, I do it all the time; no one seems to mind.”

Freja arched a thin honey-brown eyebrow. “Except Vincent.”

Lucas’ eyes widened. “I didn’t know he was sensitive like that. You know me, I wouldn’t hurt a kid.”
Freja nodded, Lucas never hurt children on purpose, but sometimes he didn’t think.

“How did he push me away?”

“I can make a guess, but I will not tell you right now. Go and say hello to your family, I need to make sure Cherub is all right.”

Freja began to turn away when Lucas caught her arm. “I am sorry.”

Freja smiled. “I know Lucas, I know.”

A few minutes later Cherub opened his eyes and smiled. He felt much better. He still wasn’t sure what had happened, but he would be much more careful about shaking hands from now on.

“Are you all right, Cherub?” Freja asked as she knelt in front of him and checked him over.

“I’m fine now. Is Lucas okay? Is he part of your family?”

Freja smiled into the bright open face, a bit more rounded now that he had been eating with them for three months. “Lucas is just fine. We were married long ago. He is Marcus’s father.”

“What happened?” Cherub asked his brow furrowed in confusion.

“With the handshake or our marriage?” Freja asked with a chuckle.

Cherub thought for a moment, “Both.”

“Okay then. When Marcus was five, a werewolf bit Lucas. He couldn’t handle it and fled to one of the packs we had met in our travels. He felt like he couldn’t be around us anymore, that he wasn’t safe. Once he got control over himself he had friends within the pack, and saw how some of the alpha werewolves were mistreating their pack members, he never came back to us. Lucas has spent the last twenty years removing bad alphas from packs when he could and rescuing newly infected werewolves and children from packs and regular society.”

Freja stopped for a moment and looked to see if Cherub understood then continued, “As for the handshake, Lucas is an alpha wolf. He sends out his energy when he touches people to show strength, to offer comfort, and to maintain his position as a leader. I doubt he even thought about it when he shook your hand.”

“Oh, okay I think I understand,” Cherub said still a bit confused by everything.

Freja laughed and kissed Cherub’s forehead. “Don’t worry sweetheart, it will make sense to you someday.”
Cherub placed a small hand on each side of the barrel. Leaning over he watched the red and green apples bobbing gently in the water. Taking a deep breath Cherub stuck his head into the cold water and tried to grab an apple with his mouth. After a few seconds he came up gasping for air without an apple. With a determined look on his face Cherub tried again; it took several more tries before Cherub lifted his head triumphantly, a shiny green apple in his mouth.

Vincent walked over and began drying his face and hair with a fluffy blue towel. “Well done, Cherub! It is hard to catch an apple that way.”

Cherub smiled and bit into the apple, it was tart and crisp. Cherub had never had an apple like it before; taking another bite he decided he liked it a lot. Looking around Cherub saw other people at the barrels of apples laughing and dripping with water as they tried to capture one. Some, like himself, stood to the side watching and munching on their prize.

A whistle sounded on the other side of the lawn. “They are going to start the races soon, would you like to go over there?” Vincent asked as Mudiwa, Adonis and Soto joined them.

“Don’t you want to bob for apples?” Cherub asked taking another bite of his.

Vincent smiled at Cherub’s thoughtfulness. “We will, we always let the kids go first.”

“Why?”

Soto and Adonis both blushed at this.

“Well,” Adonis began hesitantly, “sometimes we get competitive.”

Cherub wrinkled his forehead in puzzlement and looked to Soto for a better answer. Soto cleared his throat. “I am sure once you see us bobbing for apples it will all become clear to you.”

Both Vincent and Mudiwa snickered. “Come on, Cherub; let’s go and see about the races.” Mudiwa said holding out his hand for Cherub to take.

Cherub shrugged and happily took Mudiwa’s hand. Soon they were standing before a clear stretch of lawn with markers showing lanes and the starting and ending points. Cherub looked around and saw kids sitting in pairs tying their legs together.

“What are they doing?” Cherub asked.

Vincent was just about to answer when Freja’s granddaughter Giselle came running up. She was talking to Cherub in fast German. Cherub smiled at her shaking his head, he didn’t understand her. Vincent was about to help translate when she grabbed Cherub’s hand. Giselle continued to talk and began to pull Cherub over to the starting line. At first he stiffened and his eyes became unfocused, then he walked with her laughing at what she was saying and hesitantly answering with ‘ja’ and ‘nein’.

“Bloody hell,” said Vincent softly. Once all the teams were standing at the start line giggling and
ready to race they heard, “ready, steady, go!” The group of three-legged racers took off going as fast as they possibly could. Cherub and Giselle were going well despite their height difference. Vincent laughed as he watched Cherub bouncing along. Once the race was complete and the ropes had been untied Cherub came bounding over with Giselle.

“Giselle said the next race is for grown-ups! Are you going to do it?” Cherub asked, eyes shining brightly with happiness.

The four men looked at each other; there was no way they were going to be able to say no to those bright, shining eyes.

“I get Mudiwa,” Adonis yelled grabbing the shocked man and dragging him off to find a piece of rope.

Vincent chuckled and turned to Soto holding out his arm. “Shall we go and embarrass them?” Soto smiled wickedly and took Vincent’s arm.

Cherub sat with Giselle, Albin and Freja as the starter called everyone to the line.

“Oh, hush,” Adonis pouted, “you didn’t even win.”

“Those twins were really fast,” Soto defended looking over at the two strawberry-blonde women who had won.

Suddenly there was a squealing and Cherub was jumping on them. “That was so much fun! What’s next?”

Four hours later the gypsies collapsed on the ground as Cherub bounced to a halt and with a plop sat down. They had done every race, including the sack, wheelbarrow, and running backwards races. They had also played all of the games: horseshoes; ninepins and yes, the adults got their turn at bobbing for apples. When six of Cherub’s adults came away from the barrels with an apple and drenched from head to toe, he understood why they had let the kids play first. Ria being six months pregnant had made Naveen bob twice so she could have an apple. After that they had watched a puppet show, which Cherub had adored. Finally they all had their faces painted, so they now looked like a Muggle's idea of fairies – colorful and glittery.

“What are we going to do now?” Cherub asked gleefully. The many shades of green he wore on his face as a plant fairy made his eyes glow, and if possible made him look even cuter.

Everyone groaned, and Ria answered Cherub's question. “Right now we are going to wait for everyone to put away the games, then we will light the candles in the jack-o-lanterns. After that we will have dinner, and I think we will do the ritual before pudding.”
Cherub smiled at her in excitement and once again admired the face painter’s work. Ria’s face was painted in the browns and greens of an earth fairy – someone who gives life, Muriel had explained. Muriel’s husband, Quirin, was also painting faces and made Naveen’s face look like the sun. Cherub didn’t understand why everyone chuckled, but he really liked the way Naveen looked.

“When will we light the bonfires?” Cherub questioned as they looked at the huge piles of wood.

“After supper,” Ria replied.

“Well I don’t know about all of you,” said Adonis, “but I am going to change into some warmer and completely dry clothes!”

Everyone laughed, Cherub watched as Adonis stood in the dim light making the different shades of blue on his face shine, it seemed to flow and swirl like the face of a real water fairy.

Soto pulled disdainfully at his wet, dirty shirt. “I agree.” Cherub turned to smile at him and gasped. Soto had been painted as an autumn fairy and he seemed to blend into the forest behind him. Soto smiled and stood up, ending the illusion.

Freja stood and held out a hand to Cherub. “Come on sweetie.” Her face was winter; all whites and ice blue. Her eyes were as light blue as some of the paint, but were still warm and soft.

Cherub took her hand, and began to walk towards the tents. Vincent and Mudiwa stood there waiting for him. Vincent was painted as a fire fairy, bringing out the red in his hair. And next to him, Mudiwa’s midnight-black face was painted white and silver for a moon fairy. Cherub smiled; this had been one of the best days ever, almost better than his birthday, which they said was on July 31st. Cherub had been given his first birthday cake, and presents! It had been so much fun.

After they all dried off they changed very carefully into their dry clothes because they didn’t want to mess up their face paint. They gathered near the four long tables filled with food.

“Okay,” announced Ms. Dragonheart. ‘Becky’, Cherub remembered, ‘she asked me to call her Becky’. “You all know the drill: children and pregnant woman first.” Children, the smaller ones accompanied by a parent, began to head for the tables full of food.

Soon Cherub was sitting with his family, Vincent’s mum Becky, and Freja’s family along with Lucas and the werewolves. He watched everyone carefully for a moment, as he pressed himself against Soto’s side. Cherub wasn’t sure about Lucas and his friends.

Finally Lucas snapped at Cherub, “We are not going to hurt you!”

Before anyone could answer, Cherub straightened and glaring defiantly at Lucas he demanded, “How do I know that after what you did to me earlier? Anyway your energy is all…” he paused for a moment to find the right word, “…wonky.”

Lucas lifted an eyebrow; he was rarely spoken to in such a manner, and by such a wisp of a boy. He could see Freja gearing up to lay into him when Vincent held up a hand, interesting. “It is my nature to test; if I had been aware that you would react as strongly as you did I would not have done it.”

Cherub’s brow crinkled as he looked suspiciously at Lucas. “Was that an apology?”

The other werewolves stiffened. Lucas’s mouth dropped open, and then he laughed a full, head-thrown-back belly laugh. It was deep and rough and seemed to calm the others. “No, my child no, that was an alpha saving face to a lesser. I am sorry, Cherub, I never should have done that to you.”
Cherub looked to Freja and then Vincent. They both nodded that yes, he should accept Lucas’s apology. “Thank you, apology accepted,” Cherub replied formally.

Lucas bowed slightly in thanks. The woman next to Lucas looked around to make sure the conversation was over, and then she spoke up. “Cherub, my name is Cassandra, and this is my son Paul,” she explained wrapped an arm around the eight-year-old boy sitting next to her. “We haven’t been part of Lucas’s clan for very long and werewolves for only six months. Would you mind explaining how we feel ‘wonky’ to you, please?”

Cherub closed his eyes and focused on the energy. “Your energy feels… broken… like there are two pieces of you fighting for control. And you each put out a different amount of energy as if some of you are more special.”

Opening his eyes he looked into Cassandra’s sad blue-green eyes. Afraid he'd done something wrong, he snuggled into Soto. He had been encouraged to stand up for himself, and felt okay doing it as he had seen the others do the same, but making someone sad – that he wasn’t sure about. A tear slipped down her cheek and Cherub grabbed onto Soto with both hands.

“Hey, you did nothing wrong,” Vincent said. “In fact I believe that is almost the same thing I told Lucas when he asked me about it.”

Lucas had placed his hand onto Cassandra’s in a gesture of comfort. “Vincent is right, Cherub. You have done nothing wrong,” he said. “That is just who we are. We have a wolf, a monster inside of us waiting for the full moon to get out and take over. While we are in our wolf form we have no control over what we do. That can be rather upsetting. We take great care to make sure we are safe and far away from anyone during our transformation.”

Cherub looked up at the alpha werewolf. “Adonis was teaching me about wolves a few weeks ago. They are not monsters.”

Lucas grinned, “No they aren’t, but unfortunately werewolves are. However we are only forced to be monsters during the full moon. None of us will hurt you, Cherub, I promise. I can see how important you are to Freja and I would like to get to know you.”

Cherub could tell Lucas was being honest with him. The people he trusted and liked trusted Lucas, so he would give him a chance. “Okay.”

“Well then,” Freja said wanting to change the focus of the conversation, “let’s eat.”

Everyone laughed and dug in. Cherub smiled and looked at his plate: it was full of food. Some of it he recognized, like the cheese and macaroni, potato salad, and steamed broccoli. However there were quite a few new foods to try so Cherub eagerly began to eat.

Everyone smiled as Cherub hummed in different degrees of enjoyment as he ate. Lucas’s eyes were shining with mirth as he watched the young boy eating. The adults were talking when suddenly everyone turned to Cherub. Green eyes were wide, pink lips pursed and a squeak was heard.

Soto quickly handed Cherub a paper napkin. “You can spit it out into this.”

Cherub took the napkin, but looked to Vincent and Mudiwa to make sure it was okay to spit out the yucky food. They both gave their permission, trying not to laugh as Cherub quickly spit out the food, and grabbed his glass of water.

“What did you eat?” Naveen asked.
Cherub pointed to a small pile of sauerkraut on his plate, wrinkling his nose in disgust. This time they couldn’t hold back their laughter, although they did manage to keep it mild.

“You don’t have to finish it,” Mudiwa said still chuckling.

“Thank you,” Cherub said still scowling at the offending food.

Cherub would never forget his first Halloween celebration. After filling his belly full of good food, Cherub helped clean up. Soon they lit the fires and began the Samhain ritual. Some people burned pieces of paper with things they wanted to let go of written on them. Some said aloud how they were going to create more balance in their lives. Cherub found it interesting for a bit, but soon was off playing with the other children.

When the ritual was done, the music began. Naveen, Ria, Freja and Mudiwa played and sang along with the local musicians. Mudiwa even let Cherub try playing his drum. Cherub danced and played around the bonfires. Becky kept giving him pumpkin-based goodies just to hear him hum. Late that night when not even the kids could dance any longer, Cherub curled up in Mudiwa’s lap as people took turns telling scary stories. Vincent sat to one side of them and Lucas on the other. It wasn’t long before Cherub was fast asleep, completely safe, surrounded by strong arms and people who loved him.

Five days later they were leaving. Becky sent along a huge amount of food. They were going to pick up Freja from the village were she had been spending time with her family. A tear trickled down Cherub’s face as he watched Oma’s farm fade in the distance. Looking at the book in his lap, Cherub opened it up. Vincent’s mum had given it to him and asked him to call her Oma, ‘grandmother’ in German, as they left. The book on his lap contained photos from his time at the farm, along with notes from the people he had met there, including Oma, Lucas and Giselle.

Vincent turned and saw Cherub’s melancholy expression. “It’s okay, Cherub. We will see my mum in the spring. And we can write to her and anyone else you want to.”

Cherub turned, wide tear-filled eyes locked with Vincent’s lavender ones. “Becky said to call her Oma. That if I was your son, that made her my grandmother.”

Vincent got up from the passenger’s seat and wrapped his arms around Cherub. His voice was rough with emotion when he spoke. “Cherub, both Mudiwa and I love you so much. And we would love nothing more than to be your fathers.”

Cherub began to cry and clung tightly to Vincent. Mudiwa’s calm, deep voice wrapped around them: “It is true; we both love you very much. We have begun researching adoption ceremonies. We had planned to ask you formally to be our child once we had a ceremony picked out.”

Cherub took a deep breath. Vincent’s scent filled his lungs, calming him. Vincent wore a mix of black pepper, petitgrain and geranium oils*. They were for psychic protection and made him smell sweet and spicy at the same time. Pulling back just enough from Vincent so Mudiwa could hear him, Cherub asked, “What would I call you?”

Both men released the breath they had been holding. “Well, you can call me Dad, or Da’,” Vincent said.

“In Shona, the native language of Zimbabwe, father is Baba,” explained Mudiwa.

Cherub snuggled back into Vincent’s chest. “Baba and Dad, I like that.”
* This recipe is from Scott Cunningham’s ‘Magical Aromatherapy’, and uses essential oils. And black pepper smells sweeter than one would think – trust me.
A/N Before this chapter begins I'd like to say that I am basing Ria’s village in India on the village in the book ‘Kali’s Odiyya- a shaman’s true story of initiation’ by Amarananda Bhairavan. It is matriarchal village, which worships Kali as the female personification of the energy of the cosmos. I will be making up some rituals and customs, using the book and research as a guide.

Parseltongue is in bold.

December 15th, 1986. Karingkalchuttor, India

Cherub stretched slowly and had snuggled back into the covers trying to figure out what had woken him up, when he heard the cries of wild birds and the screech of monkeys. A slow smile spread across his face. He was in India now; they had been in Ria’s village for a little over a week. Cherub’s smile grew as he thought of all the wondrous places he had been so far. Turning to look at his map hanging on the wall over his bed Cherub smiled. They had been to so many wonderful places. Vincent and Adonis had helped him with his map of Europe and Asia and his calendar. This way he could keep track of where they had been and where they were going. Red lines marked the route they had taken and red pins showed where they had been. Cherub tracked the red lines out of England, through France, Spain, Northern Italy and into Switzerland, then across Austria, Hungary and into the Soviet Union. There were so many beautiful places and interesting people. Cherub loved the different types of music they had encountered during their travels and began collecting music tapes of everything from Classical to folk and modern music from every country they passed through.

The journey from Oma’s to Ria’s village had taken almost a month, but now they were here for three months. Cherub touched the gold pin marking where they were right now, at the southern end of India. Smiling Cherub hopped up; it was time to get up! Every morning he would help Ria’s mum – she had said to call her Naanii* – gather eggs and fruit and milk the cows. While breakfast was being cooked Cherub would practice yoga with his family. After that he would play with the other kids in the village until lunchtime.

Cherub quickly got ready putting on light blue cotton slacks and a matching tunic with embroidery in the same blue along the collar and cuffs. The fabric was light and loose keeping him cool in the tropical jungle. Vincent and Mudiwa said he didn’t have to wear his headscarf in the village. So Cherub spent some extra time brushing out his black wavy hair, which now touched the tops of his shoulders. Creeping to the opening of his room, Cherub peeked out. Baba and Dad weren’t in the living room. Quietly he crept to the opening of their bedroom and cautiously pulled back the curtain. Both men were still sleeping each on opposite sides of the bed, which meant he could jump in the middle. As quietly as possible Cherub ran across the room and jumped, planning on landing in the middle of the bed, when a strong arm suddenly shot up and grabbed him. Cherub squealed and fought against the arms holding him.

Mudiwa’s sleep-roughened voice questioned, “And just what do you think you are doing, young
Cherub giggled, “Nothing Baba.”

Mudiwa smiled, “I don’t think you are telling the truth, what do you think, Vincent?”

Vincent smirked at Cherub. “I agree. I think we will have to convince him to tell the truth.” Then ever so slowly Vincent stretched out his long fingers wiggling them slightly as they got closer to Cherub’s side.

“I was just on my way to help Naanii, Dad, really,” Cherub shrieked as the fingers made contact with his ticklish sides. After a few minutes of tickle torture Cherub panted, “Please… I’m sorry… I was trying to sneak… up on you.”

The tickling stopped although the fingers stayed in place. “And will you ever be able to sneak up on us?” Vincent asked with playful arrogance.

Cherub smiled and rolled his eyes, reciting the same lines he said every time he was caught sneaking up on them. “It was foolish of me to try. You are the masters of your surroundings.”

“He didn’t sound very repentant,” Mudiwa noted smiling at the joy written on Cherub’s sweet face.

“I agree. I think he needs more tickling.”

Cherub squealed and tried to get away, when he was saved. “Where is my helper?” called out Shefali, Ria’s mum.

Vincent and Mudiwa instantly let go. Shefali was a lovely woman, but one did not cross her, and as far as Shefali was concerned Cherub could do no wrong.

“Coming, Naanii,” Cherub yelled quickly kissing his Baba and Dad and hurrying out.

“He doesn’t even realize he is speaking Hindi,” Mudiwa said as he slowly stretched.

“I know,” Vincent agreed. For the first two days, Cherub had to be touching someone who spoke Hindi to understand what was being said. By the third day he was speaking and understanding Hindi as well as a toddler. By the end of the week, Cherub was fluent. Vincent turned from his thoughts as Mudiwa sat up, the muscles playing across his back seemed to tease and taunt him. “You know,” Vincent began as he ran a hand across the warm black skin, “we have about half an hour before yoga.”

“Thirty minutes isn’t very long.” Mudiwa purred leaning into the touch.

Vincent smiled and ran his hand down the muscular stomach, until he reached the beautiful hard cock he wanted. “Oh I am sure we will manage.”

Turning Mudiwa smiled, “I am sure we will.”

“Good morning, Naanii,” Cherub said brightly as he hugged her. “I like your sari; it is a very pretty pink.”

Shefali smiled, “Thank you, Naatii. Are you ready to help me with the morning chores?”

“Yes,” Cherub said and reaching up he took the strong, rough hand in his.
Cherub smiled as they went about their morning. Naanii was a strong woman and Cherub had trouble keeping up with her. When Cherub had first met her he had been worried she wouldn’t like him. Her brown eyes were calculating and her black hair, which was sprinkled with silver, was pulled back into a severe bun making her look harsh. Cherub had gone quiet and stuck close to Vincent and Mudiwa. Ria’s family had glanced at him, but didn’t seem to have much interest in him. Not long after they arrived they had dinner. Once Cherub took a bite of Shefali’s cooking he began to hum, Cherub could do no wrong in Shefali’s eyes. That night when Shefali sat down to tell stories to the children in the village, she pulled Cherub into her lap. Cherub smiled thinking about Naanii’s stories – she was a wonderful storyteller. He especially liked the story of Durga battling the daemons, and creating Kali to help her fight them.

When they got back to the house the mats were set up for yoga, and most of his family was there getting ready. Ria was in the kitchen starting the rice for breakfast.

“Good morning, Ria,” Cherub greeted.

“Good morning, sweetheart, how are you today?”

“Very good, and you?” Cherub asked looking at her tummy. Ria said the baby could come any minute now, and her belly stuck way out in front of her. Cherub was afraid she would pop.

“I’m feeling very well this morning,” she replied happily. “Now you go and do yoga, then after breakfast the two of us will go for a walk. There is something I want to show you.”

Cherub grinned and took off for yoga. Quickly he toed off his leather sandals and stood on his mat waiting for Naveen to start. Soto, Adonis, and Freja were already there and said good morning to him. While waiting for Baba and Dad to show up he wondered how the others were doing. Quinn and Isabelle had signed up for a yoga teacher training course at a nearby ashram, and had taken Camellia and Justin with them. Cherub had gone to the ashram a few times to see them. It was beautiful and had such a peaceful feeling. Dario, Luca, and Elena had volunteered to take Mitchell with them and were currently on the coast enjoying some time off. They were planning on coming back next week and Cherub found himself looking forward to their return. He really liked the Italian siblings; they were so pretty and mischievous.

Cherub was pulled out of his thoughts as his Baba and Dad finally arrived. He shook his head as the others snickered at their flushed faces. He didn’t know why they looked like that, but every time they did, they got teased.

Cherub held onto Ria’s hand as they walked down a path through the dense jungle. He loved the air here; it was thick with water and the scent of flowers and plants. Suddenly Ria stopped, and focused on her breath. “Ria, are you okay?” Cherub asked once the moment had passed.

Smiling down at Cherub she said, “I am fine, the baby is just letting me know it is ready to be born.”

“Should we go back?” Cherub asked, concerned.

“I just want to go a bit further. We are not far from the village; you can still hear the kids laughing. Anyway it is still early, everything is fine.”

Cherub didn’t look convinced, but didn’t protest further. After a few minutes they came out of the thick foliage to find a small, clear pool covered in lotus flowers.

“Ria, they are beautiful, they look like stars.”
“They are lotus flowers.”

“Isn’t that the flower Lakshmi was born from?”

Ria smiled at Cherub. “You are so clever. Come sit with me.”

Cherub smiled and sat down on the soft moss surrounding the pond. “Everything is so strong here.”

“What do you mean?” asked Ria, confused.

“Well, like the air here it is thick and heavy. The air in the mountains was crisp and wispy. And in the desert it was dry and scentless.” Cherub looked at Ria hoping she understood.

Ria smiled and patted his hand. “The presence of life can be overwhelming here. You can hardly see the sky peeking in between the trees.”

“Yes, but I love it.”

“Me too.” Ria paused for a moment then began, “I use to come here when I was a little girl. I always thought of it as my secret place. I would make my wishes here, and when I was sixteen I came here and wished for my parents to let me go into town to see the gypsies perform. Once I saw Naveen, I came here and wished he would take me with him. That night, he asked my father for permission to court me.” Ria blushed as she thought of it. “Anyway two days before, Naveen was supposed to leave I brought him here, and he asked me to marry him. We had only known each other for three weeks, but I knew I wanted to be with him forever.” Ria stopped for a moment to let the contraction pass then took Cherub’s hand in hers.

“This must be a very special place for you. Thank you for sharing it with me,” Cherub said not sure what was going on.

“It is, and I have my reasons for bringing you here.” Ria sighed. “We are family, all of us – Soto, Freja, Naveen, Mudiwa, Vincent, Adonis, you and I. And I know you and everyone else will welcome our baby into the family. However Naveen and I talked about it, and we want to ask you specifically to be our baby’s big brother.”

Cherub’s eyes were wide with amazement. He had been wondering what he would be to the new baby. Ria and Naveen had been teasing the others about being uncles and auntie. “I would love to be her big brother,” Cherub exclaimed wrapping his arms carefully around Ria’s neck.

Ria smiled and hugged him back. Just after Halloween Cherub decided the baby was a girl, and from time to time said ‘her’ or ‘she’ instead of ‘the baby’ like everyone else. “Wonderful! I am so glad. Now we should probably head back. If they find out I have been having contractions out here I will be in trouble,” Ria chuckled. Turning to all fours in order to stand up Ria gasped, as she saw a large cobra less than a foot away from her. Its dark brown hood was flared and it swayed slightly back and forth. The cobra was shedding making it even more dangerous as it couldn’t see to discern whether she was food, foe or something to leave be. Ria fought to hold still as the snake hissed.

“Danger! I am in danger; what is in front of me? I must strike”

“No!” hissed Cherub forcefully, “No, you are safe. No one wants to hurt you. She has young. She wants to get away from you. Please let her go.”

Ria tried not to panic as she heard Cherub hiss back at the snake.

“Who speaks to me?” The snake hissed turning from Ria and moving nearer Cherub.
“My name is Cherub, and we don’t want to hurt you. Please may we go?”

“What are you? All I smell is human.”

“I am human, a male child.”

“And you do not wish to harm me?” asked the snake cautiously.

“I promise we do not,” Cherub said soothingly.

“Then I will go back to my den. I will be done shedding in three days. You come back and speak with me when I can see you.”

Cherub smiled gratefully. “I would be happy to. Thank you.”

As soon as the cobra slithered back into the jungle Cherub moved to help Ria up. “Are you all right?”

“Yes, I think so. Let’s get back to the others,” Ria said shakily, needing the security of her husband right now.

Cherub agreed and taking her hand helped Ria back to the village. It took longer to get back because Ria had several contractions and much stronger ones than before.

*Naanii- maternal grandmother
Naanaa- maternal grandfather
Naatii- daughter’s son (grandson)
Thirty-one

The birth of Naveen and Ria’s baby is coming. I am going to base her experience off of mine, and off of the births I have been blessed to witness. I had both of my children at home, with no complications, and most of the births I attended were the same. I know not everyone has these same experiences, and this is not meant to be preachy or invalidate anyone else’s experience. Thanks, Witchdragon.

Chapter Thirty-One

By the time they reached the edge of the village Ria was feeling much calmer. Cherub had spoken to that cobra and saved her life and the life of her baby! A tear slid down her cheek.

“Are you okay?” Cherub asked, his voice filled with concern.

Ria turned and knelt down in front of the small boy. “Thank you,” she said looking into his green eyes. “Thank you so much for saving me and my baby.”

Cherub placed his small hand on her warm brown cheek. “Don’t cry, everything is okay I’m glad I was able to help.”

Ria was about to answer when another contraction came. This time she moaned as her stomach tightened. Cherub’s eyes widened, he knew this was normal, Freja had told him what was going to happen. She'd even had some photos and a video for him to watch. However there needed to be an adult here. “Ria, are you okay? Do I need to get someone?”

After a few seconds the contraction passed and Ria was able to answer Cherub’s question. “I am fine. Help me up, we are almost home.” Cherub held onto Ria’s arm as she stood and then they walked into the village.

Naveen looked up as he saw Ria and Cherub; quickly he stood and hurried over, something was wrong. Adonis who had been sitting with him followed quickly. Naveen wrapped his arms around his wife as soon as he got to her. “What wrong, love? Are you okay?”

Now that she was safe the fear overwhelmed her and she began to shake and cry while telling the story. Naveen held on to her and tried to soothe her by running his hand across her back. He really couldn’t understand what she was saying as her face was buried in his chest.

Adonis stood there shocked. They both looked okay. He could only make out a few words, but once Adonis heard ‘cobra’ and ‘Cherub’ he knelt in front of the small boy. “What happened? Are you okay? Did you get bitten?” he asked as he frantically looked over Cherub for any sign of injury. About this time Shefali, Freja, Vincent and Mudiwa came around the corner.

Shefali was the first to speak. “What is wrong, Naveen?”

“I don’t know; she is really upset.” he answered a bit frantically.

“Ria,” Shefali said firmly in English so everyone could understand her, “come back to the house. You will drink some juice and calm down. Cherub, you will tell us what happened.” Everyone
nodded, and soon they were seated on the floor around the low table. Shefali poured everyone a mango lassi and sat down. Turning to Cherub she said, “All right, I want you to calmly tell us what happened.”

Cherub took a sip of his lassi and began. He told how Ria was having small contractions, and blushed as he told about being asked to be the baby’s big brother. When he told about the cobra everyone gasped, and then looked puzzled as Cherub said he had talked to it. Once Cherub’s story was finished, Ria had calmed down and was able to talk.

“Everything he said is true. I heard the snake hiss, and then Cherub hissed back. After a few minutes, the snake turned and went back into the jungle.”

“Thank you, Cherub,” Naveen said gratefully. “It is quite a gift to be able to speak to snakes.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Shefali, “my Naatii able to charm a snake like that, truly he has been blessed by Kali. We shall have to hold a celebration in his honor. However I see my daughter is getting ready to have her baby.”

Everyone turned to look at Ria whose face was strained and her breathing controlled purposefully. When the contraction passed Naveen helped Ria into the bus, she wanted a bath. Shefali and Freja went off together to get the bed and supplies ready.

“Well gentlemen, it looks like we will need to entertain ourselves for a while, and make lunch and dinner. Do we need to get anything?” Mudiwa announced. Soon they had a small list of ingredients they would need for supper. They had decided to make a simple lunch of sandwiches and fruit salad.

After asking Naanii if she needed anything from the market, Cherub hurried to where Adonis, Mudiwa and Vincent were waiting with their bicycles. “Is Soto back yet?” he asked as he climbed onto his shiny blue bicycle they had given him for his birthday.

“No, he said he was going to be gone until mid-afternoon,” Vincent answered. “Are we ready to go?”

“Yes, Naanii asked us to get some sugar and fenugreek seeds,” Cherub said as he tied on a brown headscarf.

“Then let’s go.” Mudiwa said and he took off. The others fought to catch up, as they raced to the market.

Three hours later they had returned home, and were preparing lunch. Cherub had a lot of fun at the market, but his thoughts had kept straying to Ria; he was anxious to know if she was okay. Offering to see if the others wanted lunch, Cherub ran off to Naanii’s house where he knew Ria was going to have her baby. Slipping up to the door Cherub listened; they were talking quietly and everything seemed okay so he knocked on the door.

Freja opened the door and smiled. “Oh hello, Cherub, would you like to come in?”

Cherub nodded and walked into the cool room. The low bed was covered in old sheets. There were some towels, a knife, and some herbs and other things Cherub didn’t recognize set off to one side. Ria and Naveen were sitting on the bed. Naveen was smiling and rubbing Ria’s back. Ria looked tired and happy. “Hello, we are getting lunch ready and I was wondering if anyone wanted some?”

“Thank you, Cherub, that is very kind of you.” Naanii said as she walked into the room and handed
Ria a cup of water. “Why don’t you bring enough for everyone and leave it in the kitchen, and we
can get some as are able.”

“Okay. Um, Ria are you okay?” Cherub fidgeted with the hem of his shirt as he watched Ria calm
down after a contraction.

Smiling wearily she said, “I am doing fine, sweetheart. Having a baby is hard work, but I am feeling
good. Will you bring me some fruit with some yogurt please?” Cherub beamed at being able to help,
and ran off to get the requested food.

After lunch, the others tried to keep Cherub busy. You could never know how long it would take for
a baby to be born, and waiting is never easy. They got everything ready to make lasagna for dinner,
including homemade garlic bread. They went into the special compartment in the building bus, a
large room where the gypsies trained. They spent two hours training; Cherub was learning
contortion, statue, juggling, poi and acrobatics. The exercise really helped, and it was a relaxed and
happy Cherub who came out of the bus at three o’clock.

Soto was sitting under the shade of a large mango tree, his eyes were closed as if he was asleep.
Cherub squealed and ran for him. “Soto, Soto, guess what?”

Soto slowly opened one eye and grinned at the rosy cheeked boy. “What?”

“Ria is going to have her baby. And I can talk to snakes. And we went into town. And I can do a
back flip!”

Soto’s eyes opened wide, as he heard all of this. “Wow, you have had a very busy day.”

“What did you…” Cherub was cut off as Ria screamed from in the house. Before anyone could stop
him Cherub was running full speed. Thankfully when he opened the door to the bedroom Ria’s
contraction had stopped. Cherub stood there wide-eyed and panting. Ria’s face was flushed and
sweaty, she moaned softly as Freja encouraged her to take a sip of juice.

“You're doing great,” Naveen said encouragingly as he held her against his chest and ran a cool cloth
over her face.

“Cherub,” Naanii said soothingly. “I will come and get you after the baby comes. Why don’t you
wait outside?”

“Yes, Cherub, come with me we can wait together,” Mudiwa said softly not wanting to disturb Ria.
Although he wondered if anything would, she was so far into the process that being naked in front of
them wasn’t bothering the normally modest woman.

“He can stay if he wants to,” Ria said.

Cherub looked up at Mudiwa a stubborn expression on his face as he crossed his arms defiantly over
his chest. Mudiwa repressed a snicker, but Ria didn’t bother. Patting the far side of bed she
encouraged Cherub to sit up by her shoulder. Quickly Cherub walked over, not looking at whatever
Naanii was doing between Ria’s legs. Cherub looked over Ria to Freja. When she smiled at him,
Cherub calmed.

“I will wait outside, shout if you need me.” Mudiwa said moving out of the room.

“Nonsense!” snapped Ria. “Go and get everyone else and hang out by the door, our newest gypsy is
coming.”
Mudiwa arched an eyebrow and looked to Naveen. Naveen looked down at his wife then nodded. A moment later Mudiwa, Vincent, Adonis, and Soto were standing by the bedroom door, silently offering support. As each contraction came, Cherub held Ria’s hand as she pushed. In between contractions he stayed quiet and allowed Freja and Naveen to take care of her. Twenty minutes later Ria was grunting and yelling as the baby’s head crowned.

“You are almost there, Ria. You are doing so well.” Shefali said to her daughter.

Cherub was worried, he knew this was hard work, and it hurt, but the sounds Ria was making were so loud. Looking up he caught Freja’s eye. “She is doing wonderfully. Everything is just fine,” she reassured Cherub.

Cherub nodded and focused on Ria. She pushed with all her strength and gave a loud yell at the end. Looking down Ria’s body Cherub saw the baby’s head. Looking up he saw the four men were gripping each other’s hands and had moved a bit further into the room.

“One more good push, love.” Naveen said as he supported Ria’s body with his own. “You are doing so good, I am so proud of you.”

Ria grunted as another contraction moved through her body. As she pushed the baby turned and the shoulders pushed there way through quickly followed by the rest of the baby. Shefali quickly placed the baby on Ria’s chest, rubbing it with a towel. Cherub was in awe, and looking around he saw the glimmer of tears in everyone’s eyes. No one seemed to breathe, as the baby hadn’t cried yet. Looking down Cherub saw the dark blue eyes looking right up at him. Lazily the baby blinked and seemed to look around. After a minute, Freja said. “Little one if you do not cry for us I will take you from your mama,” The baby’s lower lip jutted out, face wrinkled and turned red as it let out its first wail. Everyone breathed deeply as they heard the clear cry.

Wiping his eyes, Naveen kissed his wife. “Our baby is so beautiful. Thank you so much, you did so wonderfully.” Ria smiled and kissed him back.

Breaking the tender moment Adonis asked, “Well, what is it a boy or a girl?”

Everyone turned to Ria as she lifted up the clean blanket her mum had just covered them with. Smiling she said, “A little girl.”

“So what is her name?” Freja asked.

“Kamala, it means ‘lotus’.” Ria said as she ran her hand over the fine black curls.

Everyone smiled and commented on what a pretty name she had been given. Cherub leaned in a bit and whispered, “Hello, Kamala, I am your big brother, Cherub. We are going to have so much fun, and I promise to protect you and love you always.” As he said this, Cherub kissed Kamala on her forehead, right at her hairline. A soft wave of magic pulsed outward, and when Cherub pulled back a soft impression of his kiss could be seen on her head. It looked as if he had been wearing lip-gloss and some had rubbed off when he kissed her.

Shefali was amazed at the power her Naatii had, but right now she had to take care of her daughter. “Ria, I want you to drink some juice and then see if Kamala will nurse.”

Ria nodded and smiled as Freja quickly handed her a fresh glass of juice. After drinking most of the cool, sweet liquid Ria carefully positioned her daughter. For a moment Kamala looked confused then opened her little mouth and greedily began nursing. A twinge crossed Ria’s face as her uterus contracted, but she sank into the arms of her husband and lovingly gazed at her baby.
“I do not wish to break the mood,” Mudiwa said, “but Ria deserves a good dinner, so I am going to get everything together.” Walking over he kissed both Naveen and Ria on the cheek. “Congratulations, she is beautiful.”

Soto and Adonis followed Mudiwa’s example and they went to help with dinner. Vincent congratulated the new parents then said, “Welcome, Kamala, to the Dragonheart Gypsies; know you will always have family with us.”

“Thank you,” Ria said shakily as a tear ran down her cheek.

Vincent smiled and wiped the tear away with his thumb. “Cherub, sweetheart, why don’t you come with me?” Cherub looked torn, he didn’t want to be in the way, but he also wanted to stay with his baby sister.

“Oh, he can stay if he wants,” Shefali said. “Everything here is fine, and he can help us clean up.” Vincent nodded and left feeling blessed at being allowed to watch a child come into the world.

Shefali had Cherub put the dirty linens in a basket, and asked him to bring her a bowl. Soon she was showing him the placenta and how the veins on the back made the tree of life. Cherub thought it was amazing and gross at the same time. Once Naanii was happy that Ria was healing up well, she let Naveen take her into the bus parked just outside to wash up, Freja went with them to help and then fetch some healing potions. When they got back there were clean sheets on the bed and all of the dirty linens and tools were gone. The room smelled fresh and clean.

Shefali had both of her grandchildren in her lap as she rocked in the rocking chair. Ria smiled at the beautiful picture: her mum a deep burnt copper, with Cherub curled against her lime green sari, his skin just kissed golden by the sun, and in both their arms Kamala, her new skin darker then Cherub’s, but not yet as rich as her mum’s.

“Well, Cherub, our time is up. Let’s let Freja hold the baby for a moment and then we will leave the new family alone for a bit.”

Cherub reluctantly let Freja take the baby from him. He watched as she cooed to the little girl. Naanii checked on Ria just to make sure everything was as it should be, then with kisses goodbye they left the new family to get to know each other.
Chapter Thirty-two

Parseltongue is in bold.

December 20th, 1986

Cherub moved as quietly and carefully through the jungle as possible. At the base of a large Neem tree, Cherub jumped, catching a low branch he pulled himself up. Climbing halfway up the tree, Cherub crouched and hid amongst the foliage. Grinning he looked around for any sign of Soto. They were playing hide and seek as part of his martial arts training. Cherub loved learning ninjitsu, which is what Soto called his style of martial art. It was far more play than work as they rolled and wrestled and fought; Cherub grinned thinking of the hours of fun he had with Soto.

Calming his mind as Soto taught him Cherub listened carefully hoping to hear Soto before he was found. Cherub stilled even more as he heard a soft rustling sound, it was faint yet close. Studying the landscape before him Cherub almost missed the small black snake as it carefully slid down the tree.

“Hello, little master.”

Cherub blinked and turning toward the tree trunk came face to face with a beautiful black snake. As it moved tasting the air, Cherub could see a rainbow of color reflected in every scale. “Hello there, you are very pretty; what is your name?”

“Thank you, little master. I do not have a name yet. I have been waiting for you to give me one.”

“My?”

“Yes, I was reborn in the temple of Kali just over there.” The small snake turned its silver eyes to the right where an old temple was hidden from view by the dense jungle. “I have been waiting for a new master to come.”

“Oh.” Cherub frowned not sure what to do next. “What kind of snake are you?”

“My last master called me a ‘night rainbow’ snake.”

“That fits. If I am supposed to name you, could you tell me if you are a boy or a girl?”

The snake hissed out a chuckle. “I am a girl snake. Did you know there is a man trying to sneak up on you?” She asked curiously, keeping an eye on her new master.

Quickly Cherub turned and bumped noses with a grinning Soto. Cherub squealed in fright and Soto’s quick grab was the only thing that kept him from falling out of the tree.

“Are you okay?” Soto asked. When Cherub nodded he smiled. “Good, I win.”

Cherub groaned and rolled his eyes, a habit he had picked up from Freja and Ria. “Yes, you won. Oh, and look – a new snake found me,” Cherub said excitedly turning back to the night rainbow patiently waiting beside him.

Soto raised a thick black eyebrow and watched as the two hissed at each other. In the week since they had found out that Cherub could talk to snakes they had all seen him do it several times. Once Freja pointed out the possibilities for gathering potion ingredients, Cherub had been talking with
snakes and carefully collecting their eggshells, scales, and venom. Soto was grateful that Cherub’s gift had been discovered here in India where snakes were revered and sometimes worshiped. Once they left, Cherub would have to be very careful who heard him hissing.

The snake watched her new master closely. He was very young, and certainly not ready for a familiar bond. Still, she was awake now and she could be helpful and a friend to her little master. “Do you have to go? Can I come with you?”

Cherub turned to the lovely little snake. “I will have to ask.”

Cherub turned to Soto. “She wants to stay with me, can I bring her back?”

Soto thought for a moment, he had never seen a snake like this before, and her energy was definitely magical. “If she promises not to hurt anyone you can bring her along, but it will be up to your dads if you can keep her.”

Cherub grinned and held out his arm for her to climb on. “Soto says you can come if you promise not to hurt anyone. I have to ask Baba and Dad if you can stay.”

“I promise not to hurt anyone,” she hissed as she slithered onto his arm. Once she was settled around his neck Cherub began to climb down.

As they walked back to the village Soto asked, “Does she have a name?”

“Not yet, she said I am supposed to name her,” Cherub said as he focused on walking silently, gently rolling his foot, heel to toe, along the ground.

After a moment Soto asked, “How are you enjoying being a big brother?”

Cherub grinned. “I love it! Kamala is so sweet, and Ria and Naveen let me help a lot.” Still focused on walking silently, Cherub confessed, “I was a bit worried that I wouldn’t be wanted after the baby came.”

Soto nodded. “It is very common for older siblings to feel that way. I was sure my parents wouldn’t want me around after my baby brother, Nobu, was born. I believe I had packed a bag, and figured out the best way to get to my grandparent's house by the time he was born.”

Cherub giggled, “What happened?”

“Well, my mum and dad called me into their room to meet the new baby. He was so small and cute that I couldn’t help but want to protect and take care of him. Soon I was helping my mum with chores, or getting things for her and even holding the baby when she needed me to. Just like you are helping Ria and Naveen.” Cherub grinned and Soto continued his story. “I found that I had a new place in my family, a place of honor: I was a big brother. And when the time came I walked Nobu to school and back home so he didn’t get lost. I taught him many things and we became very good friends.”

“What does he do now?” Cherub asked. He knew very little about Soto’s life away from the gypsies.

“My family are craftspeople who keep alive the old traditions and ways of doing things. My father and brother make swords. My mother dyes cloth and embroiders, along with some cousins and aunts. There are also potters, painters and weavers in my family. The village they live in is dedicated to keeping alive the old traditions. Muggle tourists go there to watch them work, and to buy their art. Wizards also come to their village to purchase their creations, due to the fine quality of their wares.”
“I would like to see your village someday,” Cherub said wistfully.

Soto smiled. “I think one day you will.”

Freja smiled as she watched Soto and Cherub walk back from their training session. Cherub had developed a close and unique relationship with each of them. Everyone took their turns teaching Cherub whatever they could. Cherub loved to learn new things, and with his ability to learn through touch he was a joy to teach. He was also very clever and frequently asked questions and put ideas together in new and interesting ways. Well, now it was her turn, there were a few hours before lunch and they were going to bake biscuits for the Solstice celebration tomorrow, one type for each of the thirteen full moons of the year.

“Hello, Cherub, Soto; how was your training?” Freja asked with a smile.

“We had so much fun! After sword practice, we played hide-n-seek. Look, I found a snake, or rather she found me. She wants to stay, do you think Baba and Dad will let me keep her?” Cherub said with wide eyes while petting the beautiful black snake wrapped around his neck.

‘If you ask with those beautiful green eyes full of hope like they are right now, how can they say no,’ Freja thought. “We will just have to see,” she answered evasively. “Are you ready to bake biscuits?”

“Yes!” Cherub shouted, now sidetracked from his snake. “Just let me wash my hands.”

Freja smiled and waved him off. “Well, hurry up then; shoo!”

Cherub smiled and quickly ran to the bus to wash his hands.

When Vincent, Mudiwa and Adonis returned with Dario, Luca, Elena and Mitchell, the air was filled with the scent of sweet biscuits. They had driven to the city three hours' drive south to purchase clothing, jewelry and trinkets to restock the merchandise they sold. They had also introduced Mitchell to several of their favorite book dealers while they picked up old and unusual books which might of interest back in Europe.

“Daddy! Baba!” Cherub squealed as he flung himself at the two men. Easily they caught him and hugged him tightly, eliciting an angry hiss from Cherub’s snake.

“I hope this is a friendly snake,” Vincent said softly as he warily met the snake's silver eyes.

“She promised not to hurt anyone. She is just a bit shocked and got squished,” Cherub said calmly. “Did you have a good day?”

Vincent looked warily at the snake, relaxing when Cherub hissed softly to her. “We had a very good day. We found some great deals, and now have a huge selection of things to sell. And what about you, did you have a good day?”

Cherub grinned, “Yes, Soto and I trained and played hide-n-seek. Then we helped Freja make biscuits. Ria was feeling well and helped out a bit.”

“Ask if I can stay,” the night rainbow hissed.

“Okay.” Biting his lip Cherub looked up at his Dad and Baba through his long black eyelashes. Both
men bit back a groan as hope-filled emerald eyes gazed up at them; there was no way they could say 'no' to that look. “Dad, Baba, I was hoping I could keep the snake. She promises to be good, and I will take good care of her. Also she said she was waiting for me, and I am supposed to give her a name.”

Lavender eyes met soft gray both pleading with the other to be strong enough to say ‘no’. Vincent sighed deeply. “Can I hold her? I want to feel her intentions.” A few hisses later and the snake slithered onto Vincent’s outstretched hand. It was a small snake and as the light hit her scales small rainbows were reflected. Slowly Vincent opened his empathic senses and gasped, this was a magical familiar, her power and intelligence were easy to feel. She was old too, and yet newly reborn. Opening his eyes he looked at Mudiwa, his look promising to explain everything later. “Yes, you may keep her.”

Cherub’s smile lit up his face. “Thank you so much!” he exclaimed while hugging both of them fiercely.
Chapter Thirty-three

A/N This Chapter focuses on Vincent and Mudiwa; we will see how Cherub is doing through their eyes, plus we get some smut! So anyone who doesn’t care for that might want to skim this chapter and only read the ‘plot’ bits.

Witchdragon

December 23, 1986. Chennai, India at the Taj Fisherman’s Cove Hotel

Vincent gazed down at Mudiwa, whose ebony skin was warm in the soft morning light; the white sheet just covered his beautiful, bare arse. Vincent sighed and softly began to run the tips of his fingers over his lover's bare back marveling at the softness of the skin in direct contrast to the hard muscles underneath. Mudiwa sighed in his sleep at the light, erotic touch.

Vincent smiled; he loved this time of year. They would always go away just after winter solstice for a few days to celebrate their anniversary. Six and a half years ago an eighteen-year-old Mudiwa had joined their troupe. Vincent had been instantly attracted to him, but being four years older and knowing that people would come and go, he didn’t take things any further than friendship.

For six months they had been friends, each giving the other lust-filled looks when the other wasn’t watching. Then at the Winter Solstice celebration they met under the mistletoe. Vincent tried to keep the kiss light, but Mudiwa had enough. He knew what he wanted, he’d had a dream a year before of lavender being his future, and he knew that Vincent’s lavender eyes were what he had been looking for. As Vincent gently touched his lips to Mudiwa’s, Mudiwa grabbed him and kissed him passionately. Vincent had gasped in shock but soon was kissing back with all the pent-up passion coursing through his body. Vincent smiled as he remembered that first kiss – they hadn’t been apart since.

Vincent returned his attention to the beautiful body before him. His fingers traced over the broad shoulders and, giving into temptation, Vincent lowered his mouth to kiss the warm skin. He moaned softly as the taste of his lover filled his senses. Slowly he relearned his lover’s body, now that Cherub had his own room they had plenty of opportunity to make love but the thought that Cherub was nearby was always present. But now they were in a cottage, alone, and Vincent was determined to take his time. Inch by inch Vincent kissed, licked and sucked his way down Mudiwa’s back. As he reached the small of Mudiwa’s back Vincent paid special attention to the two dimples just above the firm arse.

Mudiwa was softly moaning at this point, and certainly awake. Determined to drive his lover crazy with desire Vincent reached his hands up to the top of Mudiwa’s shoulders and dragged his nails down firmly, but not as hard as Mudiwa preferred. Mudiwa shuddered and moaned. Smirking, Vincent sat up a bit and continued to run his nails down the shuddering body before him, while pulling back the sheet. Just as Vincent’s fingertips reached the end of Mudiwa’s toes his mouth took over. Slowly he explored each toe with his mouth, tracing their shape with his tongue, nibbling the tips, and sucking each one before moving onto the next.
Vincent kissed the bottoms of Mudiwa’s feet, and continued upward, nipping and sucking the backs of his knees, then gently tracking patterns over each firm thigh. At this point Mudiwa was squirming beneath him, and panting softly. Vincent smiled; he would get him to scream soon enough. Gently nuzzling the firm butt in front of him, Vincent continued worshiping his lover. He kissed the firm, round flesh, while his hands slipped underneath and stroked the muscular chest and abdomen. Returning his focus to the perfect globes in front of him, Vincent meticulously kissed every inch of skin before returning to the dimples in the small of Mudiwa’s back. Vincent traced them with his tongue, savoring the spicy taste of his lover's skin, and he moaned as his tongue ran over Mudiwa’s tailbone and then began moving down.

Mudiwa gasped in pleasure as strong hands grasped his hips and urged him to his knees. He panted as Vincent took his time, slowly moving down the crease of his arse, until he reached his opening. Moaning, Mudiwa arched, pressing his face deeper into the pillow he moved his arse back towards that wickedly slow tongue. Vincent was going to kill him, waking him up with such slow sensual touches. Mudiwa moaned again as Vincent's tongue began to explore his hole, he could feel the firm muscle hot and wet against him, slowly pushing into him, tasting, exploring, learning his body. God, it felt so good, but he needed more.

“Please, Vincent, please harder, more, anything!” Mudiwa gasped.

Vincent hummed against the sensitive flesh, dragging another moan from his lover. His hands left Mudiwa’s hips and quickly found the lube. Coating a finger Vincent slid it into the loosened hole. Mudiwa moaned and pressed back trying to get more and faster stimulation, but Vincent grabbed his hip holding him still while he continued to move his finger in and out slowly while his mouth continued to lick and suck. Mudiwa began to tremble, as another finger was slid into his willing body. As the fingers slowly stretched him they rubbed against his prostate and pleasure shot through him as he cried out with the overwhelming sensations. As Vincent slid a third finger into his lover's body he pulled back and gasped at the picture Mudiwa made. Hips slowly undulating skin glistening with sweat, hands clenching the sheets, his face turned to the side, and full lips opened as harsh pants moved between them. Vincent wanted nothing more than to claim his lover fiercely, but he held back, determined to take his time. Removing his fingers, Vincent got more lube and spread it over his aching cock before parting the dark checks. Vincent rubbed the head of his cock against the loose hole and for a moment just reveled in the beauty of his lover spread before him.

“Please,” Mudiwa groaned pushing back just enough to get the tip of the teasing cock inside of him. Both men moaned in pleasure. Slowly Vincent slid inside his lover, the tight heat caressing and welcoming him in. Fully seated, Vincent took a moment to regain his composure, and tried to resist the urge to pound into his lover. Once he felt in control again Vincent slowly pulled back out until just the tip of his cock was inside Mudiwa’s body, then just as slowly he pushed back in.

Mudiwa groaned in pleasure and frustration. Feeling every inch, every ridge of his lover's cock sliding inside him, caressing and loving him, Mudiwa laid back finally accepting Vincent’s slow, exquisite pace. Closing his eyes he gave himself over to sensation, the slide of the hard flesh, the gentle slap of balls against his arse, and the rhythmic squeezing of Vincent's fingers on his hips, letting him know his lover was just as overwhelmed as he was. Mudiwa groaned as Vincent rubbed over his prostate – dear God, he was going to come from this alone.

Both men panted and groaned as they slowly made love to each other; each thrust bringing them closer to completion, and closer to each other. As the pleasure built Vincent ran his hands over Mudiwa’s back, firmly dragging his nails down and leaving red lines on the dark skin. Mudiwa screamed, the slow build finally pushing him near the edge.

“Vincent… God you feel so good… so close, please so close,” Mudiwa gasped out between thrusts.
Vincent reached around his lover and took the hard, leaking cock in his hand; he stroked firmly, matching the still slow pace of his thrusts. “You feel so good. You are so hot and tight, your arse was made for my cock.”

“Yes... yes... yes!” With a cry of passion Mudiwa came all over his lover's hand, his body shaking and clenching around the hard cock still inside him.

Vincent gasped at the intensity of Mudiwa’s orgasm, the sensation of his clenching arse driving him over the edge. Vincent grasped Mudiwa’s hips, bruising them, as his orgasm was ripped from his body. Collapsing next to his lover, Vincent kissed the sweaty skin in front of him. After a moment, Mudiwa turned over and gently brushed the long hair off of Vincent’s face. A soft smile graced his lips as he leaned forward and kissed Vincent gently.

“Good morning.”

Vincent smiled, “Good morning, love.”

“After such a lovely wake-up should we get showered and have some breakfast?” Mudiwa asked his voice rough and deep.

Vincent smirked and led Mudiwa into the shower. An hour later they were seated on their private balcony eating fruit and yogurt while watching the ocean waves crash on the beach.

“This has been an amazing year,” Vincent said talking to himself as much as Mudiwa.

Mudiwa chuckled. “That it has.” Pausing for a moment he asked, “What do you think of the chest Aurora led us to?”

Vincent thought back to winter solstice. They had already opened presents and eaten a huge breakfast, and Cherub had been bouncing around on the pogo stick Adonis had gotten him when he suddenly stopped and hissed to Aurora, the night rainbow snake he had found. Apparently the snake told Cherub she had something for him back at the temple. After a moment, Mudiwa turned over and gently brushed the long hair off of Vincent’s face. A soft smile graced his lips as he leaned forward and kissed Vincent gently.

“I wonder when it will open, and what it contains.”

“I, too, am curious, but I think we will have a lot of mystery with Cherub in our lives,” Vincent said.
trying to lighten the mood.

Mudiwa smiled at his lover. “Yes, I agree. I adore him; I didn’t think I wanted to be a father until I saw him walk into our camp that night. God, he looked so frail; and yet he was so strong.”

Vincent took Mudiwa’s strong hand in his. “He is an amazing child. He has learned so quickly how to blend in, adopting many masks. Masks to get past check points or amaze an audience or slip through a wizarding crowd unnoticed and even look lost and innocent. He is already performing with us, for goodness sake! He has really made himself part of every aspect of our lives so quickly and thoroughly, I can’t imagine life without him.”

Mudiwa squeezed Vincent’s hand. “I know he will only be with us until he is sixteen, but the thought of him leaving even ten years from now is hard to imagine.”

Vincent smiled and his lavender eyes filled with determination, hope, love and a bit of fear. Standing up he straddled Mudiwa’s lap and kissed him deeply. “I love you so much, and I think we should become a proper family for Cherub. We found the potion Familia Accredo* which we can use to bind us all together and adopt Cherub. So then the only thing left is for you to marry me,” Vincent said and keeping his eyes locked with Mudiwa’s he pulled a beautiful bracelet out of his pocket, it consisted of three colors of gold, woven together over and over making an intricate knot-work pattern about half an inch wide.

Without saying a word Mudiwa held out his left hand. Beaming, Vincent slid the cuff onto Mudiwa’s wrist. Mudiwa placed his hand on Vincent’s cheek gently running his thumb over the soft skin, and then drew him closer. As their lips met in a soft kiss, their breath mixed as they each sighed. Pulling back gently Mudiwa finally spoke, “Yes, I will marry you, Vincent Dragonheart.”

Vincent grinned and pounced on his lover. It was several hours before they left their room.

Three days later they were back at Ria’s village. When Cherub saw them he cried out and ran as fast as his little legs could carry him. Throwing himself into Mudiwa’s arms he wrapped himself around his Baba not letting go.

“Shush, sweetheart; what is wrong?” asked Vincent rubbing circles on Cherub’s back, looking at his friends for an idea of what was happening.

Naveen shrugged his shoulders. “He has been fine until now. We have had a great time.”

“Cherub, tell us what’s wrong,” Mudiwa said holding the boy close.

Cherub sniffed and pulling back to look at his Baba and Dad he smiled with a guilty little grin. “I was a bit worried that you wouldn’t come back,” he confessed. Mudiwa hugged him close and Vincent came up behind Cherub wrapping his arms around both of them.

“We will always find a way back to you, no matter what.” Vincent said with such conviction that Cherub smiled and relaxed into his fathers’ arms. “We have two surprises and one question for you.”

Cherub grinned. “What?”

“Let’s sit down,” Mudiwa said and carried Cherub over to a shady tree away from the houses and sat down. “First, we missed you. Were you good for everyone?”

“I missed you too, and I tried to be good. I didn’t get into any trouble.” Cherub answered still holding onto Mudiwa.
Vincent snickered, “That just means you didn’t get caught.” Cherub grinned, but didn’t answer. Both men laughed knowing Cherub had been perfectly behaved while they were gone. “Okay, now for our surprises and the question. First, I asked Mudiwa to marry me, and he said yes.”

Cherub blinked, he hadn’t known they weren’t married. “Did you get a ring?” he asked Mudiwa.

“Vincent knows I don’t care for rings so he got me a bracelet,” he said holding out his wrist.

Cherub ran a finger over the beautifully woven gold. “It’s lovely.”

“Thank you,” Mudiwa replied. “Now we have a question for you.” Looking at Vincent for support, Vincent nodded his head. “We would like to adopt you, for you to be our son.”

Cherub’s mouth dropped open in shock. “How?” he whispered.

“We found a potion that will bind us through our magic and our love. Other squibs have used it successfully, and it is legal and binding,” Vincent explained.

“So I would be yours forever?” Cherub asked his voice rough with emotion.

“Yes, forever,” Vincent said as he wiped a tear off Cherub’s soft cheek.

“Forever,” Mudiwa agreed kissing Cherub’s forehead.

Tears fell from bright green eyes even as a smile lit up his face. “Yes, I want to be adopted.”

The three wrapped their arms around each other letting their emotions settle, as happiness, love, and hope overwhelmed them. After a few minutes Cherub’s muffled voice said, “You said you had two surprises.”

Vincent chuckled, “Yes, I did. Seeing as we are going to be here until the end of January, and we are so close, you, Mudiwa and I are going to visit Zimbabwe.”

Cherub gasped in excitement. “Isn’t that where you grew up?” he asked Mudiwa. “Will I get to meet your family?”

Mudiwa smiled tightly, “Yes, it is where I grew up. And you will get to meet some of my family.” Vincent placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. “Not everyone is happy with my life, so not everyone will want to see me.”

Cherub frowned at this; Mudiwa was wonderful – how could anyone not want to see him?

“Do not worry about it, we will have a wonderful time. We can go to the markets. And spend a few days on the preserve, seeing animals. It will be a grand adventure.”

Cherub grinned, but still feeling a bit of sadness in his Baba he hugged him tight. “If you had another life you wouldn’t be here with us and we need you, so I am glad you are here.”

Mudiwa smiled and hugged his son fiercely.

*familia – family,
accred – to accept wholeheartedly,
and so ‘family of the heart’ is what I am going for.
Thirty-four

Chapter Thirty-four

January 4, 1987 Zimbabwe

Cherub walked in between his Dad and Baba holding their hands tightly. They were on their way to have dinner with Mudiwa’s family. After celebrating Dawali with Ria’s family the three of them flew to Zimbabwe. They spent two days in Harare going to the local markets and stocking up on things to sell, then a day driving to the Northwest corner of Zimbabwe to the nature preserve run by Mudiwa’s family. Today they had taken a safari on the preserve. Cherub had a wonderful time. They had seen so many amazing animals, lions, elephants, gazelles, and even meerkats! Cherub was hoping to get to talk to some of the local snakes and get some venom and scales for Professor Snape.

Mudiwa’s village was only a mile away from the hotel, so they walked. Cherub admired the beautiful landscape as they walked. The grass was tall and a lush green. The huge blue sky was darkening and the thin wispy clouds were tinted pink as the sun began to set. Holding tight to his Dad and Baba’s hands they climbed a little hill. At the top Cherub gasped. Below them lay Mudiwa’s village. Round thatched roofed houses sat within a tall wooden fence. Cherub could see a pen of cows on the far side of the village and a few children were herding the chickens into their pen for the night. Cherub looked up at Mudiwa, he stood perfectly still, eyes wide and body taut as he looked at his childhood home.

“We are here for you, and we can leave any time you want to,” Vincent said simply.

Mudiwa sighed and turned to his fiancé, “My mum said my father wouldn’t be here. Everything should be fine.”

Cherub was worried, his Dad and Baba were never afraid. “Baba?”

Mudiwa smiled down, “My dad and I don’t get along. We had a big fight when I left and he hasn’t communicated with me since then. It will be fine, my amai, my mum, and I write to each other all of the time.”

Slowly they walked down the hill to the gate in the fence. Cherub looked up, the fence towered over them. Mudiwa knocked, and moments later the sound of a bar being shifted was heard. When the gate opened a slim young woman opened the door. She had a small baby strapped to her back with a brightly colored piece of cloth.

“Mudiwa?” she questioned in a soft voice.

“Tendayi?” When she nodded they embraced each other fiercely. Moving into the village they talked quickly in Shona. He had missed his sister so much over the past six years. Hearing the excitement, others came over, and soon there was a large group gathered around Mudiwa. They were all laughing, crying, and hugging each other. Just as the excitement was calming down an older woman glided into the group. Cherub watched her as she approached his Baba. She wore a deep blue sarong that was tied under her arms and fell to her ankles. She moved gracefully and with an air of power and strength about her.
“Mudiwa,” she called.

Quickly he turned. “Amai!” he called and swept his mum up in his arms. They held on tightly and the laughing and crying began again. Mudiwa’s family began moving towards the center of the village, where they had dinner waiting. Vincent held back keeping Cherub with him and slowly followed behind. Once they reached the fire people began getting ready for dinner. Children ran and got plates and cups. The woman and older girls made sure the food was ready and began serving it, while the men sat down. Mudiwa sat next to his mother. A moment later he realized that no one sat next to him. Looking around he saw Vincent and Cherub standing off to the side calmly waiting. Smiling brightly he gestured them over.

“Amai, this is my fiancé, Vincent, and Cherub who we are going to adopt,” Mudiwa introduced in English. “Vincent and Cherub this is Chipo, my mum.”

Vincent held out his hand. “It is a pleasure to finally meet you; Mudiwa speaks of you often and with great fondness.”

Chipo smiled at his nervousness. “And you, Vincent. Thank you for taking care of my son.”

“Hello,” Cherub said softly holding out his hand, “it is very nice to meet you.”

Chipo smiled warmly at the lovely green-eyed boy. “It is nice to meet you too. Mudiwa has told me much about you in his letters. How are you enjoying your visit so far?”

“It has been very fun! Your preserve is beautiful, we saw a lot of animals today, and we get to go back out again tomorrow,” Cherub answered enthusiastically.

“I am glad you are enjoying your time here. Now what would you three like to eat?” Both Vincent and Cherub turned to Mudiwa, as they were not familiar with the food here.

Mudiwa cleared his throat softly, “Are there options without meat?” Chipo looked unhappy, but nodded her head. “Okay, well how about a bit of everything without meat.”

“And for you?” Chipo asked as she stood up.

“The same please, Amai.”

A moment later Cherub had a plate full of food, which Chipo was telling him about. “There is cabbage salad, maize pudding, groundnut stew on top of steamed millet, sautéed okra, and banana chutney to help cool the spicy stew.”

“Thank you,” Cherub said and began to eat. Soon happy hums filled the air as Cherub tasted the new foods. Mudiwa and Vincent both smiled at him. Cherub sat happily eating and listening to Mudiwa’s family catching him up on what had been going on with them. Mudiwa shared their adventures, talking about the different people and places they had seen. Once Cherub couldn’t eat another bite, he set his plate down as he had seen the others do and turned to look at Vincent, who was still eating. Mudiwa however, was done, so Cherub climbed onto his Baba’s lap and laid his head on the firm chest.

Chipo blinked and smiled at the picture her son made with his son curled up in his lap. Mudiwa was talking with his sister, Tendayi, and just started rubbing Cherub’s back, not noticing his mother’s look.

“Did you still want to trade?” Tendayi asked her older brother.
“Yes, we brought all of the items you requested in your letter.” Mudiwa said pulling his backpack forward. Tendayi looked confused until Mudiwa started pulling out far more than the pack should have held.

“It’s magic,” she gasped.

Vincent smiled. “Yes, we brought several like this for you.”

Soon all of the items were laid out: different potions, toys, jewelry, shells, clothes, food, and more; and the others went to their homes and brought out the items they had collected at Mudiwa’s request. There were hand woven blankets, jewelry, some statues, and pottery, but mostly plant and animal ingredients for potions. Mudiwa had sent jars and vials ahead of them so everything could be collected properly. As the bartering began it got very loud, and Mudiwa looked down to Cherub. “Why don’t you go and play with the kids, this is going to be crazy for a bit.”

Cherub looked over at the kids, who were staring at a deflated old football and arguing. “Do you have my ball?”

“Vincent does.”

Cherub got up and walked over to Vincent. “Dad, can I have my ball, please?”

Vincent smiled and dug into his pack, which he was removing items from. Pulling out five footballs, he finally found the one with Cherub’s name on it. “Here you are, have fun.”

Cherub smiled and ran over to the group of kids. They looked at him suspiciously then he smiled and held out the ball. Soon they were running all over the village playing a crazy game, which might have been an attempt at football. An hour later the bartering was done, and everyone packed away their treasures feeling as if they had gotten the best deal. The adults watched the kids play as they talked and sipped coffee.

Cherub plopped down between his Dad and Baba. Happily he accepted the cool water Vincent held out to him. He was just about to snuggle into his Dad when a loud knock sounded through the village.

“You said he wouldn’t be here,” Mudiwa pleaded with his mum.

“He shouldn’t be,” Chipo answered getting up. “The hunting party must have had good luck.”

When the gate opened a cheer went up as six large, armed men walked though carrying two gazelles. Quickly the woman moved forward to take the gazelles.

Tendayi turned to her bother, tears in her eyes. “It was so good to see you, please keep writing.” Mudiwa said he would and hugged her tightly.

“Vincent, Cherub, collect your things; we will need to go soon.” Mudiwa said, his usually warm voice was cold and he was speaking in a monotone.

Cherub worriedly looked around and finally found his ball; quickly he ran and got it. A moment later he was standing next to Vincent. Mudiwa was staring at an older man who wore a small, black-and-white patterned cloth around his waist. His chest was bare except for an ornate necklace over his collarbones. He looked fierce and stared at Mudiwa with cold, calculating gray eyes.

“Hello, son; are you back to ask forgiveness and come home?” he asked in English so Mudiwa’s guests would know what was going on.
“No, father; we are just visiting,” said Mudiwa carefully. “In fact we were just about to leave, and it looks like you had a good hunt, so we won't keep you from your work.”

Mudiwa’s father snarled, “How dare you come here and not ask for my forgiveness. This has gone on long enough, Mudiwa! You have a responsibility here with us! You need to be here, taking my place, getting married and having babies! Not gallivanting around with some male whore!”

Mudiwa’s body was tight with anger. “Father, you are the one who taught me to interpret my dreams, and they led me to Europe and to Vincent. I love him; we are going to marry. I have no intention of coming back here. My sisters and brothers are strong; they can and are helping you.”

“Banga, please let them go back to the hotel. We can talk about this later,” Chipo said softly trying to calm her husband’s fiery temper.

Banga ignored his wife completely. “You are the strongest of all of them, and yet you waste you gift creating illusions for white men’s entertainment. I am disgusted that you are my son.”

“Then let me leave and you will not have to look upon me any longer,” Mudiwa snapped. He just wanted to get Vincent and Cherub out of here. His father pulled out his obsidian ritual blade. Mudiwa remembered the honor he'd felt when his father had first let him use it, now he felt only dread.

Addressing his tribe Banga began, “When a child is born to us, both mother and father connect the child and their magic to the tribe, to the land and to our ancestors. Mudiwa has proven himself unworthy of such a gift.” Turning to his son he said, “I disown own, you are no longer my son, and I will cut the binds between us.”

Mudiwa gasped, Chipo cried out, and his sister began to weep. Cherub had been clinging to Vincent, his eyes focused on Mudiwa. Mudiwa’s father was scary and Cherub wanted to leave. However, when his Baba gasped in pain and trembled for a second before a mask of coldness and determination fell over his body, Cherub got angry. Just as Banga was picking up the energetic cords, which bound them, knife poised to cut, Cherub acted.

“Leave my Baba alone!” Cherub shouted, moving between Mudiwa and Banga.

Shocked, Banga turned to look at this small boy protecting his son. Emerald green eyes flashing in anger, cheeks flushed pink, and his stance relaxed yet ready for a fight. “Who do you think you are to speak to me like that!”

“My name is Cherub, and you will stop hurting my Baba!”

Banga was furious, first his son and now this scrap of a child! Snarling, he advanced, drawing his hand back to strike; both Mudiwa and Vincent moved forward to protect Cherub. Cherub, still thinking his Baba was in trouble, growled in anger; a wind began to blow around him. He stomped his foot, thrust out his hand and shouted “No!”

Banga was thrown back crashing into one of the huts and landing in a heap on the ground. No one spoke, waiting to see what would happen next. Cherub was still angry, and turning to his Baba he grabbed the cords, which bound him to his family. Separating the cords he looked into amazed gray eyes. “I can cut it if you want, Baba. I can leave you tied to your Amai, and cut the other one.”

Banga was sitting up now staring in wonder at the small boy.

“I think,” Mudiwa, said calmly, “my father has expressed his wishes clearly. Could you please cut the cord that connects us?” Vincent came up behind his lover and wrapped his arms around him.
Cherub nodded and looked at the angry red cord in his left hand; carefully he pinched it between his right thumb and forefinger until the cord snapped. Two gasps could be heard. Cherub looked up still holding the cord attached to his Baba in his hand. There was a pained look on his face. Turning to Vincent he whispered, “I know he doesn’t want me, but I feel so empty now.”

Vincent tightened his arms and kissed Mudiwa’s cheek. “You have us, and we will never leave you,” he promised his hurting lover.

Cherub looked at the cord of energy in his hand, and then again at his Baba’s pained face. He could fix this! Reaching out he took his Dad’s hand in his and looking into his lavender eyes he pushed with his magic and his love.

Vincent gasped, he could feel the cord in Cherub’s hand as their fingers intertwined, and suddenly their magic was combining, the three of them were connecting and cords of energy moved between them connecting them with love and magic, and making them a family. When it stopped they all hit the ground gasping on their knees and trying to get their bearings. Vincent recovered first and stood up on shaky legs. First he held a hand out to his husband, “Mudiwa Dragonheart,” he said smiling. Mudiwa smiled brightly and took his husband’s hand kissing him softly. Together they each held out a hand to their son. “Gabriel Alec Dragonheart.” They said together. Cherub put his hands in theirs tears running down his cheeks. The new family embraced then grabbed their things. Mudiwa said good-bye to his mum and sister promising to write, nodded to his father, and then left with his husband and son.
Chapter Thirty-five

June 13, 1987. Number 4, Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey

3pm
Petunia Dursley hummed happily as she cleaned out the last of the freak's things from the cupboard under the stairs. It had been a year since he had disappeared. At first they had been fearful other freaks would come wondering where he was, but they never did. So tonight while Vernon and her Duddikins were at the cinema she was getting rid of the last reminders of the nasty little boy her sister had left her with.

Thirty minutes later Petunia had cleaned the cupboard and was just sitting down with a glass of sherry, when she heard a loud ‘POP’. She jumped up and went towards the door when suddenly it burst open.

“Where is he?” demanded the strangest looking man she had ever seen. He had long white hair and a white beard that was tucked into his belt. His robes were electric blue with multicolored tulips being visited by butterflies, which actually moved!

“Who are you and how dare you enter my home uninvited!” demanded Petunia gathering her courage around her.

Dumbledore stared at the horse-faced woman. “I am Albus Dumbledore, and I want to know where Harry Potter is.”

Petunia wrapped her arms around herself, clutching the sherry glass tightly in her hand. “He isn’t here, and he hasn’t been here for a year.”

Dumbledore paused, shocked, and then sighed – so that was why the wards had fallen. “Mrs. Dursley, I am sorry I startled you,” he said in his calmest, most sincere voice. “Please may we sit and you can tell me what has happened.”

Petunia pursed her lips in irritation, but sat down hoping to get this man out of her home before Vernon and Dudley came back.

“Thank you,” said Dumbledore as he conjured a tea tray. “Now can you please tell me what happened?”

“There isn’t much to tell,” Petunia said stiffly. “We went out to dinner, Harry was left here, as he had been bad and was being punished. When we got back he was gone.”

“Was there anything out of place? Any sign of a struggle?”

“Nothing,” Petunia answered sharply.

“Did you contact the authorities?” Dumbledore asked.

Petunia snorted. “Of course not! Why would we? And who would we contact anyway?”

Dumbledore sighed again and sipped his tea. This was a real mess, everyone expected him to be
keeping Harry safe and the boy had been gone for a year without anyone knowing! ‘No one can find out about this’, he thought to himself. ‘I will tell them I investigated the house thoroughly, I don't want to call in others so extra attention won’t be drawn here. I will tell them that he has been missing for three days. I will still look good, but they will know the trail is cold’.

Dumbledore was pulled from his thoughts by the sound of car doors slamming shut. As soon as the two Dursley males stepped into the house Dumbledore had them petrified and sitting on the couch.

“Three days ago Harry Potter went to the park to play. He didn’t come back home. You looked everywhere for him. Knowing he is magical you chose not to contact the authorities and instead waited for my visit to tell me about what had happened,” Dumbledore said pushing the words into their minds and blocking the real memories. Releasing the spell he said, “Thank you very much. I will be in touch and let you know as soon as we have found him.”

The Dursleys just sat there numbly and nodded their agreement.

Now whom do I tell? he thought as he apparated back to Hogwarts.

8pm

Dumbledore looked around his office; he had chosen just a few loyal members of the Order of the Phoenix to inform of Harry’s disappearance. Molly and Arthur Weasley were completely loyal; Kingsley Shacklebolt, a young Auror, was still very black-and-white in his view of the world and Dumbledore hoped to keep him that way. Remus Lupin was also present – even though he was a dark creature his desire to prove his worth made him easy to control. Albus had cautiously included his brother Aberforth as he ran the Hog’s Head bar in Hogsmeade and could be a valuable source of information. He had also called in Dedalus Diggle, Elphias Doge, and Sturgis Podmore. Now they were just waiting for his spy, Severus Snape, to show up.

“Welcome and thank you all for coming,” Dumbledore said after Professor Snape walked into his office. “Please everyone have a seat and I will explain why we are here,” he invited, his tone grandfatherly and warm.

Once everyone was seated Dumbledore began his story. “Earlier today I went to the Dursleys' house to check up on Harry as I do every few days. Unfortunately Harry wasn’t there, and after talking with his aunt I learned he disappeared three days ago.” Shouts and gasps filled the room at this terrible news.

Dumbledore held up his hand for silence. “I investigated the area thoroughly and found no signs of force or magic. I tried to locate Harry’s magical signature but was unable to do so. Kingsley, Dedalus, and Sturgis, would you please begin investigating secretly; ask your contacts if they have heard anything about a missing boy. Also keep an eye out in the Muggle world if you can. I want him found, but I am also hoping to keep this out of the media if at all possible.” They nodded in understanding.

Albus turned to his brother, “Aberforth, please let us know if you hear or see anything at the Hog’s Head.” Aberforth snorted but agreed.

“Severus, are you going to be seeing the Malfoys anytime soon?”

Severus narrowed his eyes. “Yes, I am invited to attend their Solstice celebration. I will see if I can find out anything. If this is the work of Death Eaters, Lucius would more than likely be involved.”
Albus nodded sagely. “I agree, thank you Severus. Arthur and Elphias, if a Muggle took Harry, or if he is being held in the Muggle world, he might have a burst of accidental magic, which will be recorded. Or maybe an incident will be noted and be checked out by the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Department. Any information at this point will help.”

“Headmaster,” Kingsley said. “I would like to check Azkaban Prison to make sure all of the Death Eaters we have locked up are still there.”

“Wonderful idea,” Albus exclaimed. “Now Remus, I would like you to begin visiting the werewolf clans throughout Europe. I do not believe that Voldemort –” he paused for their gasps, “– is truly dead. The werewolves know the forests, will now if something Dark is in them, or if something strange is killing off magical beasts.”

Remus sighed, he didn’t want to leave, he wanted to help look for Harry, but he understood the importance of talking with the other werewolves. “Give me a few days to get my things in order, and I will leave.”

“Thank you, Remus. Now I know this will be hard, but please everyone act as normally as possible. Attend events, go shopping, do your jobs, we can’t have anyone finding out. The public will go into a panic, and if Harry isn’t with the Death Eaters we don’t want them knowing he is vulnerable and finding him first,” Albus said sagely.

June 15th 1987. Azkaban Prison

“God, it is miserably cold in here,” muttered Kingsley. Pulling out the list, he began checking off names as they passed by the cells. “I hope they are all here. I can’t imagine Harry Potter in the grips of one of these insane madmen,” he said with a shudder. “I hope we find him soon, poor little lad!”

Gray eyes opened in shock, it had been so long since he had heard another person’s voice that wasn’t involved in crying and pleading. The words swam through his mind, and finally registered. Harry was missing! Growling low in his throat the man slunk back into the shadows gathering his strength while the Dementors were away.

In the dead of night a shaggy black dog swam across the icy dark water. He had to get to shore. He had to find Harry. He had promised Lily and James! Exhausted he pulled himself onto the shore. A great shake and most of the water flew off his coat. Slowly he began to make his way to London, and hopefully to find his Godson.

June 16th. Headmaster’s Office, Hogwarts.

8am
Dumbledore sighed in frustration. The Minister of Magic Millicent Bagnold has just contacted him. Sirius Black had escaped from Azkaban last night. Shacklebolt had reported last night that all of the prisoners were accounted for. “I wonder what happened to make him try and escape,” Dumbledore muttered to himself. “Oh well, either he will be caught and out of my hair, or he will find Harry and solve my problem for me, or he will find Peter Pettigrew. If he finds Pettigrew I will defend him and he will become an ally.” Albus hummed happily and popped a sherbet lemon into his mouth.

3pm
Severus Snape stormed down the hallway to his dungeons. ‘Things could not get any worse,’ he thought. ‘The Potter brat had run off, most likely throwing a fit because he couldn’t get something he wanted, and got lost! And savior of the wizarding world or not he is the son of James Potter, and the only person I hate more than James is Black. Stupid, murdering Sirius Black who has just escaped from Azkaban!’

Severus snarled as he flung open his door and slammed it behind him. Striding over to his liquor cabinet he poured himself a glass of scotch. Sipping it angrily he sat in his chair and stared into the fire. His sulking was disturbed by the sound of a hoot. Turning he saw a brown postal owl perched on the arm of his chair. With a sigh he stroked the owl and gently removed the scroll tied to its leg.

“There are owl treats and water over at the perch; feel free to help yourself.” The owl hooted its thanks and flew over to the perch. His own owl, Damascus, opened one eye and turned away from the common brown owl, going back to sleep. Severus shook his head at his pompous owl, and then turned his attention to the scroll. Opening it, he read:

Professor Snape,

I hope this year has been good to you. We have had a very good year, and have an abundance of potion ingredients. Below you will find a list of everything we have. Cherub has also collected many ingredients for you to look over. You are a valued customer, and we do not expect you to purchase substandard ingredients, so please do not feel you must buy anything from Cherub because he is a child, though I think you will find his items most interesting and well worth using in your potions. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,
Freja Nef

Severus’s black eyes widened in surprise. Looking over the list he smirked. Well, they had been in India and Southern Africa, which was wonderful – some of these things were really hard to find. He mentally began calculating out how many potions and Galleons he was going to need to get everything he wanted. At the bottom of the letter was a childish scrawl which read:

Professor Snape,

Here is a list of the things I got for you. Could you recommend a good book on potions ingredients and how to collect them? I want to do a good job.

Sincerely,
Gabriel Dragonheart
‘Cherub’

Severus sighed, he really didn’t want to purchase inferior ingredients just to make someone’s kid happy, but Ms. Nef did say they were good, and so far he had never been disappointed. Looking over the list Cherub had written out his jaw dropped open and he sputtered. This was a list of snake ingredients, including venom! Not only were these hard to get and very expensive, but a child had collected them! Gasping when he got to the cobra venom, he shook his head; they let a child collect these dangerous venoms. Severus was shocked to say the least. Slowly, his mind began to consider the possibilities if these were real and properly collected. Grinning, he thought of the potions he could make, the experiments he could do, and the great price he could get for his products. Surely
they didn’t know how much Slugs and Jiggers would charge for asp scales, did they?

Standing up, Severus began to search through his collection of books. Somewhere in here was a book on collecting potions ingredients and how they were used and reacted to each other. His mother had given it to him for his fifth birthday; it would be perfect to pass on to Cherub.
Thirty-six

Chapter Thirty-six

A/N Harry’s new name is Gabriel, but his nickname will be Cherub.

June 20th 1987. Ottery St. Catchpole

Gabriel danced about as he placed the books on the long tables against the walls of the tent. He wasn’t hiding from the chaos like last year, this year he was listening to a tape of Indian Bollywood music, and happily thinking of where all these books had been bought. Africa, then he smiled as he placed several large books on the shelf; it was there in Africa that he had bound Baba, Dad and himself making them a family. His fathers had already picked out a name for him, Gabriel Alec. They told him Gabriel is the name of an archangel, a warrior, and Alec means ‘defender of man’. Freja and Ria still called him Cherub as did the others sometimes, but he liked having a ‘real’ name.

As he danced, his black cotton pants, and green tunic flowed about him, with each book he picked up he remembered a different city and experience. Moscow had borscht and beautifully painted buildings with onion-shaped tops; Kiev had intricately painted eggs and a huge, shiny silver arch; Athens had baklava and ancient Greek ruins; Amsterdam had fields of tulips and windmills and Berlin large soft pretzels with spicy mustard and a huge wall with guards and wires that made him feel very sad even when his empathic shields were up.

When Gabriel finished placing all of the books he opened another box. Smiling as he saw the carefully wrapped bundles Gabriel rolled up his sleeves, so they wouldn’t catch on anything. Lovingly he ran a finger over the braided gold bracelet adorning his wrist; it was a smaller version of the bracelets his Dad and Baba wore. Unwrapping the first piece of hand-blown glass he thought back to that spring. They had gone back to Oma’s and had a bonding ceremony. The bond Gabriel had created between them in Zimbabwe was strong and made them a family, but they wanted to have a ceremony with their family and friends. They had stood in the middle of the orchards, leafless branches covered in delicate white and pink blossoms surrounded them. It was such a happy day, there had been a wonderful party, most of the village and Lucas’s werewolves came to help them celebrate.

Before they had left they spent a day in the village with Freja’s son. He, along with many others in the village blew glass for decoration, and to put the oils and herbs, which came from Oma’s farm, into. Gabriel was fascinated watching the glass heated and carefully blown into a desired form. The different colors and shapes they were able to create was awe-inspiring. Gabriel focused on the present as he set out bottles, jars, vials and other beautiful glass objects. On the toy table outside there were several bags of marbles that one of the glass blowers had made. Gabriel loved his set and was becoming quite good at playing different marble games.

Severus Snape quietly watched young Mr. Dragonheart, waiting until his hands were free of the glass objects he was setting out on the table. The boy had changed in the last year, he was much taller, his black hair reached past his shoulders, and he seemed much more confident. Once he appeared to be finished Severus called out, “Mr. Dragonheart.”

Gabriel turned calmly and beamed up at him. “Professor Snape, hello; did you have a good year?”

Severus couldn’t help but smile back. The only other child who looked so happy to see him was his
godson Draco. “It has been an interesting year, certainly.” Severus said thinking of the many cauldrons that had exploded and a missing Harry Potter. As Gabriel walked closer to him the green eyes pierced him, and he thought back to school, to a girl, and then it faded and he was left feeling safe and calm. Shaking his head to clear it he continued. “I assume congratulations are in order, Mr. Dragonheart.”

Gabriel beamed, “Thank you Professor Snape. Yes, Mudiwa and Vincent got bonded and adopted me, and please call me Gabriel, or Cherub.”

Severus grimaced, “I am not fond of nicknames. I am however willing to call you Gabriel, if you insist.”

Gabriel giggled at the Professor's sour face, “Thank you, do you want to see what I collected for you?”

“Certainly.”

Excitedly Gabriel ran over to the front table where the boxes they stored potions ingredients in were sitting. Gabriel pulled a small black trunk over to the edge. Standing on tiptoes he was able to reach the latches and open the trunk. Severus gasped at all the vials, bottles and jars in the trunk. One by one he examined them. There were so many, and such rare and amazing specimens.

“You collected all of these?” Severus questioned Gabriel.

“Yes, sir.”

“How?” he demanded.

Gabriel took a deep breath; he had practiced what to say with Freja and Soto. “I have a way with snakes.”

Severus snorted. “I am sure that is an understatement.”

“It is rather simple and boring, and as a gypsy and an entertainer I simply cannot ruin a good mystery,” Gabriel said shyly, remembering how Freja had used the same line on a man in Istanbul. He had laughed and let it go.

Professor Snape shook his head and chuckled. “All right, keep your secrets. I will need to spend some time looking through everything.” Pulling a battered blue book out of his robes he handed it to Gabriel. “This is for you.”

Gabriel looked over the book: it was a guide to collecting plant and animal potion ingredients. Opening it up he saw that Professor Snape had written notes in the margins. Gabriel grinned; this would give him a lot of information. He didn’t know why or how, but he knew that books which had belong to others talked to him, and he learned a lot very quickly. “Thank you very much, Professor Snape.”

“You are most welcome, Gabriel.”

Thirty minutes later Severus was in shock. There were approximately 20,000 Galleons worth of snake material in front of him. He didn’t have the money for all of this. In order to ‘prove’ himself to the Ministry he was cut off from his inheritance. The Ministry couldn’t make Gringotts keep it from him, but to prove he felt remorse for becoming a Death Eater he needed to stay away from his money
for another three years. Dumbledore paid him well, and he was given a huge allowance to purchase work robes and potions supplies for his classes and the potions he made for the school. He saved his money, spending the majority of his savings every year while he was here purchasing the highest quality ingredients. Sighing deeply he began to separate out a few vials.

“Professor Snape is that all you want? Did I collect them wrong?” Gabriel asked him.

“No, Gabriel these are very fine ingredients. They are also very expensive and I cannot get everything I want,” Severus explained.

Gabriel’s forehead wrinkled in confusion. “But, I got them for you. If you don’t want something I will try and sell it later, but don’t worry about the money.”

“Gabriel, that is very generous of you, but it wouldn’t be right.” Part of him was screaming to take what the boy was offering; another said not to ruin the relationship he had with his best suppliers.

Stubbornly Gabriel locked eyes with Professor Snape. “Freja says you are the best Potions master in Europe. She said that you use ingredients like these to make new and better potions to help people. So these are for you. When you use these and make amazing potions, and people give you lots of money for them, then you can pay me more, but for now you will take what you want for the money you have.” Gabriel folded his little arms over his chest and jutted out his jaw, as if daring Severus to challenge him.

It took all of Severus’s will power to not laugh at the young man. He had seen such a look on his godson’s face and knew that fighting was not the easiest course of action. He was just about to answer, when Adonis walked into the tent.

“Oh dear, Cherub has that look. Best to give in now, it makes life so much easier.” Adonis chuckled. Gabriel quickly glared at the golden man before returning his emerald gaze to Severus' black eyes.

Severus chuckled, a deep rich sound which made both Gabriel and Adonis shiver – but for very different reasons. “I had already figured that out, but thank you for the warning. Gabriel, I will set aside what I want, and if you could please get your fathers, I want to make sure this is also acceptable to them.”

He frowned, trying to figure out if Professor Snape was going to try and get away with anything, then nodded and went to get his Baba and Dad. When he returned ten minutes later with his fathers in tow, Severus had the majority of the snake ingredients in front of him.

“Hello, Professor Snape, Gabriel said that you wanted to speak with us,” Vincent said holding out his hand.

Severus shook the proffered hand warmly. “Yes, thank you. I wanted to make sure the agreement Gabriel and I reach is acceptable to you and your husband.”

Mudiwa looked puzzled. “We told Gabriel that what he collected is his to sell.”

“Well yes, and Gabriel is most insistent that I am to take whatever I want for whatever I can afford, however these are very valuable items and I cannot in good conscience go through with this without your approval,” Severus explained.

“That is very kind of you; however, what Gabriel earns is for him to save and to spend. It is up to him to set his price,” Vincent said simply.

Severus nodded and looked down at the items he had chosen, about 10,000 Galleons worth. He left
much of the venom as very little was needed to have a big effect on a potion, and what he had was far more than he could see himself using in a year. He had taken almost all of the scales, eggs, and the few bones and fangs that were available. Taking a deep breath Severus looked down into stubborn green eyes. “Are you quite certain?” he asked one last time. Gabriel growled in annoyance. Severus snorted; ‘Merlin this boy was stubborn’! “Well, then here, one thousand Galleons.”

Gabriel took the pouch, and smiled. “I hope you enjoy them.”

Severus smirked, “I am sure I will.” Then turning to Vincent he asked. “Where is Ms. Nef? I would like to finish my shopping.”


Molly Weasley fussed about the Burrow making sure everything was ready to go. Her children could tell something was wrong, but didn’t ask what.

“Is everyone ready? It is time to go to the Solstice party.”

Everyone gathered round and touching the portkey, felt a pull behind their navels and then landed in a heap. Carefully righting themselves, they looked over to where the noise was coming from and smiled. The tents were set up, many of their friends were there, and soon the show would begin. As they walked towards the festivities Molly and Arthur both kept their eyes open looking for Harry Potter. Molly’s breath caught every time a black haired child passed by. This was driving her crazy, where was he? Trying not to think about the terrible things that could be happening to him, Molly plastered on a smile.

“The Weasley Clan!” greeted Adonis, “how are all of you?”

All of the kids answered at once and Adonis blinked at the chaos of sound. “Children!” snapped Molly. “We are doing very well, thank you,” she said to Adonis.

“Wonderful. I bet you kids are wondering where Cherub is.” At their nods Adonis shouted for him.

Soon Gabriel was running towards them, black hair flying about his shoulders from under a black head scarf, green eyes sparkling. Both Arthur and Molly stiffened with recognition for a second, before the magic of the circle protected Gabriel yet again and swept the idea from their minds.

Molly clasped her hands to her breast; he looked so good. No longer thin and pale, he was a ball of vibrant energy and so obviously happy. “Come here, Cherub, and give us a hug.” As her arms wrapped around him all the worry and fear she was holding inside seemed to vanish. Somehow she knew Harry Potter was just fine. When Arthur asked later how she knew and why she had stopped worrying she simply shrugged and said, “A mother’s intuition.”

Gabriel didn’t sit with the Weasleys, as this year he was in the performance. When it was over and he had cleaned up he was pounced on by Fred, George, Bill, Charlie, Ron and Ginny. They demanded he show them some of the things he had done, and so they spent their time before dinner learning simple acrobatics, and stretches and exercises to prepare for the statue work. They all promised to practice everyday so that next Solstice he could teach them more.

June 22 1987.
As the adults packed up their stuff Gabriel walked around the field making sure all the rubbish was picked up. As he neared a hedge Gabriel heard a rustling sound. “Hello, is anyone there?” he called out as he knelt down and moved closer to the sound. He squealed as a large, shaggy black dog popped out from the bushes. Calming down he looked at the thin dirty dog – he was huge and seemed friendly. Holding out his hand he called to the dog. “Hello there boy, how are you? Come here and let me make sure you're okay.”

The dog whined and moved closer. Gabriel smiled and began to carefully pet the stray mutt. “You seem unhurt. Why don’t you come with me and I will get you some water and food.” The dog barked as if he understood and cautiously followed the child back to camp. Gabriel had introduced himself, and told the dog all about his family by the time they reached the tents.

Freja was the first to see them muttering to herself, “Oh, that explains the tarot reading.”

“Freja look what I found,” Gabriel exclaimed happily. “He is really friendly. I know he looks really bad,” at this the dog looked affronted and whined, “but I am sure with a bath and some food he will be, well not good looking, but clean and scary. Can we keep him? Please?” The dog snorted at this and turned away from the boy.

Freja smiled, “I am sorry, but a dog is just not a doable pet, we cross into too many different countries. Anyway I bet Aurora wouldn’t like it very much.”

Gabriel stroked the black rainbow-tinted snake around his neck. She hung around most times, keeping quiet and unseen by those who didn’t know she was there. “But where will he go?” Gabriel asked, sadness and worry in his voice.

Freja smiled knowingly, “Oh, he has his own journey. Why don’t we get him some food and let him rest.”

Gabriel sniffed, “Okay.” Taking Freja’s hand they went into the bus and cooked up some eggs with cheese, slices of toast, and Gabriel had insisted on having yogurt with fruit. Placing the food in front of the dog, they were happy to see him dig in. Once he was done eating, Gabriel brought out a ball and the two played until it was time to go.

Gabriel fell to his knees and hugged the dog fiercely, burying his face in the matted fur. “I will miss you. Good luck! I hope you find a happy home.”

The dog huffed and snuggled the boy as best as he could. As Gabriel left and went into the bus, the small blond-haired woman came over to the dog.

“I am not sure what this means but I have a message for you, it came to me during a tarot reading last week: ‘the rat you need is living with the ginger clan, the Weasleys I believe’.”

The black dog growled and then bowed low in thanks. He had a rat to uncover.
Chapter Thirty-seven

June 13th 1988, England

Gabriel rolled the ball across the table smiling as Kamala, now eighteen months old, squealed and pushed it back to him. They were on their way to Sennen, and Gabriel was looking forward to seeing Jaime again. All of the adults were acting odd, as if they had a secret which they needed to tell but were afraid to. It reminded him of the time he had cut himself on Soto’s sword when he didn’t have permission to touch it. Gabriel sighed; he was planning on trying to get them all to tell him what was going on. Even Dario, Luca and Elena were acting odd!

Gabriel was pulled from his thoughts as Kamala dropped the ball on the floor. “Oh are we done playing ball now?” he asked tickling her sides. Kamala squealed with laughter. Gabriel loved his sister, and enjoyed their mornings together. It had become a habit for him to travel with Ria and Naveen so he could play with Kamala; he seemed to be the only one who could keep her happy for long periods of time. “How about some music, Princess Kamala? I need to practice my violin.”

“Moo ick! Moo ick!” Kamala said clapping her hands together. Gabriel opened his violin case, and tuned the beautiful instrument. Luca had begun teaching him after they left India. Gabriel smiled at Kamala as he began to play, instantly she quieted down.

Ria smiled looking back at Gabriel and her daughter. He had been such a big help from the very beginning, and he was so sweet with her. Every night Gabriel would kiss her forehead in the same spot where his first kiss had left a mark. Ria smiled as the sweet melody flowed over her. Gabriel was very good at the violin; the instrument had been Luca’s as a child and he was now a master violinist.

They had learned Gabriel’s gift did have limits. For instance while he learned several forms of art and music through touch it took practice for his body to really understand the movements and skills his mind now had. Learning through touch worked perfectly on the retired teacher’s grammar book, however anything filled with handwritten notes or which contained a lot of complicated and new information Gabriel had to filter in slowly. They had found this out when Gabriel opened himself to the book on collecting potions ingredients that Professor Snape had given him. Gabriel had passed out and not woken for three hours. When he did wake up it was from a nightmare and it took Mudiwa and Vincent a long time to calm the poor boy down. Apparently Professor Snape had acquired the book as a child, and whenever his father and mother would fight Snape would take his precious book out to the wood behind the house to get away from the yelling and hitting. If Gabriel’s sobbing ramblings were true, Hogwarts wasn’t much better for the stoic man.

Vincent, Mudiwa and Soto all taught Gabriel meditation techniques. He learned to filter what he was touching, making the emotions just a whisper and the information come in at a slower pace. He still absorbed a lot of information, but he could now take it in page by page. Ria smiled as Gabriel put away the violin and opened up a book to read to Kamala. Freja had given him several ‘living books’- stories, which were accurate to the time period and culture. Ria remembered the discussion they’d all had about Gabriel’s education, and found that just letting Gabriel live his life covered the majority of subjects. Geography, geology, history, foreign languages and social studies were all covered as the traveled from country to country. They made a point to stop at historical and educational places along their journeys, such as museums, castles, churches, and natural monuments. Math was easily learned as he helped Adonis plot their route, handled money, help set prices for the items they sold, and using recipes for cooking. Gabriel’s natural fascination with the world and his love of reading helped
a lot.

Ria’s musings were interrupted when Gabriel asked, “How much longer until we get to Exeter?”

“How much longer until we get to Exeter?” Naveen replied after checking a road sign. “About twenty minutes; why – are you hungry?”

“About twenty minutes; why – are you hungry?” Naveen replied after checking a road sign. “Yes, but that’s fine. I will wait until we get to Antonio’s. I was wondering if Kamala and I could play with the drums?”

Naveen smiled. Gabriel was so thoughtful. It was very hard to get Kamala to stop drumming once she started, so they tended to wait to get the drums out until they were close to the end of the trip. “I think that will be just fine, Cherub,” Naveen answered.

Kamala squealed loudly as her small djembe was placed in front of her. Watching her brother place his between his legs she did the same. The next twenty minutes were filled with loud wild beats and rhythms.

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Gabriel sat happily in Antonio’s with Soto on his right and Adonis on his left. Everyone looked over the menu; it had several new items on it since the last year. Luca, who was sitting on Adonis’s other side leaned into the golden man and asked with his heavy Italian accent, “What do you recommend?”

Adonis shivered as warm breath caressed his neck. “That’s right! This is your first time coming with us to Sennen. Well everything is good here and there are several new dishes on the menu. I can’t imagine anything being bad.”

“Hm, maybe something with a cream sauce,” Luca suggested.

Gabriel shook his head; he knew flirting when he saw it now. He didn’t fully understand it, but Luca had increased his flirting with Adonis a lot in the past month.

“What are you going to order?” Soto asked.

Gabriel sighed. “I am not sure. I love the cheese and macaroni, but they have a new dish.” Gabriel pointed to the menu. “Fettuccini, shitake mushrooms and cream sauce, that sounds really good.”

“It does at that. I was trying to decide between that and the aubergine lasagna.”

Gabriel wrinkled his nose; aubergine was not his favorite vegetable. Soto laughed at his cute face.

“Soto,” said Elena her voice soft and warmly accented. “I am also trying to decide between these two dishes, so would you care to share?”

Soto inclined his head. “Thank you.”

Elena smiled and placed her hand onto one of his, giving it a brief squeeze before turning back to Ria and joining in her conversation with Freja. Soto raised a slim sharp eyebrow. Turning back to Gabriel his confused black eyes met amused emerald green.

Three hours later the gypsies were settling down to tea in the same camping spot they used every year. Gabriel took a deep breath of the warm sea air and smiled. Conversation was light as they ate the rich desserts they had brought from Antonio’s, and a calm happiness settled over the camp.

Once everyone was done eating, Gabriel summoned up his courage to ask what was going on with
everyone. He had requested that the circle be put up before they had tea because he wasn’t sure what information would be revealed during the impeding conversation.

“I have noticed that everyone seems to be acting weird lately,” Gabriel began. Everyone shifted guiltily and looked nervous. “I just want to know what is going on. The tension is just getting worse everyday.”

“Well you see…” began Luca.

“I’m sorry I do…” said Vincent.

“I am not as young…” whispered Freja.

Gabriel’s eyes widened along with everyone else’s. This was not going to be good. Picking what he assumed would be the easiest of the three, Gabriel turned to Luca.

Luca looked to Freja and Vincent before beginning. “Dario, Elena and I have had a wonderful five years here with all of you. Dario and Elena would like to stay on and become more permanent members of the troupe, however it is time for me to go back home. My future is in Italy making violins and cellos with my father and grandfather, so when we go to Switzerland in August I am going to fly back home.”

“We are sorry to see you go,” said Vincent. “We had already discussed the idea of the three of you staying on with us; Dario and Elena are very welcome to stay.”

After a moment of chatter, Gabriel turned to Freja, and everyone quieted down.

Taking a deep breath as her eyes filled with tears, Freja began. “Last month I twisted my shoulder, and it just isn’t healing as well as it needs to. I am fifty-six, and the little bit of magic which flows through me has kept me strong and young for far longer than I expected. However, it is time for me to go. I talked with my son and I will be staying with him when we go and visit Becky’s farm in August.”

Gabriel jumped up and flung himself into Freja’s arms. “I don’t want you to go.”

“I know, Cherub, I know. We will write to each other all the time. And I will see you at least once a year.”

Gabriel sniffed, he didn’t like this at all, and it wasn’t over yet. There were several moments of talking. The others expressed their sadness at Freja leaving, and their hopes for a happy retirement.

Unwilling to be separated from Freja, Gabriel shifted in her lap so he could face his Dad and settled back for the next bit of news. Mudiwa reached for Vincent’s hand and they both looked at their son. This really was a lot for him to take in, and the next bit wasn’t going to be easy. A week ago Elena had asked Gabriel what he wanted for his birthday next month. While Gabriel had gone on about visiting an amusement park with everyone as his only gift, Vincent and Mudiwa’s hearts sank. They had agreed to tell their son who he was and about his birth parents on his eighth birthday. The thought of it and the fear of Gabriel’s reaction had not left them since that day.

Vincent took a deep breath and began to explain. “The first night you were with us after you had passed out from the energy burst, I saw the scar on your forehead. Everyone in the wizarding world knows that scar. We know your birth name, the names of your parents, and how they died.”

Gabriel blinked trying to absorb this information – he hadn’t been expecting this. After a moment he looked up at his Dad. “Okay, tell me more.”
You were named Harry Potter.” At Gabriel’s look he held up his hand. “Yes, the Harry Potter you have heard stories about, the one they call their ‘savior’ and ‘the boy who lived’. You were born to Lily and James Potter. Voldemort killed them on October 31, 1981. They died protecting you; Voldemort was after you that night. When he aimed the killing curse at you it bounced off your forehead and hit him. Voldemort vanished, but we don’t think he is gone, just terribly hurt. Freja has done several readings on this, and several people have seen visions, including Jacob. Your mother’s love protected you that night, but it is not over. When you are sixteen you will need to make yourself known to the wizarding world and go to Hogwarts.” Seeing his son’s face fall, Vincent hurriedly continued. “We will help you, we will train you, and you will win. All of us are committed to making sure of this. We love you so much, Gabriel, and we would love to keep you with us forever, never letting you go. Just remember that you will never be alone, and you will be more than ready in eight years time, you will be the master of your destiny.”

With tears running down his cheeks, Gabriel gasped out, “They worship me for nothing! How can I live with people like that? With people who left me with the Dursleys. Did you know the Dursleys told me my parents were drunks, and that my dad killed himself and my mum by driving while he was drunk? They said I was in the car, and I got my scar during the accident.”

Mudiwa curled around Vincent and both men held their arms out to Gabriel. He flung himself into his father’s arms and sobbed. As he calmed down Vincent answered his questions. “Cherub, love, we are performers, you see us act differently all of the time. Safe and trustworthy, powerful and strong, sultry and seductive, silly and harmless, these are simply masks that we create to improve upon and act, get past a border crossing, or prevent a fight to name just a few situations. Knowing what is needed, and what we are facing helps us to prepare. We will learn everything we can about Hogwarts, Voldemort, and the Wizarding world in general, before you enter it. You can be the one playing a game; you can go in wearing a hero mask, a clown mask, the mask of a villain, or maybe even an ignorant child. We will help you, and train you, and teach you everything we can. We will get you books, tools and weapons. Most importantly we will always be here for you, and love you and you will have a place you can come to, where it is safe to be yourself.”

Gabriel sniffed. “Why did you wait to tell me?”

Both men sighed, this time Mudiwa answered. “We were selfish, we wanted you to have some carefree time as a child, and we wanted to keep you all to ourselves for a bit. Also we didn’t want to think about you leaving us someday.”

Gabriel clutched them closer; he didn’t want to think about it either. “Am I still yours?” he asked softly, fear making it hard to speak.

“Yes, always!” exclaimed Vincent.

“We love you so much. You will always be our son no matter what happens.” Mudiwa said gruffly. The small family clung to each other tightly for a moment when suddenly they felt another pair of arms.

“Always,” whispered Freja.

“Forever,” said Ria as she kissed his cheek.

“We are family,” explained Naveen.

“We love you,” continued Soto.

“We are here for you,” added Elena.
“We will help you,” said Dario.

“You are not alone,” replied Luca.

Adonis stopped for a moment smiling at the sight of the group hug. He could barely see Gabriel’s head through all the people. Feeling the need to lighten things just a bit, as was his nature, he wrapped his arms around his family. “You will never be able to get rid of us, even if you really want to.”

Everyone chuckled lightly and the energy softened just a bit. After a few minutes Gabriel squeaked, “I can’t breathe.”

Once everyone was settled back on the bright pillows, Vincent asked, “Do you have any more questions, Gabriel?”

Gabriel frowned for a moment. “Why sixteen?”

“Honestly, Jacob is the first one who said sixteen. When he met you for the first time he had a visions and said ‘Cherub has such a pure heart and soul, I felt this when I touched him. There is another out there, his opposite. I saw him going back to face him at sixteen.’ Vincent held Gabriel’s hand while they spoke.

Mudiwa continued the explanation, “We are afraid that when you go back to the Wizarding world, they will immediately expect you to battle the Dark Lord. Maybe send you back to the Dursleys and try to control your life. At sixteen you will be a man in our eyes, and almost one in theirs, not a child who can be easily used.”

“You need every advantage you can get,” Soto said. “Many wizards and witches come into their magic fully when they turn sixteen, giving them a year to master it before they are legal adults. With our help, you will be a warrior, strong, powerful, intelligent, and perfectly capable of handling whatever and whoever comes your way.”

“No child should have to deal with that, and you are ours now to protect. We will not let them have you until the last possible moment,” Freja said viciously.

Gabriel sat quietly for a moment, thinking about all they had said. He had eight years, could he do this? Sinking into himself he felt his magic swirling deep inside, and for the first time he could sense some of it was blocked, being held back. ‘Is this what Soto was talking about the magic that will be released on my sixteenth birthday? Can I do this? Can I defeat this monster?’ he thought, then he felt the strength of his magic, the compassion within him, and the love of those around him. He thought of the friends he had made in the wizarding world: Professor Snape, the Weasleys, Luna, Cedric, and others throughout the world. With resolve he knew that he could and would face Voldemort one day.

Gabriel opened his eyes; he was still horribly muddled; there was just too much new information, but he did feel better about everything. He needed to do something to help calm his thoughts and feelings. His eyes met Soto’s intense black ones.

Soto raised an eyebrow, “boken*?”

Gabriel grinned and ran off to get his from his room. Soon they were standing on the patch of grass where Soto had given Gabriel his first martial arts lesson. The hard oak swords crashed together as the two men practiced. Gabriel was getting quite good, and as he grew he would be a wonderful swordsman, but right now it was about release and meditation. Step by step they moved through the various strikes and blocks. Fluidly without thought and without worry they moved together, boy and
teacher. After thirty minutes, Gabriel stopped; slowly he walked around the mat, sweat dripping off him, breath coming in harsh pants. “Does this make me someone else? Someone different?” he asked.

“No, you have always been Harry Potter even when you didn’t know it. Now you simply know another part of your life,” Soto replied.

Gabriel stared at his teacher for a moment then grinned. Placing his hands in front of his heart palm to palm, he bowed low. “Thank you, Sensei; you are very wise,” he said with mock formality.

Soto rolled his eyes at the cheeky boy. “Yes, I am, however if you keep this up there will be no more kung-fu movies for you.” Gabriel giggled at this. “Let’s get back to the group and let them know you’re okay. Then how about a swim?”

“That sounds great,” said Gabriel. He felt much calmer now. He could try and figure everything out later.
Chapter Thirty-eight

Parseltongue is in Bold.

June 14th 1988. Sennen, England

Gabriel woke to the sound of the waves crashing onto the shore, smiling he stretched thinking about what he was going to do today. His smile faded as he remembered all that had happened the night before. Sighing deeply, Gabriel sat up.

“What is wrong, Little Master?” hissed Aurora, now two feet long and about three inches around. She was still beautiful – black scales gleamed, flashing small rainbows as light hit her scales. She had become a close confidant and trusted friend. She would hiss warnings, tell jokes, and give really good advice.

“Last night I got a lot of bad news,” Gabriel hissed back, and proceeded to tell Aurora everything that had happened.

Aurora slithered up Gabriel and wrapped herself around his neck. Reaching her head up she caressed his wet cheek. “I am sorry that must have been a rough night for you. I know you will miss Luca and Freja, but I also know you want them to be happy.” Aurora paused, waiting for Gabriel to nod. “As for being Harry Potter, I knew that you would have to battle darkness. The trunk and I have been waiting for ‘the one of the four’ for a thousand years. Before I go there let me ask, were your fathers right? Have you been happy and carefree? Do you now feel the weight of your destiny?”

Gabriel’s brow wrinkled, he did now feel a burden that he hadn’t before. Reaching up he began to stroke her smooth head. “Yes, I get it; they were able to give me a few years of carefree childhood.”

“A very precious gift, I think.”

Gabriel smiled; it was true he treasured these past few years very much. Dad and Baba had given him a scrapbook last night filled with all of the newspaper clippings they could find about his parents and the night they had died. He wanted to share it with Aurora, but first, “It seems to be a time for telling secrets. Will you tell me yours now? All other snakes speak differently. They do not say ‘father’, they would say ‘nest mates’. Your speech is much like mine. Any other snake speaks more broken, and I have to figure out what they mean sometimes.”

Aurora paused for a moment then looked over at the chest Salazar had left with her when he died; it was open. “I am a magical snake, I spent over one hundred years with Salazar Slytherin. I simply am a much grander snake than all the others.”

Gabriel laughed. “You are so modest!”

“Well if one cannot speak the truth, what is the world coming to?” she sniffed playfully. Deciding it was time she told him, “The trunk is open.”

“Is it more bad news?”

“No it will help you meet your fate; do not worry I am here to help you.”
Gabriel sighed and walked over to the trunk. Kneeling down he opened the lid. There were several books inside it, and on top an old yellowed scroll. Carefully he picked up the ancient scroll. Sitting back on the floor he carefully unrolled it. The calligraphy was beautiful it flowed and twirled across the page. Unfortunately Gabriel couldn’t read it. “I can’t read it, is it safe to open up to?”

“Yes,” hissed Aurora.

Gabriel took a deep breath and slowly dropped his shields and closed his eyes. A picture began to form, a man bent over a large desk, deep in a castle, his feather quill moving carefully over the parchment. Long black hair flowed over his shoulders. The room was decorated in black with green and silver accents. Gabriel turned as he heard a soft hiss; a much larger Aurora was curled by the fire. Opening his eyes, Gabriel looked down at the letter, now able to read it.

Little Angel,

I hope this letter finds you well. I write this from the newly built Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. During the ritual to infuse the school with elemental magic we were given a vision, a sad and upsetting vision. Several hundred years after we pass a great evil will plague our land. She will try and find our diaries, work journals, and the textbooks we have written and use them to take over Britannia if not the entire world. So we created this chest, and when we pass these items will be transported to it, waiting for you Little Angel. For you will also have a great evil to face, and a world to change. What we saw in our vision is not what we had hoped for the future. Our school is divided. The things we worked hard for have been undone. So we give you this chest full of treasure. Our knowledge, our hopes, our fears, so that you can hopefully set things right. Do you wonder, Little Angel, why you? It is rather simple, there is a bit of all of us in you. We are family, granted with a thousand years between us, but still family.

The chest will release the books, as you are ready for them, and not before. So take your time, and study them carefully and if you have any questions, Midnight should be able to help you. I have left her for you; please take good care of her.

Sincerely,
Salazar Slytherin

Gabriel set the letter down and looked into the trunk, there were seven books. Pulling them out one by one he read the titles. ‘Welcome to Hogwarts, a guide for first years’, opening the front he looked over the table of contents:
Chapter One- Map of Hogwarts and How To Navigate The Castle
Chapter Two- Hogwarts' Rules and Guidelines
Chapter Three- Outline of Curriculum and Description of Classes

Setting that book aside, he picked up the other books, First Year History, First Year Latin, First Year Elemental Earth Magic by Helga Hufflepuff, First Year Elemental Water Magic by Godric Gryffindor, First Year Elemental Fire Magic by Salazar Slytherin and First Year Elemental Air
Flipping through the books, Gabriel found all but the history and Latin books were handwritten. This would take time to go through.

“Little Master,” Aurora hissed.

“Yes.”

“I know this is a lot to take in, and it is fine to tell your family, but these do need to remain a secret.”

“I understand, I think I will go and show Baba and Dad now.”

“Good, Little Master. They will be able to help you,” Aurora hissed curling tighter around Gabriel’s shoulders as he stood.

Thirty minutes later the small family sat around the newly opened trunk. Mudiwa and Vincent were in shock! The most amazing things happened around Gabriel. They had read the letter, several times, and looked through all of the books. Right now they were watching as Gabriel ran his fingers over the handwritten words in the ‘Welcome to Hogwarts’ book. His eyelids fluttered as if dreaming. They were watching to see what kind of reaction he would have to such an old book. Once he reached the end of the chapter, Gabriel set the book down, and sat with his eyes closed breathing deeply. Smiling, he slowly opened his eyes. “That was brilliant! Whoever wrote this chapter was very focused and calm when they wrote it. It isn’t at all like a journal, or Professor Snape’s book. Once I finish this book, I will go through the history and Latin, then work through the elemental magic books.”

“How do you feel about all of this?” Mudiwa asked carefully.

“I guess there is a lot of unknown family of mine out there,” Gabriel smiled. “And it seems I will get a lot of help in facing my destiny.”

“Yes, you will. Are you all right with us waiting to tell you about your past?” Vincent was nervous about his son’s answer.

“I understand, Aurora helped me realize that I have enjoyed these past two years very much, and I wouldn’t trade them for anything. Now that I know about my past and my destiny I do feel the need to prepare; people are counting on me.” Gabriel shrugged hoping his fathers would understand.

“We wouldn’t change the past two years either, and we won’t give up the time we have with you in the future. We will train you, and help as much as possible, but you are still a child and you will play and have fun too,” Vincent said.

“The Wizarding world might be counting on you, but they should be counting on themselves! You are more than just the ‘savior’ or the ‘boy-who-lived’; you are our son, Gabriel Alec Dragonheart, and you always will be,” Mudiwa explained as he pulled the beautiful emerald-eyed child into his lap.

After a moment Vincent spoke up. “How about after yoga and breakfast we go to the Atchison’s farm? I think Soto was planning on going to the fish market today.”

Mudiwa snickered, “Elena won’t like that.”

“Why not?” Gabriel asked.
“Well, Elena likes Soto and he has some special friends in Sennen who will keep him busy all day,” Mudiwa answered.

“Oh,” Gabriel didn’t understand, but sometimes grown-ups were just strange. “I would love to go to the farm this morning; can we ride our bikes?”

Vincent laughed. “Of course we can. That’s half the fun!”

Adonis sighed as he walked to the beach. It was early afternoon, and everyone was busy with something, so he had decided to go for a quiet swim. Slowly he waded into the cool blue water. Swimming with slow easy strokes he went further out into the sea. Things were really complicated, people were leaving and two new people were becoming permanent members; Gabriel had learned about his birth parents and how his parents had died. Then this morning they learned about this mysterious trunk! Vincent and Mudiwa had told Gabriel not to read the books from the trunk for more than thirty minutes, and only with an adult near for now. Gabriel had agreed, but it was still a lot of information he was taking in all at once.

Adonis floated on his back in the calm sea letting the gentle waves move him. There was also Luca, beautiful sexy Luca who was flirting with him and teasing him and leaving soon! Adonis growled in frustration. He hadn’t made any move on Luca because the flirting had seemed causal and just for fun. Adonis had been waiting to find out if Luca was going to stay before trying to pursue something more. The only thing Adonis knew is that he wanted the man, with his deep olive skin, dark brown wavy hair which came to his chin, making him look younger than he was, and turquoise eyes, so bright and full of emotion. Sighing again, not sure what to do, he turned and began to swim back to the shore. Stretched out on a towel, his skin glistening in the sun from tanning oil, lay Luca. “Bloody hell the man is beautiful!” thought Adonis.

Smirking Adonis climbed out of the water. Luca lay on his back, his cute arse covered in tight black Speedos that barely covered anything. Quietly he walked over and standing above the sun-warmed, muscular back, Adonis shook out his dripping wet shoulder length hair. Luca jumped and began cussing viciously in rapid Italian. Jumping to his feet, Luca turned to face his attacker. Grinning evilly he advanced on the beautiful golden man. “Oh you will pay for that.”

Adonis grinned and ran into the surf, Luca close behind him. Within a minute Luca jumped and landed onto Adonis, pushing him into the water. Both men went under, and then broke through the surface laughing and wrestling. After several twists and turns Adonis was on top of the olive-skinned man. Luca, laughing lay back on the sand.

“What do you want from me?” Adonis asked his voice rough.

Luca smiled softly, “I want whatever you will give me for the months I have left with you.”

“And when you leave?”

“Our futures are not compatible, you belong here and I with my papa. I hope for a dear friend to write to for the rest of my days.” Luca reached up and caressed Adonis's smooth cheek. Slowly Adonis leaned down and brought their lips together. The kiss was sweet and slow, their mouths moving together, learning each other. Luca wrapped his arms around the broad back as Adonis buried his fingers in the thick, silky hair. Both men moaned and the kiss grew in intensity. Lips parted, tongues explored and their bodies melded together. Being about the same height meant they
could easily kiss and rub their hard cocks together. Adonis kept one hand buried in Luca’s hair cradling his head, as the other one began to explore the luscious hard body beneath him. Luca’s skin was warm from the sun and slick from the combination of oil and water. Soft moans and canting of hips let Adonis know when he found a sensitive place on the well-muscled chest.

Luca had wanted to touch the golden body for months now and began his own exploration. Moving his mouth from Adonis he kissed along the square jaw up to the soft earlobe. Taking the tender flesh in his teeth he worried it gently. Adonis gasped and thrust his long hard cock into Luca’s. Running his hands down the sculpted back Luca was just about to grab the tempting round arse, when a ‘snort’ followed by a wet puff of air hit his face. Confused, Luca opened his eyes and stared straight into the black eyes of a large seal.

Luca shouted, and tried to get away while still pinned to the ground by Adonis’s body. The seal began to snort and shake as if it was laughing. Adonis groaned then chuckled.

“Luca meet Jacob, he is a Selkie and a friend. I assume he wants to bring his son onto the beach and would like us to stop.”

The still-laughing seal bobbed his head up and down saying ‘yes’ while still shaking with laughter. Adonis grinned, gave Luca a soft peck on the lips and moved off of him. Luca took the offered hand and stood up. Looking at Luca’s still shocked face Adonis asked, “Are you okay?”

Luca looked into the concerned golden eyes, “Yes, it was just a shock. I haven’t seen a seal this close before and then having one who can understand us!”

“Don’t worry; Jacob will shift into his human form once his family is settled. Miriam his wife will move into her human form after she gets used to us again, and I am not sure if their son Jaimie can change yet,” Adonis explained as he led them to their towels to dry off.

“It is nice to meet you Luca,” said a rich melodious tenor. Turning, Luca saw a tall, lean, naked man. His snow-white skin looked as soft as silk and lean muscle rippled as he moved. His black curls dripped with seawater, and his black eyes were warm with laughter.

“Ciao bella*,” Luca breathed softly.

Adonis snickered. “Have I lost you already Luca?”

“No, of course not! I… he… I mean…” Luca fluttered his hands about making his confusion visible.

“Maybe I should cover up,” suggested Jacob.

“Probably, although Vincent and Mudiwa will be sorry to have missed you in all your glory,” Adonis teased as he grabbed a robe they kept near the beach just for this purpose.

Jacob shook his head in amusement as he slipped on the robe. Being naked didn’t bother him; he certainly didn’t wear clothes as a seal. Luca did look a bit uncomfortable so he decided to make things a bit easier. “Where is everyone?”

“Let’s see,” Adonis answered. “Vincent, Mudiwa and Gabriel are at the Atchison’s farm, they should be back in time for tea. Soto and Freja are practicing along with Elena and Dario who you haven’t met yet. And Ria, Naveen and Kamala are in their tent resting.”

Splashing was heard and the three men turned back to the waves. Two seals were coming onto
shore. “Come, Luca, and meet my family. This is Miriam my wife.” He introduced pointing to the larger of the two seals. “And my son Jaime. Miriam, Jaime this is Luca, Adonis’s friend.”

Soon they were joined by others, and just as they put out tea Vincent, Mudiwa, and Gabriel arrived. When Gabriel saw the Selkies he whooped with joy and ran towards the group. Jacob smiled and stood up, arms open and caught the boy. Smiling they twirled, both of them laughing.

“Look how big you've got, and your hair is half way down your back!”

“I missed you! How is everyone? Is Jaime here?”

“He is right over there,” Jacob answered pointing to the waves. “He has a surprise for you.”

*Ciao bella- Hello beautiful
“Jaime, how are you?” Gabriel asked as he squirmed out of Jacob’s arms. “I missed you,” he said as he wrapped his arms around the soft brown seal. Jaime snorted wetly and cuddled into Gabriel’s arms. As they did every year the two friends opened their minds sharing all of the things that they had seen and done over the year. Gabriel saw pictures of fish, sharks, whales and magical sea creatures. He gasped as Jaime narrowly escaped an orca, and watched in amazement as a group of mermaids floated just below the surface of the ocean to sing at the full moon. Then he saw a group of sirens lying on jagged rocks and singing a sweet melody in order to lure men to their deaths. Playing about them was a cat with fins. “Jaime what is this?”

“A siren’s cat. They only live near sirens; they are fuzzy like a land cat, but can swim. Da’ says that the sirens wrecked a ship which had a litter of kittens on it, and they couldn’t stand the thought of them dying, so they used their magic and made them able to live in the ocean,” Jaime said as he in turn watched Gabriel’s year go by: the leaves turning different colors; the snow; making snowmen; trying all year to sneak up on his fathers. Jaime watched Gabriel learn to fight with swords, knives, and hard stars which he threw. He watched Gabriel practice moving silently through a forest during spring, small flowers bloomed at his feet and when he crept alongside a bush he saw three unicorns grazing in the glade before him. Jaime slowed down the memory; the unicorns were so beautiful and graceful, and he could feel the peace and magic coming off them even in the memory. He gasped as he saw a beast that was part man and part horse. “What is this?”

“A centaur.”

Jaime nodded and went back to the memory, it seemed very important. “Well, Little Angel, we centaurs have been told of your coming. I am here to tell you that we will follow you if you promise to take things back to they way they were,” The centaur said ominously.

“I don’t understand,” Gabriel replied.

The centaur snorted. “Of course you don’t, but the trunk has the information you will need.” The memory ended and Jaime watched as the year came up to last night and finding out about his birth family, and how they’d died, then finally he saw this morning and the opening of the trunk.

“You have had quite a year, Gabriel!”

Blushing, Gabriel said, “At times it has been a bit much. Hey! Your Da’ said you had a surprise.”

“Yes, but you will have to let go of me first.”

Gabriel let go of his friend and scooted back a bit. Slowly the Selkie's skin shifted and moved as Jaime’s human form slid out.

“Jaime, oh wow!” Gabriel exclaimed as he looked at his friend’s new form. A slender boy stood before him with milk-pale skin, black ringlets which framed his face in a halo, and black eyes which
were currently sparkling with amusement. Recovering from his shock Gabriel grabbed his friend up in a hug, and grinned widely as arms hugged him back. “This is so exciting! I can’t wait to show you everything!”

Jaime laughed, a soft melodious sound. “Maybe some clothes first?”

Gabriel blushed then walked over to where everyone else was sitting. Grabbing the dry beach towel he wrapped it around his friend's waist. “There, that will do until we get to my room and you can borrow something of mine, we seem to be about the same size.”

“Can I Da’?” asked Jaime.

“Of course, do you want to keep your skin with you, or would you like me to put it with mine?”

Before Jaime could answer, Gabriel spoke twisting the hem of his tees shirt in nervousness. “Actually I wanted to talk to you about that. Could I brush your coats? I am collecting potions ingredients and I know Selkie hair is hard to get.”

“I don’t mind,” answered Jaime.

“It is fine with me. Jaime why don’t you take your skin to Gabriel’s room, and he can brush it while you explore.”

“This is just amazing!” Jaime gasped as he walked around the room touching everything. Gabriel grinned remembering how much he'd loved to touch the different fabrics when he had first got here. Jaime lay down on the bed. “This is what you sleep on?”

“Yes, it’s my bed.”

“It’s comfy,” Jaime grinned. “So what’s that?”

For the next hour Gabriel explained everything in his room. They looked at all of his clothes, toys, weapons, art supplies, instruments, and books. More carefully they went through the photo albums and the scrapbook of Gabriel’s past as Harry Potter and his parents.

Gabriel watched as Jaime fiddled with the small telly that was also a VHS player. They had found a reliable and small solar system which was strong enough to run the telly so they could watch movies. “Would you like to watch a movie?”

Jaime looked puzzled for a moment, “I guess so.”

Gabriel laughed, “They are really fun. They are stories with pictures. If you don’t like it we can always do something else.” Setting up the telly, Gabriel grabbed a movie. “I got to see this one at the cinema, and Adonis found it for me just the other day. I think you will like ‘Labyrinth’.”

June 20th 1988

The week had flown by. Jaime and Gabriel spent all their time together exploring both of their worlds. Gabriel was able to find balance with all of the new information he had been given, and was feeling good about his future. Vincent and Mudiwa had snuck away several times, and Adonis and Luca had become very affectionate. Everyone was in good spirits when they said goodbye to the Selkie family, promising to return the next year. Gabriel had a list of food Jaime wanted to try next year, and had promised to get as many of them as he could.
Gabriel chose to ride with his Baba and Dad to Ottery St. Catchpole. He hadn’t gotten a chance to read any of the books from the trunk and wanted to get started. Opening the history book, Gabriel began to run his hand over the pages, quickly taking in all the information written there. Images filled his mind as the information flowed into him. Atlantis and Lumeria, powerful centers of magic, a war and both civilizations left in ruins. The survivors beginning the powerful and advanced civilizations of Japan, China and Tibet, Egypt, Rome, Athens, and Meso America. Gabriel marveled at the advancements, knowledge, and good which came from these ancient cultures. He learned about how magical and non-magical people lived together. He watched as the world and people grew up until the date the book was written, just over a thousand years ago.

Gabriel's eyes fluttered open, his gaze unfocused as the information settled and his mind became clear once again.

“Are you okay?” his Dad asked.

Gabriel cleared his throat. “Yes, I’m okay. Wow, that was a rush! How long have I been out for?”

“Three hours; we will be in Ottery St. Catchpole soon. Did you finish the book?”

“Yes, it was easy. I don’t think anyone ever read it after it was copied down; there isn’t any emotion in it at all. I can’t wait to do more.”

The music of Mozart filled the tent as Gabriel placed books on the shelves, just as he did every year. Severus smiled as he watched the boy happily humming along with the violins, his black hair in a tight braid. He was wearing denims and a light green shirt with what looked to be Russian embroidery decorating the cuffs, collar, and hem. Severus couldn’t help but smile as the boy’s emerald green eyes found him and lit with happiness.

“Professor Snape! Hello, how are you? Did you have a good year? I brought you something special this year.”

Snape chuckled, how did boys talk so quickly without breathing? “I am fine. It was as good as teaching dunderheads can ever be. Let me get my standard ingredients before I indulge in your more exotic fare.”

“Okay, just let me know when you are ready.”

Just as Severus was almost finished going through the materials set aside for him, Freja and Elena came into the tent.

“Professor Snape, good to see you again,” said Freja cheerfully.

“Ms. Nef,” replied Severus inclining his head.

“I would like to introduce Elena Ermo. Elena this is Professor Snape, Potions master, a Professor at Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry and, most importantly, one of our best and favorite customers.”

Despite his best efforts Severus’ cheeks tinged pink. There was something about these people which broke through his barriers. Reaching out his hand he shook the one Elena offered to him. “It is nice to meet you, Miss. Ermo.”
Elena smiled, “Thank you, it is a pleasure to finally meet you. I am hoping you will spare me a few moments to tell me and perhaps show me what you are looking for in the materials we supply you with. Freja has been training me, but as English isn’t my first language sometimes seeing things is better.”

Wanting an explanation Severus quirked an eyebrow at Freja. “I am retiring, this will be my last trip here for Summer Solstice and Elena has a knack for herbs and plants so she is taking over.”

“I am sorry to see you go.” Severus said sincerely his deep voice rich and warm. “It has been a pleasure to work with someone competent for once.” Turning to Elena he said in flawless Italian. “I am sure we will be able to communicate just fine. My maternal grandparents were Italian and I learned much of what I know about potions from them.”

Severus explained what he liked and disliked about different items to Elena as he finished sorting through them. Most of the conversation was in English in deference to Freja and Gabriel, but when needed they would speak in Italian. As Severus packed up his purchases, Freja and Elena left the tent to put away their new stock of potions and help set up for the festival the next day. Once he had finished Severus spoke: “Gabriel, come and show me your amazing, mysteriously gathered ingredients.”

Gabriel smiled and walked over to the case he used, he was just about to open it when a strange man walked into the tent.

“Mysterious ingredients, Snivellus? Maybe I should take a look at those.”

Snape whipped around, wand in his hand. ‘What are you doing here Black?” he sneered.

“Why I have been fully restored as an Auror. And you, Snivellus, are buying illegal potions ingredients no doubt,” Sirius Black taunted, drawing his wand from his scarlet robes with a flourish.

“I didn’t know insanity was a requirement for being an Auror,” Severus stated coldly.

Sirius froze in anger his eyes becoming hard. “Dump everything on the table now, Snape.”

Gabriel had seen enough, he didn’t know who this Sirius Black was, but he was insulting his friend and saying they sold illegal potions materials! This was going to stop now. Walking forward he placed himself between the two men. “Sir, I do not know who you are, but we only see customers by appointment today. Tomorrow you may come back when we are open to the public.”

Both men blinked and looked down at the boy, eyes flashing with anger, and yet his body was loose, arms hanging at his side just as Soto had taught him – a perfect fighting stance.

Sirius snorted. “I will leave once I make sure he hasn’t bought anything illegal here.”

Gabriel narrowed his eyes. “How dare you! How dare you say that we would sell illegal potions ingredients!” Sirius blinked at the outrage on the child’s face. “We have all of the updated documents, both for ourselves and from the ministry on the regulation and control of dangerous and volatile substances. We are always careful about what we sell and transport. Don’t you have to have some sort of document saying you have the right to search our tent?”

Sirius held up his hands in surrender. “I don’t want to search your stuff, just Snape’s.”

“And yet you expect to find something wrong. Everything he has came from here.”

“I am not out to get you, even if I found something I wouldn’t turn you in. I just want him!” Sirius
exclaimed.

“Professor Snape is one of our best customers and a dear friend. I will not allow this to continue; what you are doing is wrong. You need to leave now, we will be open to the general public tomorrow.” Gabriel said dismissively.

While both men were speechless, Gabriel wondered where all of that had come from, maybe he was getting more from his gift than just information, he would have to talk to his fathers about it later.
Chapter Forty

Severus looked down in amazement at the boy who defended him so fiercely. No one had ever fought to protect him; even his mother had used distraction rather than head-on defense. Looking into Black’s face, his mouth slack in shock, Snape smirked.

When Black saw the smirk his shock turned to anger. Quickly he advanced on the boy. “How dare you…” he began as Snape also stepped forward in order to protect the child.

A shadow fell over both men. They turned and needed to look up to see the man suddenly standing before them. Black gulped; at 6’ 1” he rarely had to look up, but this man was huge and not only tall but broad.

His deep voice rumbled through all of them. “What is going on here?”

Both of the adults opened their mouths to answer, but Gabriel beat them to it. His voice came out sounding soft and innocent and in direct contrast to how he’d sounded just seconds before. “Baba, Auror Black doesn’t have an appointment. I told him he could come back tomorrow, then he called Professor Snape a rude name.”

Mudiwa bit his lip trying not to blow Gabriel’s act. Auror Black’s mouth had dropped open yet again in shock, and Professor Snape seemed torn between amusement and suspicion.

“Auror Black, is there a problem I should know about? And why were you speaking to my son about such adult matters?”

Sirius gathered himself up. “Snape is a Death Eater. I was merely making sure he wasn’t purchasing anything illegal.”

Mudiwa cocked his head to the side and said, “Headmaster Dumbledore hired him. I doubt he would hire a Death Eater.”

Snape drew himself up and stood stock-still. He did not like where this conversation was going.

Black crowed in triumph, “Just look at his left arm!”

A small hand reached out and grabbed Snape’s left forearm right over the Dark Mark. “Professor Snape is a good man and our friend. I don’t need to know anything else.”

“Maybe I should check all of your documents? Maybe they are all forged if you choose to consort with a Death Eater.” Sirius Black sneered as his hated enemy continued to be defended.

“You are certainly welcome to; just so you know however, Mr. Weasley, Mr. Diggory, and Mrs. Bones provide us with the majority of our legal documents which make our travels possible. They will all be here tomorrow if you would like to verify it with them.” Seeing a shape moving outside the tent Mudiwa shouted, “Adonis!”

Adonis popped into the tent. “Yes, what I can I do for you? Oh, hello Professor Snape; how are you doing? I hope the urchins weren’t too hard on you this year.”
Severus smirked, Sirius sneered, Gabriel glared and Mudiwa sighed. “Can you please get Vincent and the folder?”

Adonis’s golden eyebrows shot up. “Of course I’ll be right back.”

“While we are waiting, Gabriel, why don’t you show Professor Snape what you’ve brought him this year?” Gabriel turned to look into his Baba’s gray eyes. After a moment of silent communication he glared viciously at Black, then turned a bright smile on Severus.

Moving over to the table Gabriel opened the large case. Easily he removed the vials and jars of snake materials. Severus looked over them all. “These are very good quality, just like last time. I was able to develop a potion to help heal the effects of the Cruciatus curse with the venom you collected last year. These are wonderful, and I will take most of them. But you said you had something special.”

Sirius quirked an eyebrow at this, the amount of snake ingredients on the table already seemed special to him, but the wild smile on Gabriel’s face told a different story.

Dramatically Gabriel pulled two squat glass jars out of the case. One held several silvery-white hairs, and the other many rich brown hairs. Severus took the jar with the white hair. “Unicorn?” he asked a bit breathless. “There are so many. They are beautiful; well done.” Gabriel beamed and handed over the other jar. Severus looked puzzled turning the jar carefully over in his hands. The hairs were a deep brown, thick and short. He could feel a magical aura to them, something fluid and almost musical. After a few minutes Severus looked into happy green eyes. “I give up. What are they?”

Gabriel’s eyes sparkled happily as he whispered, “Selkie.”

Severus smiled in glee at what he was holding. “How did you get these?”

Sirius watched as the boy waved his hands dismissively, “Oh it was rather simple and boring. I would tell you, but I don’t want to ruin the mystery.”

Severus snorted, while they continued to talk, a small woman with short blond hair walked up and held out a thick leather folder. “Auror Black, here are all of our documents, including passports.”

Sirius cleared his throat; he hadn’t meant things to go this far. He wasn’t here on official business, he was just harassing Snape. “Thank you, I am sure everything is in order.” He flipped through the folder pretending he was looking over the documents in front of him, half of which he didn’t understand.

Freja smiled smugly and asked, “Did you solve your rat problem?”

For a second Sirius had no idea what she was talking about, and then he remembered. Last year he had been fed and then went to the Weasleys! She had told him where to go, and Gabriel was the little boy who had found him, and wanted to keep him. “I had forgotten about meeting all of you. Um, yes, thank you I did solve my problem. In fact I owe all of you a great debt.”

Mudiwa raised an eyebrow and made a show of looking down at him. Looking over his shoulder he saw his husband enter the tent.

“Auror Black, I was told there was a problem. I am Vincent Dragonheart.”

Sirius took the offered hand. “Mr. Dragonheart, I am afraid this is all my fault. I am sorry.” Closing the folder he handed it to Vincent and prepared to leave.

“Well, I am grateful there isn’t a problem, however I just got here so I doubt it is me that is owed an
apology.” Vincent said smoothly.

Sirius flushed in embarrassment as the others softly snickered. Drawing himself up he walked over to Gabriel and Snape. “Gabriel, I apologize for my behavior and words; both were uncalled for.”

“Thank you, apology accepted, and as I said earlier you are welcome to come back tomorrow.” The gypsies smiled with pride at their son.

Gritting his teeth Sirius said, “Snape. I apologize for my behavior.”

Severus smirked and folded his arms across his chest. He had always wanted Sirius in this position. He was thinking about not accepting his apology. Severus had opened his mouth when he felt a small hand on his arm. Looking down into hopeful green eyes, Severus sighed. “Apology accepted, Black.”

The tension grew until, predictably, Adonis broke it. “So are we going to see you tomorrow, Professor Snape?”

“Unfortunately not, I am attending a function at Malfoy Manor.”

Adonis grinned. “Well, this just isn’t fair! One year it has to be our turn to have you.”

Severus smirked, Sirius gaped and Freja sighed in frustration. “Auror Black, will we see you at the Solstice celebration tomorrow?”

“I have been invited to spend the day with the Weasleys,” he answered.

“Good,” Mudiwa said, “then we will see you tomorrow. They always attend.”

Turning to Severus, Vincent asked, “Do you need anything for the kids, Professor?”

Severus grimaced, “I should get something. It has become a ritual and I fear what they would do to me if I didn’t show up with something.”

“I have a box all ready for you,” Freja answered. “It has ribbon wands and magical face paint in it. We found a wonderful recipe for a color-changing paint on our travels and had great success in making it.”

Sirius, having not stuck his foot in his mouth for a bit, spoke without thinking. “Squibs can make potions?”

Mudiwa answered, his deep voice cool. “We do have magic in us, and with practice we can make simple potions which rely more on the properties of the ingredients than the magical power of the brewer.”

Sirius, his ego still stinging from having to apologize, turned to Snape. “I guess you wouldn’t be so hard to replace after all.”

Gabriel snapped, “Do you know anything at all about potions?”

“Stop, we are not getting into another fight!” insisted Freja. “Cherub, honey, have you finished with Professor Snape?”

“No, I will do that right now.” Gabriel took Severus’ arm and pulled him so his back was to the
group. Waving his hand he indicated he wanted him to bend down. Severus sighed, but bent over so
the boy could whisper in his ear; he did not miss the sharp intake of breath from Adonis as he did so.
“Can you check my eyes? I have been getting headaches and sometimes the words in my book are a
bit blurry.”

Severus’s brown wrinkled in concentration as he frowned a bit. Pulling out his wand he cast a
diagnostic charm on the boy. Recognizing the results he stepped back. “I will return in a moment.”
Gathering up the box he'd already paid for he walked out of the tent, and they heard the crack of
Apparition.

“Are you all right?” Mudiwa asked, scooping up his son.

“I am fine, Baba. But I have been getting headaches and sometimes the words are a bit blurry, that's
all.”

“Why didn’t you say something?” Vincent asked as he ran his hand across his son’s back.

“I just noticed it a few days ago. Anyway this will be a good trade.”

Less than ten minutes later, Professor Snape popped back in. Only, Gabriel, Adonis and Vincent
were in the tent now. Severus sighed, grateful that Black was gone, the stupid mutt. “Here, drink
this.”

Gabriel took the vial of murky, sky-blue potion, and quickly downed it. It tasted awful and Gabriel’s
face wrinkled as the bitter liquid slid thickly down his throat. After a moment Gabriel felt magic
swirling in his eyes. Once it stopped he carefully opened his eyes, and gasped at how clear
everything was. “Oh wow, this is great! I didn’t realize my vision was that bad!”

Severus grunted. “Do you normally take potions without asking what they are?”

Gabriel grinned. “Only from those I trust. Now I am sure you want to get home and play with your
new goodies, so let’s get this done.”

Vincent laughed. “I will leave you to it. Have a good year, Professor Snape.”

“And you, Mr. Dragonheart.”

“I should be off too, do you need anything else?” Adonis asked, slowly raking his eyes down
Severus’ black-clad form.

“I think I can manage on my own,” Snape replied, smirking.

“If you ever change your mind?” Adonis trailed off teasingly as he left the tent.

Severus shook his head and turned back to the now grinning boy. “I think you know too much.”

Gabriel laughed happily. “Adonis really likes you. I think if he ever thought you took him seriously
he would be too nervous to flirt with you. So, the jar of Selkie hair for the fixing of my eyes, what
about the rest?”

Severus filled the information about Adonis away for later, and began to barter with Gabriel, yet
again getting thousands of galleons worth of material for almost nothing, leaving both Gabriel and
Severus happy.
June 21st 1988

Sirius watched as the Weasley family ran around the house in apparent chaos. He missed living here. The first six months after his escape from Azkaban and the capture of Peter Pettigrew, who had been happily living as Percy’s pet rat, Sirius had lived here in the Burrow. His name was still on the clock. The constant noise, warmth, and the scent of food cooking had helped him regain his sanity and heal from the cold misery of Azkaban. He had spent a lot of time with the twins, teaching them everything he knew. He had also enjoyed playing with Ron and Ginny. It had helped his sorrow at the loss of his own godson, Harry Potter. Sighing, Sirius realized that for some reason he didn’t feel as depressed about Harry, not since visiting the gypsies the day before. Sirius shrugged, maybe Molly’s ‘mother’s intuition’ was rubbing off on him at last.

Suddenly Molly’s shriek filled the air. “Any one not touching this portkey in one minute will be left behind!” Loud thumping filled the air as everyone including Sirius ran to Molly and grabbed a bit of the old shoe they were using.

Sirius was nervous as they walked closer to the tents; he was worried that he wouldn’t be welcome after what happened yesterday. He held his breath when he saw Gabriel. “Mrs. Weasley!” he called out and running over gave her a big hug.

“Cherub! How are you going? My goodness, look at you! You have grown so big!”

“I am great!” Looking around the Weasley clan and waving hello he noticed someone was missing. “Where’s Bill?”

Before Mrs. Weasley could answer the twins stepped up. Fred had dramatically thrown his hand over his head while George was grasping his chest. “Cherub, how could you?”

“Aren’t we enough for you?”

“How many redheads do you need at one time anyway?”

Gabriel laughed. “Prats!”

“Really,” Mrs. Weasley said with fond exasperation. “Bill got a summer internship at Gringotts bank learning to be a curse breaker. He will be here in time for the performance, but couldn’t get away earlier.”

“That is wonderful! Has he finished school?” Gabriel asked.

“He still has one more year of school,” Molly said with obvious pride at her son’s accomplishment. “And Percy begins Hogwarts this year.”

“That’s wonderful, Percy,” Gabriel said genuinely happy; he knew Percy couldn’t wait to get away from the twins. “Good afternoon, Auror Black.”

Sirius blushed, “Hello Gabriel, and please, call me Sirius.”

“All right, Sirius. Well, anything special I can help you find today?” Gabriel asked graciously. He chuckled as every Weasley began speaking at once.

Later that evening after everyone had gone home, and the gypsies were just about to settle in for the night when they heard a loud crack. Everyone rushed towards the sound, yet when they saw a man
standing with two children and two large trunks most of them went back to their tents.

Vincent walked forward, tension filling his body with each step. Mudiwa and Gabriel followed, the negative emotions were almost more than Gabriel could block.

Pushing his children forward the man snarled, “They are nothing but worthless squibs and I won’t have them in my house one more moment! They have been disowned; there is money and most of their possessions in the trunk. I don’t care what happens to them, but my wife asks you try and make sure they are well cared for.” With that he vanished with a crack, his children looking shell shocked and heartbroken.

Vincent sighed. “Hello, I am Vincent Dragonheart. What are your names?”

The boy looked up, his brown eyes filled with shame. “I am Mercury and this is Athena. Our last name use to be Parkinson, but when father disowned us…”

Athena sniffed. “We’re twins and we turned eleven in May, when our Hogwarts letters didn’t come, father did a test to see what our magic levels are, just to make sure there wasn’t a mistake.”

“I am so sorry; we will take care of you and find a good place for you to live. Right now, are you hungry?” Both children shook their heads, no. “All right, then lets get you settled in for the night.”

“They can use my room,” Gabriel said.

Vincent smiled at his son. “Thank you, Gabriel.”

Gabriel smiled and went up to the scared children. “Come along, I’ll show you my room. My bed is big enough for both of you, Dad and Baba can bring your trunks.” Taking their hands he led them to the tents chatting happily along the way.

As soon as the children were out of sight, Mudiwa pulled Vincent into his arms holding him tightly. For as long as Vincent had been alive parents had abandoned their squib children, either leaving them directly with the troupe or dropping them off on a road they knew they traveled along. Every time Vincent found it upsetting, no matter how old he got. Pulling himself together, Vincent kissed Mudiwa, and together they walked back home.
Chapter Forty-one

April 11, 1991. Germany

Gabriel smiled; Mercury and Athena were doing well, and were happy with their new family in Belgium. “Did Athena send a picture of the fabric she designed?” Kamala asked. She was lying against his chest as he read all of the letters Oma had forwarded to them.

“I’m not sure, check the envelope,” replied Gabriel smiling as his little sister enthusiastically tore into the envelope. Two photos fell out; one was of a deep blue fabric with small, white bell-shaped flowers and silver leaves. The other photo was of the beautiful silver dagger Mercury had made. It had taken a month for Vincent to feel comfortable finding a place for the squib twins, finally he had settled on a village in Belgium which made fabrics and metalwork for the Wizarding world. There was a Potions master who lived in the village and made all the potions they added to the fabrics and metal, so they could create very powerful and sought-after items.

“Gabriel,” Kamala drew out his name singing it sweetly, her large, almond-shaped brown eyes focused intently on his.

Gabriel quirked an eyebrow at his four-year-old sister. “Yes?”

Smiling, she crawled up onto his lap facing him, and placing both her hands on his face she leaned in and gave him a kiss. “I love you, you’re the bestest big brother in the whole world.”

Gabriel smirked. “What do you want now, princess?”

She shoved the photo of the fabric in his face, “I want a dress made of this fabric!”

“It is very lovely fabric, should I put that down on your list?” Kamala had begun asking for so many things during their travels that Naveen had created an imaginary ‘list’ of everything she wanted. Every time she asked for something they would say it would go on her ‘list’ and she would be happy and move on to something else.

Kamala pouted, “I don’t ever seem to get things that go on the list.”

Gabriel chuckled, “Oh, really? And what, pray tell, are you missing, princess?”

“Well, I don’t know, but I don’t have a dress made of Athena’s fabric.”

“Your wish is my command, princess.” Gabriel said laughing, and then tickled her until they were both breathless.

“Did we read all the letters?” Kamala asked once she caught her breath.

“I’m not sure; let’s check.” Gabriel picked up the scattered envelopes and settled himself back on his bed. Once Kamala had plopped back on his chest he went through them one at a time. “Oma’s letter.”
“We read that one. She sounds happy, we will see her soon, right?” Kamala asked.

“Yes, next week,” he answered. He was looking forward to seeing Oma again and to meeting Ann, whom Oma had mentioned several times. “What about Naanii?”

“Yes, she said she is doing well, and hoping we can visit soon.”

“Luca?”

“Yes, he is getting married next year and is hoping we can come to the wedding!” Kamala bounced a bit on the bed. “A dress made from Athena’s fabric would be perfect for a wedding.”

Gabriel laughed at his little sister, “You are crazy! Look it's almost one o’clock, I have to go and train with Soto, so why don’t you take the photo and show your maataa and pitaa.* We can play again later.”

Kamala pouted for a moment then said, “Okay, but you and Soto have to play hide-n-seek with me later.”

Gabriel shook his head as he watched his sister flounce out of his room. Taking a deep breath he looked around his room to remind himself that this was real, he really was loved and had been living with his family for almost five years now. Sometimes, he was afraid he would wake up back in the Dursleys’ cupboard, and all of this would turn out to be just a beautiful dream. The map, which still hung over his bed, was covered in lines and pins showing five years' worth of traveling. Quickly he changed into forest green trousers and top, which just matched the deep green of the pine tree that dominated the forest they were camping in. Seeing he still had ten minutes, Gabriel tidied up his room. He put all his dirty clothes in the hamper and gathered up the books that had come from the founders. He placed them one by one into the chest, as no one could open it but him, and while he trusted his family he couldn’t risk them falling into anyone else’s hands. He read the titles of each book as he put it away to make sure he'd gathered them all.

Gabriel smiled as he held the books, he felt very close to the founders, whose personalities were still bound in their writings. Fourth level Potions, Dark Arts and their Defense, and Mind Magic Level One were all by Salazar Slytherin. Slytherin was very focused when he wrote, but would suddenly jump up as his subconscious mind would come up with a solution to an experiment and he would rush off to see if it would work. Magical Beings Level Two, Healing Arts Level Two, and Political Science Level Two were written by Helga Hufflepuff who remembered personal experiences and stories as she wrote about different topics. Rowena Ravenclaw wrote everything from a detailed outline and preferred to write in the evening with a glass of red wine and the fire blazing. She was the author of his Fourth Level Arithmancy, Runes and Charms books. Chuckling to himself, Gabriel put away Godric Gryffindor’s Fourth Level Care of Magical Creatures, Herbology and Transfiguration texts. Godric was always jumping between them as he wrote, having trouble sitting still, and easily getting sidetracked.

Looking up at the clock Gabriel grinned, it was time to play and if he could stay hidden from Soto for an hour he won. Gabriel hurried; Soto was only giving him a twenty-minute head start.

Gabriel had quickly and quietly moved through the dense forest, having found a large bush he crawled underneath and tucked himself up against the trunk. He should be well hidden here, and if he hadn’t disturbed the surrounding foliage, Soto would hopefully pass him by. Gabriel listened so he could hear Soto moving through the forest. He could hear something crashing through the trees, and the birds' squawks as they were upset and flew away. Staying still, Gabriel watched the trees,
whatever it was it was headed his way – and it wasn’t Soto.

Four rough-looking men forced their way between the trees, one of them was holding a rope which held the wrists of five people: one badly beaten man with wheat brown hair and a dirty, torn, cardigan sweater; a woman and three children who all had dirty reddish hair, torn clothes and sported cuts and bruises on their faces and arms. The largest of the men grabbed the rope and barked out, “We will stay here for the night. Mike and Tyler – go and find food; Karl – get enough wood to last us through the night.”

Turning to his prisoners he snapped, “Sit down!” and shoved the man to the ground and then kicked him, getting a moan of pain from the man. The woman gathered the children in her arms and tried to make them look as small as possible. Gabriel was pissed off with this, and determined to get these people free. He hoped Soto had heard the commotion and was headed this way. Releasing his shields, Gabriel tried to determine who and what he was dealing with. Carefully he let his magic flow over the area, he kept it soft and non-invasive, just reading the surface so that no one, not even a wizard, would be able to tell he was there. All four of them were werewolves, which was good to know as magic affected them differently. The five prisoners were magical, and their guard also a werewolf had a bit of magic but not much more than a squib.

Gabriel cast a silencing charm around the clearing, very grateful that he was capable of wandless, wordless magic. When the leader sat down against a pine tree, Gabriel saw his chance. Calling on the elemental magic he asked the tree to wrap its braches around the man, holding him tight. Gabriel smiled; the tree moved quickly and soon the man was yelling obscenities and struggling to get away. The woman and her children looked on in fear as the tree captured the man and he suddenly passed out, Gabriel on the other hand was rather proud of his sleep spell. Slowly he moved out of the bush and into the clearing, keeping his hands visible. “Hello, my name is Gabriel and I would like to help you.”

The woman sobbed with relief. “Please hurry, there are others out there, and I’m sure they heard him screaming.”

Gabriel pulled out his pocketknife and knelt to cut the ropes around their wrists, his jaw clenched as he saw the children flinch as his knife got close to them. “My family is camped not far from here, maybe a mile; can you walk that far?”

“We will,” the woman said, determined to get her kids to safety.

“Why don’t you search their packs for some water, while I see to the other prisoner.”

“Lupin, his name is Remus Lupin. He found us three days ago and tried to free us.”

Gabriel nodded and bent down, first cutting the rope which bound Lupin then doing a quick scan. He didn’t want anyone to know he could do magic, but he needed to know how badly hurt the man was. Lupin was badly injured, but he could be safely moved. Standing, he whipped around as he heard a noise in the brush, then he breathed a sigh of relief as Soto stepped into the clearing.

“The other three are no longer a problem,” Soto stated simply.

Gabriel nodded, he would ask later. “Mr. Lupin here has passed out and is badly injured, can you carry him back to camp?”

Soto switched to Japanese, “Can you make him lighter?”

“No,” Gabriel answered flawlessly, “he has internal injuries and I don’t know how the charm will
affect them.”

Going back to English, Soto said, “Let’s go,” and bent down, scooping up the injured man.

“Are you ready?” Gabriel asked the family.

The woman was digging through the last pack when she gasped in delight and pulled out two wands, which she quickly tucked into her waistband.

“Ready,” she said grabbing her kids’ hands. They moved through the forest as quickly as they could. Even with his burden Soto moved swiftly and effortlessly through the trees. The mother kept up a constant stream of encouragement, urging her children to keep moving. Unfortunately they were tired, hungry, and weak. A sharp cry and a shout of “Lilac!” made them all stop. The oldest child, a girl, had fallen and was gripping her ankle tightly in both hands.

Gabriel knelt down and gently held her foot, instantly he knew she had twisted it badly. “You can’t walk on this. I will carry you.”

Lilac flushed with embarrassment, “Mum?”

“I am sorry, sweetheart, but I can’t fix it. I have never been able to do healing charms,” her mum said looking unhappy. Her daughter was about the same size as Gabriel and the terrain was bumpy, if they both fell they could be badly injured.

Gabriel softly placed his hand on her forearm, “Lilac will be fine, I can carry her, Miss.”

The woman smiled. “Please call me Rose, are you sure? I can try…”

“I am in much better condition than you are right now. You’re exhausted, and I bet they haven’t been feeding you well either. Help your other two kids; I will take care of Lilac.”

Rose nodded. “Tristan, Marigold, let’s go.”

Gabriel smiled softly at Lilac. “I’m going to turn around and I need you to wrap your arms around my shoulders. Once I stand up I will hold onto your legs, if anything feels uncomfortable or if you can’t hold on just let me know.”

Lilac, still blushing, simply nodded. Gabriel turned around, knelt and scooted back so she could easily climb onto his back. Once her arms were securely around his shoulders, Gabriel stood up slowly. Lilac squeaked and instinctively wrapped her legs around his waist. Gabriel held onto her legs just above her knees, grateful she was wearing denims. “Okay?”

“Yes.” They began to walk again. It was slow going, but thirty minutes later they could hear sounds from camp.

“We’re almost there, just a bit more,” Gabriel said. He wanted to call out to his fathers, but they weren’t inside the protective circle yet. Both Soto and Gabriel sighed with relief as they passed into the circle. “Dad! Baba!” Gabriel called out; everyone needed help at this point.

Everyone in camp turned and soon they were surrounded. Mudiwa took Mr. Lupin from Soto. “Bring him to our tent; I have most of the healing potions there,” Elena said to Mudiwa. Turning to Soto she wrapped her arms around him. “Are you okay?”

Soto smiled and held onto her for a moment. “I am unhurt. Come, we need to tend to Mr. Lupin.”
“Wait!” Rose shouted. She looked nervously at the ground. “Before you treat him I think you should know, he’s- actually all of us, are werewolves.”

“Thank you for letting me know. I think one of the potions has some wolfsbane in it, I will make sure not to use it.” Elena said simply, shocking the woman.

Vincent came up behind Gabriel and spoke softly to Lilac: “Let go, sweetheart, and I will carry you over by the fire where you can rest.”

Gabriel sighed as the girl was lifted off his back. She wasn’t that heavy, and due to the performances he did, especially 'statue', he was used to holding people up, although not for so long and while walking. He smiled as he saw Kamala take the youngest child’s hand and led the little girl to the fire. Adonis came forward and led the woman and her son to the others, supporting them as it was needed. Gabriel went to the bathroom cupboard where they kept several healing salves and brought them out to the fire, where Naveen was passing out tea and sandwiches, which they had already prepared.

Gabriel sat in front of Lilac and once again took her foot in his hands. He carefully removed the shoe and sock and then rubbed the ankle with a salve made by Professor Snape. Instantly he felt her relax.

“All right, first things first,” Vincent said. “Are there any other injuries which need immediate attention?”

“No, I don’t think so,” the mother answered. "Kids?” They all shook their heads.

“Let me talk with my son, and once I know what is going on we can figure out what to do from there. For now, just relax.” Vincent stood and walked away from the circle. Gabriel quickly followed his dad. Once they were out of sight, Vincent turned and wrapped his arms around Gabriel. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, Dad.”

“Good. Now what do I need to know?”

“The man is badly hurt, I think I should go and see if they need my help. She is a witch, and four werewolves took them. I don’t know what happened to three of them, Soto dealt with those, but the leader is under a sleep spell. I had a tree bind him, but released him as we left.”

“Will the circle keep them away?”

“It should, but we might want to leave in the morning.”

“Okay, I will get Rose and her kids cleaned up and set up a tent for them. You go and help Mr. Lupin.” Giving his son one last hug, Vincent walked back.

Gabriel took a deep breath as he entered Soto and Elena’s tent. They had become a couple two years ago, and had chosen to share a tent last year. Gabriel liked them being together, they both seemed very happy. “How is he?”

“So far we have cut his clothes off of him to check for injuries and broken bones. We were able to get him to drink a simple healing potion, and we were just about to clean and treat the cuts and bruises,” Elena answered.

“Will I be in the way if I sit by his head and work from there?”
“Please do; he needs more help than I can give him, although his pulse is strong and his breathing steady.”

Gabriel sat cross-legged by Remus’s head. Carefully Gabriel slid his hands under Remus’s skull and held it firmly allowing his magic to flow out of his hands and into Remus. Slowly Gabriel moved through Remus’s body, careful to find every injury and heal it the best he could. When he finally opened his eyes, Remus was clean and covered by a thick blanket. His Baba and Dad were sitting at the end of the bed and did not look happy. Carefully Gabriel moved to the edge of the bed, he didn’t notice when Mudiwa also moved and blinked in shock when he was standing beside the bed. “Is something wrong?” he asked.

“Other than you have been in trance and using magic to heal this man for an hour, and that we couldn’t get you out? No; everything is just fine,” snapped Vincent sarcastically.

Gabriel smiled; he loved it when they worried about him. “Dad, I'm fine.”

Standing up Gabriel swayed and then passed out.

*Maataa- mother in Hindi
Pitaa- Father in Hindi
April 12, 1991. Germany

Gabriel slowly came to consciousness; his body ached and he groaned low in his throat as he turned onto his side. He could hear the sounds of the camp being packed, and smelled a large breakfast cooking. Gabriel was confused, why were they having a large breakfast? And then he remembered Rose, her children and Mr. Lupin. A book closed and was set down.

“Gabriel, are you awake?”

Gabriel slowly opened his eyes and smiled reassuringly at Kamala. “Yeah.”

Kamala grinned then yelled, “Uncle Vincent, he’s awake! You are in so much trouble,” she told him.

“You seem very happy about that,” Gabriel snapped as he tried to remember what he had done.

“Stupid boy,” hissed Aurora, “what were you thinking? I did not help you learn the Founders' magic so you could endanger yourself!”

“Aurora I’m fine, I just overdid it a bit.”

“A bit! A bit he says. Oh, now Aurora, I understand you are a thousand-year-old magical snake, but really I do know SO much better than you.” Gabriel wisely suppressed a smirk, as the angry snake was now on his chest, her head raised and waving back and forth in angry harsh movements. “I will stop helping you if you do not take better care of yourself!”

“Mr. Lupin needed help.”

“Yes, he did,” Aurora interrupted, “but did you stop when he was safe enough? Did you even realize you were using your own magic? I have taught you how to channel magic from the very air, why would you use your own?”

“I’m sorry! I was worried that I wouldn’t be able to heal him, and at first I was so focused on sending in healing energy that it was a while before I realized I was using my own magic, and then I was worried if I switched it would hinder the healing.” Gabriel pleaded for her to understand.

“Oh, you did not just say that you realized you were giving him your own magic! Stupid stupid boy – you must be one of Godric’s!”

Vincent stormed into his son’s room intent on yelling at Gabriel for scaring all of them so badly, when he saw Gabriel pleading and arguing with a very angry snake. Vincent sat in the chair deciding it was best to leave the tongue lashing to an expert. The hissing went on for ten minutes before Gabriel slumped back onto his bed, petulantly crossing his arms across his chest as Aurora slithered to the floor.
“That didn’t seem to go well,” Vincent commented.

Gabriel snorted, “I am to stay in bed, and not do any magic, including the circle, until Aurora decides I am ready.”

“Sounds like she is as worried about you as we are.” Vincent moved to his son’s bed and slowly carded his fingers through the long black locks. “Why, sweetheart, why did you do so much?”

Sad emerald eyes looked in his lavender ones. “I’m sorry I worried everyone, I didn’t mean to; but Dad, he was in so much pain. I just couldn’t…” Gabriel’s voice cracked as tears began to flow.

Vincent gathered his son up in his arms. “We were so scared. You were so pale and you wouldn’t wake up.”

“I’m sorry,” Gabriel mumbled, his face buried in his Dad’s neck.

“I understand, but you need to learn how to take care of yourself while taking care of others. No one wants you hurt or sick.” Vincent sighed. They would need to talk more about his later; right now they simply didn’t have the time or assured privacy. “Now let me update you on our visitors. We’ve told them all we are squibs – thankfully they have heard of our troupe – and that we trade with wizards, so the potions and wizard space was easily accepted. Rose and her kids are well; they need food, more rest and to get far away from the men who kidnapped them, but they will be fine soon. Mr. Lupin slept through the night, and woke this morning shocked at how well he feels. When we mentioned Professor Snape he easily accepted that the potions we gave him are why he healed so quickly.”

Gabriel pulled back so he could look up at his dad. “I’m glad they’re accepting things so easily. People really do see only what they want to.”

“This is true. Rose is a bit worried about you. Everyone else is up and about. We told her you were up late helping with Mr. Lupin. She accepted this as she thinks we all took turns standing guard last night.” Vincent gave Gabriel one last hug then stood up. “Breakfast is ready, and we are planning on leaving within the hour.”

“I’ll be out in a minute,” Gabriel said.

“Good,” Vincent said as he stood and walked out the door. “Oh, by the way, Aurora and I are not the only ones upset.”

Gabriel groaned, he was going to be apologizing all day! Hopefully the presence of the wizards would keep his family from babying him too much. Slowly he moved his aching body and got dressed. It was cold in the mornings, so he pulled on a pair of denims lined with flannel and a dark blue jumper. After lacing up a pair of boots, Gabriel quickly brushed out his hair and tied on a headscarf. Moving slowly he headed for the door, when he heard a hiss.

“I will be keeping an eye on you today,” Aurora informed him. Stifling a groan, Gabriel bent down so he wouldn’t get another talking to he allowed the beautiful black snake to climb up his arm and wrap around his neck and shoulders.

“Comfortable?” Gabriel asked trying to sound pleased she was with him.

“Rather comfortable, thank you. Oh, and by the way I know every muscle in your body aches, so don’t bother trying to hide things from me.”

“Brilliant,” he sighed. “You know I can’t talk to you while I am around outsiders.”
“Perfect, then you will have no excuse for not listening,” Aurora hissed pleased with herself. Gabriel groaned; this was going to be a very long day.

As soon as Gabriel stepped out of the tent he was scooped up and held tight. “Don’t you dare scare us like that again!”

“I’m sorry Baba,” he said clinging tightly to the large man.

After one last squeeze Mudiwa set his son down. “Let’s get some breakfast. You didn’t get any tea or dinner yesterday.”

Gabriel smiled. “I am hungry.”

As they neared the fire Adonis smiled, he wanted to jump up and make sure Gabriel was all right but they needed to play things down in front of their guests. “Cherub! You finally got your lazy backside out of bed I see.”

“Good morning Adonis. Have you eaten everything or is there something left for the rest of us?” Gabriel answered while finding a spot to sit down.

“I have been too busy cooking to eat yet, thank you very much.” Adonis said in an indignant tone and a smirk on his face.

“Oh dear, maybe I’ll just have tea,” Gabriel teased.

“Well then, I will just keep the blueberry pancakes to myself then.” The golden man replied, as he set down a huge platter of blueberry pancakes.

Gabriel widened his eyes and batted his long black lashes. “Please forgive me. I am but a young boy and I do not know any better. Is there anything I can do to help?” Mock innocence was pouring out of every word.

Adonis laughed, it was a warm friendly sound that put a smile on everyone’s face. “You are a brat! Sit down and pour yourself some juice, we have everything under control.”

Gabriel sat back on the pillows sipping a glass of orange juice, and smiled at Rose and her children. They looked much better this morning. All of the bruises and scratches had healed and they were in clean, warm clothes. Rose had dark auburn hair, and all three of her children had inherited the rich color.

“Lilac, how are feeling this morning?” Gabriel asked politely.

Lilac blushed as she answered. “Much better; my ankle has completely healed.”

“Good, I am glad the salve worked so well.”

“Cherub?” Rose asked.

“Yes.”

“Thank you so much for helping us yesterday. I owe you so much, and I don’t know how I could possibly repay you,” she said as tears gathered in her warm brown eyes.

Gabriel was just about to answer when a hoarse voice interrupted. “Yes, young man, you have helped us a great deal. I don’t know how much longer I could have survived their treatment.”
Gabriel turned and saw Mr. Lupin walking stiffly toward them, his brown and gray hair looked clean and soft after his shower. “Mr. Lupin you are looking much better this morning.”

Remus smiled and carefully sat down nest to Rose’s son Tristan. “Thank you, and please call me Remus. I understand that you helped to heal me.”

Gabriel smiled even as his breath stuck in his chest. “Well, I helped Soto and Elena.”

“And stayed up all night watching over him!” Rose added fiercely. “You look very tired this morning, and the others were worried about you.”

Gabriel was grateful when Adonis, Soto, Elena, and Mudiwa walked into the circle. “Okay,” said Adonis happily, “we have scrambled eggs, seasoned potatoes, blueberry pancakes are already on the table, plus butter and syrup.”

“Does anyone need anything else?” Elena asked as she set down a stack of plates.

Remus looked at the table and wished there was some tea, but didn’t want to seem rude.

“Sweetheart,” Vincent said teasingly as he joined them, “where is the tea?”

Their visitors jumped a bit as Mudiwa’s deep voice answered, “Back in the kitchen, where else.” Grinning he added, “I’ll be right back with it.”

“I’ll help,” said Soto.

Vincent went over and got himself a glass of juice and sat down next to Gabriel. “Please help yourself, not only are we not very formal, this really isn’t the setting for fancy manners.”

Remus chuckled, “I suppose not.”

Gabriel watched as everyone got their breakfast. Vincent had already given him a plate, with a meaningful glare that said he had better eat all of it. Aurora shifted around his neck. “You need to eat all of that to regain your energy.”

Gabriel just nodded, hoping no one noticed.

“What an interesting snake,” commented Remus as he sipped his tea.

“Thank you, I got her in India,” Gabriel answered.

Remus looked like he was going to ask about her, when Rose interrupted. “I noticed you are packing up everything, are we leaving this morning?”

Vincent answered, “Yes, we’re headed to Switzerland, where do you all need to go? Can we get you back to your families?”

Rose looked down at her plate, and her children sniffed sadly. “My husband works for the Ministry of Magic in London. He has been actively pushing for stronger regulation on dangerous Dark creatures, especially werewolves. That is why we were bitten, Grayback wanted to punish my husband by taking us away from him. Grayback is…” she began, but Soto held up a hand.

“We know who he is.”

“Yes, well my husband did all of the right things at the hospital, and in front of the press. However once we were home, he kicked us out. Grayback had us kidnapped just a few days later. We really
have nowhere to go.”

“There is werewolf colony living near my mum’s farm. You are welcome to travel with us and meet them,” Vincent offered. “And you, Remus?”

“I'm not sure; I need to get in touch with some people first.”

“He is hiding something,” hissed Aurora. Gabriel reached up and stroked her back. Weren’t they all hiding something, he thought.

“The full moon is in four days. We will be at the farm in three, and there are phones, owls or whatever you need there,” Mudiwa suggested.

Remus tipped his head. “Thank you for your kind offer, I would like to travel with you and meet this werewolf clan.”

“Lucas is a good man, I am sure he will help all of you during the full moon. Then afterwards you can decide what you want to do,” Vincent said noticing the unease of Rose and her children.

Remus perked up at the name. “I have heard of Lucas, he has helped a lot of werewolves escape cruel alphas.”

Rose calmed at hearing this. “I'm grateful you have somewhere safe for us to go. This will be our first transformation, and we're rather nervous.”

“That is understandable,” Elena said, her accented voice soft and soothing. “I am sure Lucas and his clan will do everything they can to make you as safe as possible.”

“Do they have a place where they lock themselves up?” Remus asked in a hopeful tone.

Gabriel tilted his head to the side trying to understand what Remus wanted. “No, they live in the mountains and are far away from people. It's safe for them to run around and just be wolves for the night.”

“We are not just wolves,” Remus said shaking his head sadly.

Gabriel snorted, “Well of course not! There is far too much human in you to be a wolf.”

“We do not keep our human minds when we transform, we are not safe dogs one can play with,” Remus argued feeling flustered.

“No, you're not. My point is that wolves are not monsters. It is the human aspect which makes werewolves so dangerous, not the animal,” Gabriel answered crossing his arms over his chest and settling in for a long debate.

Adonis groaned, “Not again. Remus please just agree with him or he will argue with you until you do.” Everyone chuckled and began to clean up their dishes once they saw Remus hold up his hands in surrender with a smirk. His amber eyes, however, were calculating.
Chapter Forty-three
April 16, 1991. Switzerland

Gabriel smiled as he saw Oma’s house as they drove through the valley. It had been an interesting few days; he and Kamala had spent most of their time with Lilac, Marigold, and Triston. They had played games, read and talked for hours. Kamala and Gabriel told wild stories of their travels, and answered questions about Oma’s farm and Lucas’s clan. Rose and Remus spent most of their time with the adults. Remus every now and then would talk to Gabriel asking him questions about his past, and what he had done to help heal him. Gabriel would just smile and be vague with his answers. Outside of the circle Gabriel needed to stay focused so no one would be able to recognize him as Harry Potter, and Remus was certainly looking. On the second night Remus had asked them if they had heard anything about the missing savior. They had found out Remus wasn’t actually looking for Harry, however he was vague about why he was out alone in the woods. At one point he mumbled something about an unknown evil in the forests of Romania.

Gabriel was brought back from his musings as the bus stopped. He and Kamala flew out of the bus and ran full speed. “Oma!”

“Cherub! Kamala! Come here and let me look at you,” Becky said as she hugged her grandchildren. “You both have grown so big! How are you doing? Are your parents treating you well? Because if not you can come and live with me.”

Gabriel and Kamala both laughed. “We’re fine, Oma, but I might take you up on living with you,” said Gabriel, who was feeling frustrated at the way everyone had babied him for the past three days.

Becky stood up and smiled at her son and his family. Taking Kamala’s and Gabriel’s hands she led them toward the house. “Come and have some lunch and tell me what you did wrong.” Gabriel gasped in outrage and Kamala laughed.

It was a lovely spring day, so Becky set up one of the large outside tables for their lunch. After everyone had been properly introduced, they sat down to sandwiches and hot cream of mushroom soup. Gabriel hummed at his first taste of soup, causing Becky to smile. Feeding Gabriel was always such fun.

“This is a lovely lunch, thank you for your hospitality, Mrs. Dragonheart,” Rose said as she finished helping her two younger kids get some lunch.

“Oh, please call me Becky dear, and it is my pleasure to have you here. Lucas hasn’t been down since I got the letter so he doesn’t know you’re here. I will go and get him and have him here in time for dinner.”

“Thank you, and please call me Rose.”

“Can I go with you and get Lucas, Oma?” Gabriel asked once he realized horses would be needed to get there and back by dinnertime.

“Me too, me too!” Kamala squealed, as always wanting to do whatever Gabriel did.

Naveen shook his head. “No, Kamala. The way up the mountain needs an experienced rider, and you haven’t had enough practice yet. However, if it’s okay with Becky I will take you riding through the valley.”
“It’s fine with me; let me take you to the barn after lunch and we’ll get set up.” Becky answered.

“I would like to go along,” Remus said softly.

Vincent thought for a moment. “I don’t think that would be a good idea, Remus. Lucas can be very ‘alpha’ especially with strangers. I think it would be better if we brought him to you.”

“Yes, he is very protective of his clan. He has helped many werewolves escape from abusive clans, and one way he keeps them safe is by no one knowing where they are,” Becky added, hoping Remus would understand.

Remus nodded. “All right.”

After lunch Rose and her kids went for a walk around the house; they enjoyed the company of the gypsies, but needed some time to themselves. So much had happened to them in a few short weeks.

Remus had walked over and sat down on a bench which overlooked the fields. Soto and Elena watched him as he hunched his shoulders in weariness. Soto looked over his shoulders and watched the others go to the barn. Elena squeezed his hand, and moved towards Remus. Smiling, Soto followed her. They had never invited anyone into their bed before, but they had talked about inviting Remus. They both liked Remus, and he wasn’t going to be a permanent fixture, so it couldn’t interfere with their relationship. Joining Remus on the bench they each sat on one side of him.

“Are you all right Remus?” Elena asked in her soft and warmly accented voice.

Remus' rough voice was quiet and a bit strained when he replied. “I'm just tired, confused and nervous.”

“The tired part I understand, but what about the confused and nervous?” Elena inquired placing her hand on Remus’s arm.

Remus looked down at the small olive-skinned hand on his arm and then into the bright blue-green eyes. Clearing his throat he answered her question. “I’m nervous about Lucas, I know you all trust him, but he's still a stranger to me, and I don’t know what we will do if he refuses to take us in for the full moon.” Remus sighed and ran his free arm though his soft brown hair, which was liberally streaked with gray. “I'm confused about your troupe and Gabriel, I know he's more than he seems, but I can’t put my finger on it.”

“Aren’t we entitled to our secrets?” Elena asked.

“Yes, of course,” Remus answered quickly. “It just keeps bothering me, as if I'm supposed to know. I can’t explain it.”

“It makes perfect sense to us,” Soto replied, “as we know his secret.” Remus growled his annoyance. “Don’t worry, it does not affect your safety and I think someday you will know too, but now is not the time.”

Remus sighed and leaned back against the bench. “Okay, I hear you. I will do my best to let it go. I can wait. He really is a great kid; I will be sorry to leave.”

Soto shifted a bit so he was closer to Remus. “Yes, and we will be sorry to see you go.” Remus looked at Soto in confusion.

“What are you planning on doing for the rest of the afternoon?” Elena asked suddenly, causing Remus to whip his head around.
“I really didn’t have any plans; why?”

“Would you like to join us for the afternoon?” Soto offered.

“What are you going to do?”

Elena and Soto shared a long meaningful look and then Elena answered. “Well, actually we are planning on back to our tent and having hot, wild sex.”

Soto smirked and shook his head, as Remus coughed and spluttered. “What?”

“We would like you to join us in bed,” Elena said calmly as if people got asked to participate in a threesome every day.

Soto took pity on Remus, who was only able to gape in shock, and added, “Our feelings will not be hurt if you say no. You may not like the idea of being with two people, or a man, or a woman, or you simply may not like us like that.”

Remus looked at the two beautiful people sitting next to him, confused as to why they were asking him to join them in bed. “Why me?”

Elena smiled; they had him! “You're very sexy and we like you.” Elena ran her hand up his arm and into his soft hair.

“I'm older than both of you, and scarred,” Remus said self-consciously.

Soto placed his hand on Remus’s firm thigh. “We want you; will you join us?”

Remus couldn’t breathe for a moment as he looked into Soto's deep black eyes, they were sparkling with desire and longing. “Yes,” he whispered.

Smiling, Soto stood and held out his hand to the werewolf. Tentatively Remus placed his hand into the wide dark palm, watching as his pale hand is incased by the dark fingers. Elena slipped her hand into Remus’s free one, giving it a gentle squeeze as she began to lead the two sexy men to their tent.

Once inside the bedroom, Remus looked around trying to get his bearings and calm down a bit. The room was simple with two black lacquer dressers, and a large bed on the floor. The cover was a bright pearl white, and pillows in rich jewel tones covered one end of it. Turning, Remus's eyes widened as he watched Soto and Elena kiss, it was deep and passionate their arms wrapped around each other in a way which showed their comfort and love. Just as Remus was beginning to feel like an intruder and even considered leaving, they broke the kiss and turned towards him in one fluid motion. Elena’s green-blue eyes held his amber ones, and slowly she walked towards him. Her small hand caressed his cheek and Remus’s eyes fluttered for a moment at the touch. He craved touch, but so rarely was he around others he felt comfortable with. Slowly, as if Elena was afraid he would run away, she wrapped her arms around his neck and moving up softly she placed her lips against his. Remus whimpered and leaned into her; he wrapped his arms around her tiny waist. Her lips were so soft and warm; slowly he ran the tip of his tongue over those lush lips and she opened them, letting him deepen the kiss as their tongues met.

Soto watched as they kissed. They were so beautiful together, their bodies arching, searching for more contact. Walking over to them, he stood behind Elena and ran his hands over her shoulders, down to her pink blouse. One by one he slipped the small buttons from their holes. Remus broke the kiss as he felt hands moving against his chest. Gasping, he watched as Elena’s creamy, olive skin is revealed. Her breasts are cradled in a pink satin bra, begging to be touched. Carefully Remus raised a hand to cup the full, satin-covered breast. The firm, round flesh perfectly filled his hand. As his
fingers ran over her nipple, now pressing against the satin, Elena arched into his hand and gasped in pleasure. Soto slipped the blouse off and tossed it carelessly onto the floor behind him. His fingers moved lower, easily undoing the buttons of her white cotton skirt. Soto knelt, sliding the fabric over her hips and legs, and leaving it to pool at her feet he reached over and quickly undid the buckles on her shoes. Slowly he stood up, kissing his way back up her body. Once Soto reached her shoulders Elena gasped in pleasure.

“Remus,” Soto said, his voice still calm and smooth, “would you like to see something truly lovely?” Remus blinked at this. “Yes.”

Smiling, Soto led Elena over to the bed and helped her to lie down. Remus moaned at the sight before him. The pink satin bra and panties seemed to glitter against her olive skin, which looked even darker as she lay on the white coverlet. Her brown hair curled around her face and her eyes were alight with passion. Remus could see the powerful muscles, which he was expecting knowing the work they did, however the softness of her curves and thighs was an unexpected treat.

“I think you are wearing too many clothes to join her yet. Shall we fix that?” Soto whispered into Remus's ear as he nibbled on the tender flesh. Remus shuddered and moved his hands to the buttons of his cardigan sweater. Soto trailed kisses and soft bites down Remus’s neck as his finger swiftly unbuttoned the blue shirt under the sweater. Remus’s chest was broad and muscular, covered by fine golden and gray hair. Scars were scattered about showing the pain and torment he had endured in his life. As Soto’s hands moved to the trouser buttons Remus toed off his shoes and socks. Soon he was standing in front of Elena in nothing but a pair of blue cotton boxers.

“You are beautiful, Remus; come and join me and we shall watch Soto undress for us,” Elena offered, holding out a hand to him. Remus gracefully lowered himself beside her on the bed and turned to look at Soto; Elena curled up against his hot, lightly-furred body and also turned her eyes to her Japanese lover.

Soto smirked and grabbed the hem on his red tee shirt, carefully pulling it over his head so the fabric didn’t get caught on the chopsticks holding his bun in place. Casually Soto dropped the shirt on the floor then ran his hands over his smooth well-defined chest until he reached the top of his denims. Slowly he undid the buttons one by one, revealing a flat abdomen, a thin black treasure trail and a hard, thick cock.

Remus swallowed, the fact that Soto wasn’t wearing any underwear was incredibly hot. His body looked to be sculpted it was so perfect and smooth. Before Remus could become self conscious Soto was sliding his naked body across his until their lips met in a heated kiss.

“You forgot something,” Elena said. Both men broke the kiss to look at her. Reaching up she pulled the chopsticks out of Soto’s hair letting a midnight black curtain fall around them.

“Gorgeous,” Remus whispered as his hands ran through the long black hair. It was thick, smooth and perfectly straight. “I didn’t realize it was this long.”

Soto shrugged. “Thank you. Now Remus, what is your pleasure? What would you like to do? Or maybe I should ask, what would you like to have done to you?”

“I don’t know; this is all a bit overwhelming.”

“Let us worship you,” Elena said her voice husky with desire. “Lay back and let Soto and I kiss, lick, bite, suck and touch every inch of your body.”
Remus moaned and lay back in answer. It didn’t take long before he was writhing against the bed. Elena had started exploring his body at his neck while Soto had begun at his toes. Each of them found places that made him shudder and moan. Elena had licked his nipples into hard peaks and teased him with light touches until he had growled in frustration and longing. Chuckling wickedly she had then sucked hard on his nipples, causing his whole body to shudder in pleasure. Soto had kissed his way up the muscular legs, then paid close attention to Remus’s thighs when he had heard the werewolf moan once they were touched. Where Elena’s touches were soft and affectionate, Soto’s were passionate and demanding. Remus didn’t really notice the difference until the two met at his cock and took turns exploring. First Elena softly kissed his hard, leaking prick, gently sucking on the tender foreskin and licking the head to taste his precome. Chuckling wickedly she had then sucked hard on his nipples, causing his whole body to shudder in pleasure. Soto had kissed his way up the muscular legs, then paid close attention to Remus’s thighs when he had heard the werewolf moan once they were touched. Where Elena’s touches were soft and affectionate, Soto’s were passionate and demanding. Remus didn’t really notice the difference until the two met at his cock and took turns exploring. First Elena softly kissed his hard, leaking prick, gently sucking on the tender foreskin and licking the head to taste his precome. Her mouth was torturously slow as she kissed down the full length of him, and began exploring his balls. Gently she took one sensitive ball and then the other into her mouth sucking softly, and laved the crinkled flesh with her tongue.

Then it was Soto’s turn. Elena had brought his desire to frenzy and Soto pushed him over the edge, Remus shouted in desire as both testicles were sucked into a hot wet mouth. Soto ran his tongue over the delicate organs, intent on learning every inch of them. Suddenly he withdrew and quickly dove onto Remus’s cock sucking the entirety into his mouth at once. Remus arched off the bed, his body trembling with his lust and desperate need. Elena’s mouth met his and they kissed fiercely, desperate for relief but simply making their passion higher. Elena and Remus moaned into each other’s mouths, as Soto encouraged Elena to straddle Remus’s wait, with one final, hard suck on the rigid hot cock, Soto sat up and positioned Elena over Remus’s aching prick.

Just as slowly and gently as she had explored him, Elena sat down, sliding Remus’s length into her soft wet body. Remus moaned and reached out, grabbing her hips. Elena leaned her body against Soto’s who was kneeling behind them, and she began to slide up and down on Remus’s cock. Soto reached under the pillows, and got the jar of lube. Elena moaned as the familiar scent of vanilla came to her. Soto lightly coated the first two fingers of each hand, then reached around Elena and gently pinched her pert pink nipples. Elena gasped in pleasure and Remus moaned as her body tightened around his. Keeping one hand at her breast teasing and playing with her sensitive nipple, Soto moved the other hand down to were Elena and Remus were joined and carefully found a rhythm to match his lover’s as he began stroking her clit.

Elena screamed and arched into the touch. Her body shook as she was overwhelmed in pleasure. Between Soto’s fingers stimulating her and Remus’s hard cock thrusting inside her she wouldn’t last long.

Remus moaned and his fingers tightened on her hips. Looking up he saw Soto’s dark fingers playing with her body, making her writhe in desire. Remus thrust up into her tight wet heat gasping as his balls tightened and pleasure washed over him. Remus met Soto’s dark eyes as he came closer to completion. Soto’s fingers moved faster and soon both Remus and Elena were crying out as they orgasmed together. Soto’s fingers soothed Elena’s trembling body as he lowered her onto Remus. Remus wrapped his arms around her as he tried to catch his breath.

After a few minutes Remus looked over to Soto, whose hard cock jutted proudly out from his body. “What about you?” he asked his voice rough and sultry.

Soto smiled; it was an evil sexy smile with his long hair cascading down the front of his body. “Well as you now know, Elena is wonderful to thrust into, her body gripping you in hot, wet flesh.” Remus shifted a bit and moaned, his cock already getting hard again, one of the few benefits of being a werewolf was quick recovery after sex. “But one thing I would really like, that I really miss, is being taken.”

Elena slowly slipped off Remus and settled in to watch the passionate fucking that was soon to take
“I want to be pounded into the mattress. I want to be fucked rough and hard and viciously. Do you think you can do that?” Soto asked.

Remus growled and attacked Soto’s mouth. Their tongues dueled for dominance, as they mapped each other’s mouths. Remus pushed Soto onto the bed and began licking and biting Soto’s neck and chest. Working his way down to the flat dark nipples Remus bit them roughly leaving clear prints of his teeth. Soto arched and dug his fingers into Remus’s soft hair. Remus continued to mark the man beneath him, until he reached the thick, leaking cock. Remus took a deep breath inhaling the rich musky scent before laving the throbbing organ with his tongue. Soto moaned and shifted, trying to get himself into Remus's mouth. Chuckling darkly, Remus began to very softly suck on the head of Soto's cock.

Hearing Elena moan Remus looked over to her and almost came at the sight. She lay back against the bright pillows, slowly fingering herself as she watched them together. Seeing him looking at her, Elena took her free hand and passed Remus the jar of lube. Remus scooped up the thick, slick salve and moved his fingers to Soto’s hole, as he roughly pushed in a slick finger he sucked Soto’s cock all the way into his mouth. Soto screamed at the duel stimulation grasping frantically at Remus’s shoulder.

Remus couldn’t wait any longer, thoroughly and quickly he added a second and third finger stretching and preparing Soto. “Enough...I’m ready.” Soto gasped. Remus grinned and knelt between Soto’s thighs. Placing Soto’s legs over his shoulders, Remus rubbed the head of his cock against Soto's hole, then thrust in. Soto yelled and moved to meet him. Not giving either of them time to adjust Remus began to pound into Soto’s willing body.

“Yes, that’s it! Fuck me, fuck me hard,” Soto demanded.

Remus snarled and changed his angle hitting Soto’s prostate with each thrust. The man beneath him wailed in pleasure and clawed at his shoulders leaving dark red lines behind. Remus’s fingers dug into the dark thighs pressed against his body. He grunted in effort and pleasure. Soto was so hot and tight! Remus thrust harder into his arse as the pleasure rose. Soto reached down and roughly grasped his cock. He couldn’t wait any longer he had to come. A few hard strokes later Soto cried out as he came, coating his stomach. Remus snarled as Soto’s body tightened around him dragging his own orgasm from him. Remus pulled out and fell gracelessly to the side. Panting he opened his eyes, making sure he hadn’t hurt the dark man. Soto lay there breathing heavily, a happy grin on his face. Elena scooted over, placing her head on Soto’s chest, her own breath coming in pants as she calmed down from another climax.

Soto turned and held out his arm; after a moment's hesitation Remus laid his head on the firm chest and closed his eyes. Soto smiled and ran his fingers lightly over both his lovers’ backs.

Elena was the first to speak. “We need to do that again, soon.”

“Yes,” agreed Soto, grinning, “there are many positions we can try.”

Remus sighed happily; they both wanted to be with him again. “Give me thirty minutes to rest, and then I’ll be ready.”
Forty-four

Chapter Forty-four

Gabriel stopped at the entrance of the old wood barn and looked back. He smiled as Soto, Elena and Remus walked off hand in hand. ‘I am getting better at reading tarot,’ Gabriel thought. ‘Now I just have to find out who the mysterious person I will meet today is. I couldn’t tell if this meeting will be good or not.’ Shrugging he walked into the barn.

“Everyone,” Oma called out, “this is Ann. Ann, this is everyone.”

“Hello,” said Ann, she had a soft soothing voice. Her golden-blonde hair was in a thick plait, which fell between her shoulder blades. Ann warmly shook hands with everyone. “You must be Gabriel,” she said, her warm brown eyes sparkling, “where is your snake?”

“Ann is a vet,” Becky explained.

“Aurora doesn’t like horses, so she stayed in the tent. I can introduce you later,” Gabriel answered.

“Wonderful, I am sorry I missed lunch, but I was needed in town. And I would say I will be at dinner, but Hecate, one of your mares is in labor and I don’t know how long I will be here.”

Becky rushed over to her stall. “I so wanted to be here for the birth, but we need to get Lucas.”

“Mum, it's fine, I know the way. You stay here,” Vincent said as he began to saddle up the horses they would need.

“If you are sure?”

Mudiwa smiled, “I promise to look after him.”

“Oh! I can look after myself,” Vincent said, pretending to be indignant. Becky and Mudiwa shared a significant look and snickered. Vincent muttered under his breath about mean mums and lovers who would be punished later as he finished getting their horses ready.

“It is nice to finally meet you, Ann,” Gabriel said changing the focus of the conversation. “Oma has written a lot about you.”

Ann’s round cheeks blushed a pretty pink as she looked at Becky. Walking over, Becky took Ann’s hand and turned to face her family. “Well, Ann has become very special to me and…” She stopped talking as Gabriel grinned widely and held out his hand to Adonis.

“Bloody brat,” Adonis snapped as he pulled some money out of his pocket.

“When will you learn to not bet with him?” Ria asked shaking her head at Adonis’s behavior.

“Sorry Oma, you were telling us about you and Ann.” Gabriel asked his emerald green eyes wide as he tried to look innocent.

Becky snickered. “Apparently you all already know.”


“I have been studying divination, and to practice I have been asking questions about the people we're
going to be seeing soon so I can check on the accuracy of my readings,” Gabriel answered, twisting
the hem of his tee shirt in nervousness.

“Well, then,” Oma said, “I shall have to ask you to do a reading for me before you leave.”

Gabriel grinned broadly. “I would love to. Oh and I think Hecate is going to have twins, a boy and a

girl. You might want to have extra supplies ready.”

He looked to Ann for verification, and she shrugged her shoulders. “I have seen no signs to indicate
twins, but it isn’t a big deal to make sure we have enough stuff ready to handle twins.”

“Well, we’re ready to go,” Naveen said. “We are only go to ride around the fields and house, so if
you need us just sound the dinner going.”

“Thank you,” replied Ann sincerely.

“We need to be off, so we can make it back in time for dinner. What are you going to do, Adonis?”
Mudiwa said.

“I think I will work on dinner and tea for those sticking around. I am guessing Lucas will bring
several people with him, so there will need to be a lot of food ready.” Turning to Becky he asked,
“Do you have some dead animal for them or will I need to get something?”

Becky shook her head at Adonis. “I have a roast in the fridge. I’m grateful you're willing to make
dinner. I will show you what I have planned and where everything is. The roast is large and will
need to go into the oven soon.”

Vincent looked at his watch, it was almost two; there and back would take three to four hours. “We
should be back about six thirty if everything goes well.”

“Try and make it sooner, it will be dark by then,” Becky reminded them.

“Yes, mum,” Vincent sing-songed and swung up onto his horse in a single fluid move. Mudiwa gave
Gabriel a hand up, and then gracefully mounted his own horse.

The forest was much cooler than the open fields around Oma’s farm and Gabriel was now grateful
Baba had insisted on him wearing a jumper. Now that they were far enough away from the farm
Gabriel asked, “So what do you think Remus’ problem is?”

Vincent shook his head at his son’s bluntness. “Well, one problem is someone who is used to
everyone adoring him right away.” Gabriel blushed lightly. “Honestly, Remus knows who you are.
Your magic is blocking him from remembering, as it does with Mrs. Weasley and Professor Snape,
but Remus can sense on a different level that you are family. That is what I am picking up from
him.”

“I hope he lets it go. I would like to get to know him, he seems really nice.”

“Maybe Soto and Elena will provide him with enough distraction.” Mudiwa offered chuckling.

Gabriel laughed, “I am sure he will be rather relaxed when we get back with Lucas.” Not wanting
the conversation to get any more detailed, Gabriel changed the subject. “When will we see Freja?”

Vincent thought for a moment then said, “We were supposed to arrive Saturday and I think everyone
was going to come up for a party that night. I assume Freja is going to be there. We can call her when we get back to the house if you want to see her sooner.”

“Yes, I really miss her, and she was going to teach me how to read runes while we are here.”

“How are your studies going, Cherub?” Mudiwa asked.

“Good, I really like Healing Magic and I'm finding Mind Magics an interesting book. Aurora wants me to try lucid dreaming,* I think we are starting on it next week.”

“Is Aurora able to help you enough?” Vincent asked a bit concerned.

“Yes, Dad, she's great. I mean she’s as sarcastic as hell and doesn’t tolerate mistakes, but when I do make a mistake she's able to reverse the magic. Thank goodness! I don’t know if we could have explained a color-changing cat.” Gabriel snickered, the poor cat had freaked out when its fur began going through all the colors of the rainbow. “Aurora won't tell me the extent of what she can do, and she won't let me do potions. She watches me when I cook and criticizes how I prepare the ingredients, so I can learn all the different ways ingredients are prepared for potions. She says she can’t contain an exploding potion, or reverse the effects of a badly made potion, so that will have to wait until Hogwarts.”

“I think that is for the best,” Mudiwa said firmly. “The amount and complexity of the magic you are able to do is amazing and it's a bit nerve-racking knowing we lack the ability to help you if something should go wrong.”

“Don’t worry Baba, anything Aurora can’t undo she simply doesn’t let me try. I can read about it, and learn about it, but actually try it? No way.”

Gabriel said that with such firmness, it made Vincent wonder. “Can she actually stop your magic?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t gone against her wishes. She helps me too much, and when she gets annoyed she can pout for days.” All three laughed remembering the many times Aurora had decided she had been slighted somehow and slithered off, pointedly ignoring Gabriel for days.

“When is Dario coming back?” Gabriel asked suddenly.

“I believe he was planning on being here Friday afternoon, why?” Mudiwa asked, a bit surprised at the subject change.

“He said he would bring me a guitar,” Gabriel said excitedly.

Mudiwa laughed, “And you need another instrument why?”

“I like the guitar,” Gabriel defended.

“How many musical instruments do you have now?” Vincent asked.

“I only have ones I can play well and enjoy.”

“How many?”

Gabriel sighed, “Six, not including the guitar. I have a violin, cello, flute, harp and two different drums.”

“Are you going to need a new trunk?” Vincent asked curious as to where Gabriel was keeping all of his things.
“Yes, but I can buy it. I’ve saved most of the money from Professor Snape,” Gabriel answered quickly.

Vincent sighed; some things still seemed to haunt their son even after five years. “Cherub, we're happy to get you the things you need.” Gabriel ducked his head and blushed. “We can pick one up next month in Madrid. There's a craftsman who makes trunks for very specific purposes, including storing musical instruments.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

“Now, have you finished A Wizard of Earthsea?” Mudiwa asked.

“Yes!” exclaimed Gabriel. The three spent the next hour of the journey discussing the book.

They had reached the village, and Vincent and Mudiwa were taking care of the horse and talking with friends, while Gabriel went to find Lucas. Using a spell he had learned recently he sent out his magic to find the alpha wolf. Smiling once he found him not far off, Gabriel began to stalk his friend hoping he could sneak up on the man.

Ten minutes later, Gabriel saw Lucas. He was standing behind a tree watching a small woman with blonde hair. Lucas slowly moved forward, and when the woman turned he sprinted and grabbed her waist swinging her around him.

“Lucas,” Freja screeched. Gabriel’s eyes widened as he saw them kiss passionately. Lucas let out a low growl, as Freja wrapped her jean clad legs around him. Normally Gabriel would just walk away when he found adults in amorous positions, which did happen quite often. However they really didn’t have the time to wait, and Freja hadn’t told him about Lucas, so a bit of payback was needed. Quietly Gabriel stepped into the clearing, placed his hands over his face and yelled, “My eyes! My eyes! I am far too young to see such things!”

Lucas snarled, and Freja hopped down. “Cherub?”

“Yes,” he said, grinning as he lowered his hands.

She ran over to him and hugged him tightly. “You aren’t supposed to be here for four days! Why are you all the way out here anyway?”

“We ran into some werewolves being taken to Grayback, and brought them here.” Turning to Lucas he said, “They need somewhere to spend the full moon, and the woman and her three kids needs a home.”

Lucas walked over, each movement filled with power and grace. Picking up Gabriel he hugged him tight. “Hello, monster.” Gabriel smiled and hugged Lucas back enjoying the wild energy of the alpha wolf around him. Pulling back, but not putting Gabriel down, he began to walk back to their village. “So, tell me all about these werewolves you have saved.”

Gabriel told them what had happened, and had just finished as they entered the village. “I had heard that William Thornton’s family had been turned, I bet that is who you have found. As for Remus Lupin, I have heard about him. He has been wandering from clan to clan all over Europe; he is looking for any strange happenings in the forest.”

“Lucas, Freja, hello,” called out Vincent. He and Mudiwa were sitting outside Lucas’ house on the
porch swing. Freja ran over and hugged them both. Lucas growled softly, as he watched them embrace.

Gabriel giggled. “I know it's close to the full moon, but really do try and control yourself.”

Lucas narrowed his amber eyes and mock glared at Gabriel. “No one should be touching my woman!”

Gabriel laughed and tugged on Lucas’ curly brown locks. “Oh, I bet she just loves being called ‘your woman’ and I don’t remember hearing about a wedding, I don’t see a ring on her finger.”

Lucas sighed, “Yes, well I haven’t got that far yet. We have only been romantically involved for six months, and it has been rather casual.”

Gabriel’s brow furrowed. “What do you mean casual? Are you both seeing other people?”

Lucas’ voice became deeper and even more gravelly. “As far as I know we are not seeing other people.” His amber eyes darkened, it was too close to the full moon for such jealousy.

“Cherub, what did you say to him?” Freja asked as she touched Lucas’ free arm.

Lucas snarled and wrapped his free arm around her tiny waist. “Are you seeing anyone else?”

Ice blue eyes widened. “Certainly not!”

“Good,” Lucas said then roughly bit down on Freja’s neck marking her for all to see. Freja moaned and went limp against him.

Gabriel grinned, Freja had said she was seeing someone but she wasn’t sure how serious the relationship was. Well, now she knew. Vincent’s lavender eyes narrowed as he saw his son’s rather pleased face. Behind him Mudiwa’s strong arms enveloped him. “Your son is up to something,” his husband’s deep voice said in his ear, as he placed a kiss on his neck.

Vincent smiled and settled back into the strong body. “Why is he always my son when he's being sneaky?”

Mudiwa was about to answer, when a powerful rich voice said. “Lucas, are you going to introduce me to your guests? I didn’t realize anyone was going to be visiting.”

Lucas groaned and took a moment to gently lick the mark he had made on Freja’s neck his arm still around her helping her stand. Pulling his head up he looked at the royal alpha. “Philip, these are our friends, Vincent, Mudiwa, and Gabriel. Gentlemen, this is Philip.”

Gabriel narrowed his eyes at the new man. He had soft light brown skin, warm brown eyes, wavy brown hair that skimmed his shoulders, and a small goatee. As he said hello, Gabriel noticed a soft Turkish accent. The man was a bit shorter than his Dad. He walked with a similar grace and power that Lucas had, but it was more internal. The man believed in his own power, more than Lucas who felt he had to constantly maintain his ‘alpha’ posturing. Philip held out his hand to Gabriel who was still being held by Lucas. “Hello, Gabriel. I have heard a lot about you.”

Gabriel tentatively took the hand; he could feel Philip's power thrumming within him. “Hello, it's nice to meet you.”

Philip turned questioning eyes to Lucas, and the werewolf explained. “They found a woman, her children and Remus Lupin being held by some of Grayback’s men. They rescued them and brought
them here. I was going to go down to the farm and have dinner with them, and bring them back up here for the full moon.”

Philip nodded, “I will come with you.”

Gabriel wasn’t sure he liked this man. “Who are you and why are you here?”

Philip smiled, “Do not worry; I am not here to take over this clan, or to harm anyone.”

Gabriel crossed his arms over his chest. “That did not answer my question.”

Philip laughed, it was deep and carefree. “No, it did not. However, exactly who I am is not something we usually tell humans.”

Gabriel’s eyes narrowed, “I will find out.” Turning to Lucas and Freja he asked, “Do you trust him?”

Freja said, “Yes, Cherub, don't worry.”

Lucas released his hold on Freja and hugged Gabriel tightly. “Cherub, thank you for being worried about me and my clan. We're fine.”

Gabriel hugged him back. “I will trust you, but I'm still not sure about him.”

Philip’s eyes crinkled. “It has been a long time since someone has challenged me, it is rather refreshing. I think we are going to get along rather well.”

Before Gabriel could argue with the new werewolf, Vincent said, “We do need to head back down the mountain. Adonis is cooking, and dinner is in two hours.”

“Well, we can’t be late for dinner,” Philip said heading towards his horse.

“Wait,” Gabriel called. “Lucas, do you have the fur for me?”

“Yes, I was going to collect some from tomorrow night also, should I bring you the lot on Saturday?”

“That would be perfect. I have your money in the saddle bag; I'll give it to you now.”

“What fur?” Philip asked.

“I collect werewolf fur for Cherub. He sells potion ingredients to wizards during their travels. He also pays very well,” Lucas said as he set Gabriel down.

“I pay fair market value,” Gabriel informed him. Philip smiled, the rest of the council was going to be excited to hear that he had found the little angel the Founders had prophesied would come and heal their world.

A/N I got the idea for how Philip looks from watching a video of Baris Akarsu.

*lucid dreaming is when you know you are dreaming and can control what happens.
"A Wizard of Earthsea is by Ursula K. Le Guin and a really great book, if you haven’t read it."
Chapter Forty-five

Philip watched and listened as they rode down the mountain; Freja and Lucas were asking questions about their friends’ travels. Gabriel was a mystery; he was young and full of life and childish glee, while being powerful and far more cunning and observant then he let on. Philip was one of the werewolf representatives on the Magical Beings Council. The council had been developed to help relations and support treaties between different clans, and different magical creatures.

Humans used to be on the council; Helga Hufflepuff herself was a council member a thousand years ago. Helga had told the council of Rowena’s visions, and of the little angel who would make things right. Five hundred years ago there was an uprising in the magical world and a dark witch, Belladonna Raspin, and her followers waged war across most of Europe. Fifty years and thousands of deaths later the wizarding world was ready to rebuild. Most of the elder wizards and witches were gone, and those rebuilding were filled with fear, and the desire to prevent another uprising. Laws were passed to regulate ‘magical creatures’ and ‘dark magic’. The council was forgotten and treaties ignored. After forty years Hogwarts was re-opened and a wizard from Norway was hired to be the headmaster. He didn’t even look at the textbooks and replaced them all, and so the Founders’ knowledge and wisdom was forgotten.

The council currently consisted of every non-human, sentient magical creature. The council members usually checked in with others of their kind, teaching the old ways and helping those who were caught up in modern prejudice and false myths. Philip had been a council member now for three hundred years; werewolves had the shortest life of existing council members and were offered the option of being bound to a vampire to increase their lifespan. There were four of each being represented on the council, and each of the four werewolves had chosen to bond with a vampire. Of course the fact that they had fallen in love had made it an easy decision. Philip smiled as he thought of Jaroslava, his bonded; she was lovely and the looked antithesis of a vampire with sunny blond hair and sky blue eyes, and after she had fed, pink round cheeks.

Philip was brought out of his musings when he saw Gabriel slow down and casually reach out and run his fingers through a juniper tree. Smiling at his handful of bluish juniper berries, Gabriel made sure no one was looking and threw one at Lucas’ head as he passed under a tree. Lucas looked up and then ran a hand through his hair. Philip smirked at Gabriel’s behavior. Every time they would pass under a tree, Gabriel would throw a berry at Lucas. The poor man soon began cursing the trees, and wondering why he was the only one being dropped on. Gabriel truly was a wonder, most people avoided werewolves totally, and those who would associate with them, avoided them around the full moon, and here he saw a young boy taunting an alpha wolf the night before the full moon.

Vincent rode over to Gabriel, “Here, put on this sweatshirt.”

“Sure; hold these will you?” Gabriel said handing over his handful of berries. He put on the crimson sweatshirt and flipped up the hood. “I thought we were supposed to avoid the big bad wolf?”

Vincent laughed, “Do you have a basket full of goodies?”

Freja smiled, “You make a very cute Little Red Riding Hood.”

Lucas grinned, “Come here, little one, and let me eat you up.”
Gabriel laughed, and seeing they were just on the edge of Oma’s property he grabbed the juniper berries and threw them up into the air so they would land on top of Lucas and then took off on his horse.

Lucas just sat for a moment, shocked as he realized Gabriel had been throwing berries at him for the past hour. Snarling, “Cherub!” Lucas took off after him.

Gabriel laughed joyously and urged his horse on, easily moving between the trees. Once he came out of the forest and onto Oma’s cleared land Gabriel looked behind him, Lucas was gaining on him. Seeing the house Gabriel yelled, “Soto!”

Soto ran into view. Smirking and encouraging the horse one last time Gabriel slowly placed his feet on top of the saddle. Soto braced himself for the forth-coming impact and as the horse came near Gabriel leapt and was easily caught in Soto’s arms. “Thanks, Soto,” Gabriel said.

“What did you do to Lucas?” Soto asked as he watched Lucas slow down his horse and head towards them.

Gabriel’s green eyes widened, and his pink lips parted in shock. “Me? I didn’t do anything.”

Soto smirked, “Wonderful impression of someone innocent, Gabriel, but I do know better.”

Gabriel grinned impishly as Lucas stormed up. “All right, hand him over.”

“Sure,” Soto said as he quickly pushed Gabriel off of him, and into the werewolf’s arms.

Gabriel squeaked indignantly, but quickly recovered and wrapped his arms around the large man. Gabriel placed a sweet kiss on Lucas’ cheek. “You know you love me.”

Lucas tried to keep focused on his anger, but Gabriel’s large green eyes and innocent-looking pout were undoing him. The fact that Gabriel was comfortable in his arms simply made all thoughts of revenge fade. It was a little known fact that werewolves needed and craved touch, which made the fear people had of touching them that much harder to deal with. Lucas sighed and held Gabriel closer. “Cherub, you are such a brat.”

Gabriel grinned and hugged him back tightly. Looking up he saw Remus, Rose and her children all watching them with worried looks. Waving cheerfully at them he said, “Shall I introduce you to the werewolves we rescued?”

“Yes, let’s get this done.” Lucas said. Placing Gabriel on the ground, Lucas drew himself up and walked towards the people wanting his protection.

Gabriel rolled his eyes at Lucas’ posturing and began to whisper, “Puff up more. Come on, alpha out.”

Lucas’ mouth twitched. “Hush, brat, they are asking for my protection, I don’t need anyone undermining me or trying to take over my clan.”

“I understand, but right now they are under my protection.”

Lucas looked down into serious emerald eyes, his amber eyes widened in understanding and he nodded once. “Okay, I respect that you helped to rescue them. However I still have to take care of things in my own way.”

“They know you are our friend, and we trust you. They are also scared; this is Rose’s and her kids’
first time changing,” Gabriel said his voice soft.

“Remember, they want a strong alpha, they want to feel safe and protected,” Lucas replied. They stopped talking as they neared the group.

Gabriel cleared his throat and began introductions. “Lucas Nef this is Remus Lupin, Rose and her children Lilac, Tristan, and Marigold.”

Lucas shook hands with everyone, allowing his power to flow into them letting them know he was the alpha. Rose and her children instantly calmed down at his touch, Remus relaxed for a moment and then forced himself back up, Lucas quirked an eyebrow in question at Remus.

“I am not an animal,” Remus stated.

“We are all animals; some of us are just driven by instincts more than others. We all want to feel safe either because we are in charge, or we want to trust whoever is in charge,” Lucas said calmly and with just a hint of a snarl. Rose and her children looked confused, Lucas made them feel safe, and yet they didn’t want to become animals.

Philip smiled softly as he joined the group. “Will you all be joining us for the full moon?”

“Lucas hasn’t said if it is okay yet, but we’re hoping to,” answered Rose nervously.

“And you are?” Remus demanded.

“Oh, how rude of me, please allow me to introduce myself,” Philip said as he bowed deeply. “I am Philip, bonded to Jaroslava. And who might you be?”

“I’m Rose, and these are my children, Lilac, Tristan and Marigold.” Lucas bowed to each, shaking Tristan’s hand and kissing the ladies’ hands.

“Do you not use your surname any longer?” Philip asked.

“My husband threw us out and I am sure he’s disowned us, so I choose not to use his name,” Rose said firmly if a little sadly.

“Well, lovely lady, his loss is our gain. I am sure you will have many suitors as soon as it is known you are ready for them,” Philip said with a sly wink. Rose blushed softly, and tucked her red hair behind her ears.

“I am Remus Lupin.”

Philip smiled and took his hand, then his face became serious. Remus had tried to push his energy into Philip, testing his limits. Philip, as he had with Gabriel, had kept his energy within himself. It could be felt, but wasn’t forced to be recognized. “What is the point of this? Are you just responding to Lucas, or are you testing me?”

Remus hesitated for a moment, “I’m sorry, I think I am responding to Lucas. I am not used to being around other werewolves, and those I have been act more…”

Philip laughed it was harsh and dry. “More human? We are not just human we are also wolves, and denying that just makes things worse. Look at you, you deny what you are, your pain and exhaustion rolls off of you in waves. You’re tired, sick, and aging quickly. Now look at Lucas. His hair is rich brown with no gray, his energy strong if a bit wild this close to the full moon, and he is sixty years old. He keeps his mind during the transformation, no one at this farm, or in the village worry about
being attacked by a werewolf because they know Lucas is here protecting both the pack and them.”

Remus’s mouth dropped open in shock, how was this possible? Before he could ask anything Rose spoke up: “Is it because you’re an alpha, or is your whole pack like you?”

“My whole pack is taught how to accept and blend with the wolf. Those that practice harder get better results,” Lucas said with pride and strength in his voice.

“How is this possible?”

Lucas turned to Remus. “Who are you loyal to? Who would you tell our secrets to? Grayback doesn’t know the things I do. The Ministry and St. Mungo’s don’t know what is possible, and there is a reason why they don’t: they cannot be trusted. So who would you tell?”

“I don’t know. I am loyal to Albus Dumbledore. I am out here on a mission for him. I think if more people knew, maybe things could change for werewolves who are trying to live within the wizarding world.”

Philip smiled softly, “Now is not the time, but that will change. I am not willing for this information to fall into the wrong hands, and I do not trust Dumbledore. If your loyalties ever change, please find me.”

Remus was just about to question this statement when Adonis called everyone to dinner. Once seated, Adonis brought out a large roast, with gravy, two huge pans of cheese and macaroni, steamed broccoli, warm bread, and a bowl of coleslaw. As everyone was helping themselves to the wonderfully fragrant food, Gabriel looked over at Soto and stopped. Quietly he got up and walked around to where Soto sat. Pulling out a clean handkerchief, Gabriel tipped Soto’s water glass to dampen the white cotton. “What?” Soto asked confused by Gabriel’s odd behavior.

“You’re a mess I can’t believe you came to the table like this,” Gabriel said, managing to suppress a smirk as he began to wipe at the large love bite on Soto’s neck. Remus buried his face in his hands, turning beet red, and Elena laughed so hard she almost fell off her seat.

Soto’s black eyes narrowed as he glared at Gabriel. “You are in so much trouble.”

“Why?” Gabriel asked innocently.

At this Philip and Lucas began to howl with laughter. “Bloody hell, he has a good ‘innocent face’,” Lucas said.

“One day you will have a mark like this, and then payback will be coming,” Soto said calmly as he dished himself up some broccoli.

Gabriel quirked his head to the side in confusion, “But I don’t let the people I’m with leave marks.”

Everyone froze at this and stared at Gabriel in shock. Gabriel was able to hold the blank face for only a moment before he burst out laughing. “I’m only ten! I can’t believe you fell for that.”

Eyes narrowed at the small boy. Freja snickered; she hadn’t fallen for it. “Cherub, honey you might want to run.”

Gabriel calmly sat back down between Philip and Lucas and began putting food on his plate. “No, I’m fine, thanks.”

Slowly everyone began to chuckle and then laugh. When everyone calmed down, they began to eat.
“Thank you for making dinner, Adonis.” Gabriel said politely as he put a forkful of cheese and macaroni into his mouth and hummed. Philip looked down at the black-haired boy in wonder as Gabriel hummed happily while eating. Questioning eyes turned to Vincent, who simply shrugged his shoulders.

Adonis grinned at the hum. “I’m glad you like it, Cherub. How is the roast? I’ve never cooked one before.”

Tristan, Lilac and Marigold all said, “Yummy,” and went back to eating.

“It’s very good,” Rose, said politely. “Do you normally not cook very much?”

“Oh I cook all the time, but we are vegetarians, so I have never cooked a roast,” Adonis answered.

Rose looked a bit shy, “Oh, you shouldn’t have cooked meat on our account.”

“Pish,” Adonis said lightheartedly, “it wasn’t any trouble, and it is what you need.”

“Well thank you, it is delicious,” Philip said.

After dinner, they all sat around a warm fire with cups of coffee for the adults and mugs of hot chocolate with cinnamon for the kids.

“So, Lucas,” Rose asked nervously, “what happens tomorrow night? And how do we become members of your clan?”

Lucas smiled reassuringly. “Tomorrow morning, we will go to our village and spend the day doing exercises and meditation in preparation for the transformation. That evening we will gather together, to support each other through the change, and then play. We chase each other and animals; sometimes we hunt. Just whatever you feel like doing. As for becoming part of the pack, you and you children are welcome to live with us and we will all get to know each other. If everyone’s needs are met, then you can stay. If not we will find you a pack that will meet your needs better.”

“Like what? What could keep us from being accepted?” Rose asked clenching her hands together in nervousness.

Lucas thought for a moment before answering. “Well, we had a woman a few years back who liked to sleep with many different people and went from one bed to another. This caused problems within my clan, so she went to a clan in Greece who enjoy a more varied sex life. She is very happy there. There was a man who was very violent and wanted to dominate and control those under him; he was encouraged to go to a clan in Turkey, who devote themselves to a warrior lifestyle. We have had people who wanted to be in more urban environments, in a warmer place; all sorts of things can make other clans a better fit.” Rose visibly relaxed as she realized this wasn’t going to be a long test and she wouldn’t be left to fend on her own.

Gabriel smiled as the adults talked amongst themselves. Wrapping his arms around his Baba’s neck he asked, “Can we check on Oma and Ann and see if the baby horses are here yet?”

“Sure…” Mudiwa began, but was interrupted by Kamala screaming “No!”

Next to the fire stood Kamala with her hand held out towards Tristan, who was suspended mid trip above the fire. For a moment everyone was frozen in shock, then Adonis jumped up and grabbed Tristan, handing him over to his mum, while Ria and Naveen checked on Kamala. Gabriel just grinned; he had known for a while his little sister was a witch.
Chapter Forty-six


Remus Lupin waited with about fifteen others for the full moon to rise. They had spent the day preparing, usually Remus tried to rest the day of the full moon but Lucas’ clan had been very active. In the morning they had gone for a run. Philip had simply said, “The wolf likes to run. This is one of the ways we find balance.” After a healthy lunch everyone had rested and then done any last minute chores and preparations for that night. After dinner Lucas had told them they should wear old clothing and meet in the village center. Lucas went over a checklist to make sure everything was ready. The barn for the horse and other animals was locked up and a thin netting made of silver was wrapped around the lower walls. All the houses were locked up tight. The barn where the clan would transform back into human form was open and warm blankets were already in there. Everyone in the clan was present.

About an hour before moonrise Philip lead a Qigong* practice helping everyone to focus on their breathing and the energy flowing through their bodies. Remus felt himself relax as the wolf slowly rose. A few minutes ago those who were comfortable had taken off their clothes, and everyone now sat in meditation. Lucas’ gravey voice washed over them, encouraging them all to be calm, relax, allow, and let go. The last thought Remus had was that this transformation wasn’t nearly as bad… and then the wolf took over.

April 20th.

Gabriel watched the fuzzy foals romp around their mother in the pasture. The past few days had been really intense, especially now that everyone knew Kamala was a witch. He had overheard Ria and Naveen talking about what they were going to do. Kamala would most likely get a letter for one of the schools in India as she and her mum were born there, but Naveen was born in England and so she might also get a letter from Hogwarts. While the schools in India were good it could be hard for a woman to be really respected and encouraged; somehow the old traditions held firm despite the fact that magically woman and men were equal. However, Gabriel had heard them say England wasn’t safe, especially if Voldemort came back. Gabriel had walked away at that point, as the burden of being Harry Potter seemed to engulf him. He had talked with many of his family about being Harry Potter and how that felt, what he needed to do, what he wanted to learn, but to actually feel that people needed him to save them, that someone he loved would be affected by his future actions, was overwhelming.

Tears slowly ran down his face as he watched the small horses nuzzle their mother for milk. He wondered if the mummy horse felt overwhelmed at her babies’ total dependency on her. ‘How am I possibly going to do this? I'm just a kid, what if people die before I can stop him? Will I have to kill to stop him? What am I going to do?’ Gabriel thought miserably.

“Little Master, what is wrong?” Aurora hissed as she slithered up his leg. It was a bit cold outside for her, but she could feel that the little angel was upset and needed her.
“Aurora, what am I going to do? I don’t know anything about Voldemort. I don’t know what he’s doing, what he wants, were he is, nothing. How I am supposed to fight that?” Gabriel wiped away the tears on his cheeks and sighed in defeat.

“Little Master, it will be okay, trust me. First we need to begin practicing lucid dreaming, so you can remember your dreams. Often you toss and turn at night mumbling odd things. You need to know more about those dreams.”

“Why?”

“Trust me, little angel.”

“I do.”

“Good. We will find a way to hold the evil one off until you are ready. Then you will defeat him,” Aurora said with absolute conviction.

Whispering, Gabriel asked, “Do you think I will have to kill him? I don’t know if I'm capable of that.”

“I am sure when the time comes you will have the strength and wisdom to be able fulfill your destiny and be happy with your actions. There are many things which you do not yet know about.”

Gabriel sighed and stroked Aurora’s back as she wrapped around his neck trying to keep warm.

Gabriel stood there for a long time thinking about everything. He thought about all the things he'd learned: what Aurora had said; things he’d read in the paper and what he'd overheard Ria and Naveen talking about. With resolve he stood up taller and took a deep breath; he could kill if he had to in order to keep his family safe, but until that day he would study, train, and try to find another way. Waving his hand over his face Gabriel removed all traces that showed he had been crying and walked back to Oma’s house. Half way there stood his Dad. The breeze caught his long, chestnut hair making it flutter around his body. Gabriel sighed as he walked closer to his Dad. As he neared Vincent held his arms open wide and Gabriel walked into them, holding his father tight.

“It will be okay,” Vincent said. Gabriel just nodded into his dad’s chest and tightened his grip. The two stood there for a long time.

Soto flowed between one sequence of martial arts techniques to another. He had always found kata very relaxing – a meditation through movement. He could feel Gabriel watching him and smiled softly when the young man joined him. The afternoon sun was warm and the spring breeze cool adding to the peacefulness they were creating. When they finished Soto sat down in the grass and sipped from his water as he waited for Gabriel to speak.

“I’m very grateful for all you have been teaching me, but I need to know more. I need to become a warrior. I need to gain skill, power, strength and control.” Gabriel stopped for a minute, closing his eyes. When he opened them they were shining with unshed tears, yet he met Soto’s black ones unflinchingly. “I need to be able to kill, and more importantly I need to know enough to have other options than killing.”

Soto’s heart broke for the young child he loved. At the same time he was filled with pride at the intelligent, strong young man before him. “I will teach you everything I know, and I will train you hard, but what about your magic? I cannot train you in that.”

Gabriel sighed and wiped his eyes. “I'm not sure what to do about my magic, I need someone to train with. Aurora really helps, but I don’t think she can handle me throwing spell after spell at her.”
“We will figure it out; things always seem to work out one way or another. I can train you in throwing knives and throwing stars; you will be able to work on your speed, accuracy and reflexes.”

Gabriel’s eyes widened. “That’s perfect. I could even transfigure or cast spells on them as they leave my hand, that way no one will get hurt and Aurora should be able to help contain what we’re doing.”

Soto’s brow furrowed in concentration. “Can you cast a containment field and do magic within it?”

“I have cast defensive shields, but I don’t know if they would work or containment.” Gabriel chewed his bottom lip as his eyes darted back and forth, every once in a while he would mumble something under his breath as he worked through the problem. Finally he looked up. “I will have to talk to Aurora, but there are spells that will work; Hogwarts has them to help protect the students while they learn magic.”

Gabriel stood up to find Aurora when he heard a light rumble. Looking towards the road he saw dust billowing up, the transient gypsies along with Dario had arrived. With everything going on Gabriel had forgotten it was Saturday. Gabriel turned to Soto who was now standing beside him. Soto smiled and headed forward. Things could wait, right now it was time to greet their friends and find out what they had been up to for the past week.

Every year squibs between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two would join the troupe for a year; it had become a rite of passage of sorts. Less than half would stay for a second year, and only one or two every few years would stay beyond that. The woman Dario was courting most likely wouldn’t stay for a second year. Marie talked about what she was going to do when she returned home in September. She lived in Troyes, France and Gabriel wondered if Dario was planning on going with her. They seemed very serious; Dario had gone with her while the rest of the core group had been camping. Oh well, Gabriel had learned long ago that life was full of change and people came and went. He would simply enjoy their company while they were here.

Tea was a noisy affair as everyone caught up on what had been going on. Lucas, Rose and her children, Remus and Philip came down for the first time after the full moon, and joined them.

“Hello, Gabriel; how are you today?” Philip asked as he sat down next to the black-haired boy.

“I'm well. How are you? How was the full moon?”

Philip smiled. “I am very well, thank you. The full moon was most enjoyable. The few things we were willing to share with Remus helped all five of them immensely. Is that your guitar?”

Gabriel smiled brightly as he showed off his prize; it was a lovely classical Spanish guitar. “Dario brought it back for me.”

“It is lovely; do you play?”

“Yes, but I still need a lot of practice,” Gabriel answered setting the guitar down.

“I think that is how all things are in life. Practice is never wasted,” Philip said taking a sip of tea. “I would like to talk with you alone after tea if that is all right with you?”

Gabriel frowned and bit at this, but said, “Sure.”

Thirty minutes later Philip and Gabriel were walking amongst the apple orchard, the white blossoms scenting the air and carpeting the ground. Gabriel was curious but he didn’t feel afraid. When Philip spoke his voice was calm and rich with a roughness that all werewolves seemed to have. “Little Angel, my friends and I have been waiting for you.”
Gabriel blinked at the name, it was the same one Salazar Slytherin had used in the letter to his descendant. “Why?”

Philip smiled; the boy didn’t give anything away but had acknowledged the name. “Helga Hufflepuff belonged to the council I am now a part of. She told us of the prophecy.”

Gabriel nodded in understanding. “What do you want from me?”

Philip blinked at this; he hadn’t expected to hear such resignation from the boy. “We want to help. You have read the prophecy?” At Gabriel’s nod he continued, “It says you will put the world to rights and defeat the rising evil, which we believe to be Voldemort. The council I belong to is made up of magical creatures. There used to be human members too but after Belladonna’s rise the Wizarding world began to fear non-humans, and we went into hiding for the most part. We are hoping to re-establish relationships with the Wizarding world, and regain our lost freedoms.”

Gabriel nodded, he had read about Belladonna Raspin and the way the Wizarding world had been changed. “How will me defeating Voldemort accomplish that?” Gabriel asked trying to imagine how that went together.

“Well, it won’t directly. However, you are already revered in the Wizarding world, and after Voldemort’s defeat that will increase. Most importantly however, you are the ‘child of the four’. You are descended from all the Founders of Hogwarts.”

“I do want to help, and I would certainly rather make things better for magical creatures than kill Voldemort. Do you know how I am related to the Founders?” Gabriel asked, twisting the hem of his shirt and chewing on his lip.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know. There are spells and potions you can use to find out,” Philip answered looking at the young man in concern. He could sense the inner turmoil and wanted to help. One day Gabriel would be their hero but right now he was a ten-year-old boy. “How can we help you?”

Gabriel stopped walking and looked deeply into Philip’s amber eyes; he saw only sincerity and compassion. “Can I place a charm on you that would prevent you from telling anyone what I am about to say without my permission?”

Philip’s eyes widened. What they had already talked about was sensitive information and if it got into the wrong hands it would be dangerous, but if there was more he would allow the spell. “Yes, I am willing to have a secrecy spell placed on me. I want to help you.”

Gabriel breathed a sigh of relief. “Thank you.” He began to hiss. Philip gasped as he felt powerful wandless magic surround him and sink into his body. “All right?” Gabriel asked when he’d finished.

Philip took a deep breath. “Yes, that was quite a rush. You are a powerful young man, I have not seen many perform wandless magic.”

Gabriel shrugged. “I didn’t have a wand so Aurora told me to do my best without one.”

“Aurora is your snake?”

“Yes. She found me in India and led me to a wooden trunk, which contained the original textbooks for Hogwarts, most of them written by the Founders themselves.”

“Bok!* No wonder you asked for the secrecy spell. The Founders’ original writings are a myth amongst wizards,” Philip whispered in shock. The ancient library of the council had some of those books, but access was restricted to scholars and masters who had proven their goals were peaceful
ones. “I might be able to help you with the training, but I need to talk to some people first.” Philip said after a minute. “Right now we should be getting back to the others before they begin to worry. Your family doesn’t know me that well yet.”

Gabriel grinned. “They can be rather protective.”

“As good parents should be,” Philip replied. They chatted happily about everyday things as they walked back to the group. As they neared they saw Remus check his watch several times and then a figure appeared out of nowhere holding onto a towel.

“Moony!” yelled Auror Black.

“Sirius, it’s good to see you,” greeted Remus.

“Dumbledore sent me with a Portkey to come and collect you. Are you ready? Do you need to get your stuff?” Sirius asked exuberantly.

Remus just shook his head at his friend’s antics. “I have my bag right here, but I would like a moment to say goodbye.”

For the first time Sirius looked around him. He had known he was going to some kind of squib village or something, so he hadn’t bothered to be very observant of his surroundings. Scanning all the people he saw familiar faces, but couldn’t place from where until he saw a green-eyed boy with long black hair and a white headscarf. Sirius’ eyes lit up as he broke into a grin. Remus turned to see what Sirius was grinning about and saw Gabriel.

“Hello, Auror Black; how are you today?” Gabriel said cheerfully.

Sirius wrinkled his nose. “None of that! It’s Sirius to you.”

“I wasn’t sure; you seem to be here in an official capacity.”

“Why?”

Gabriel shook his head at Sirius’ ignorance. Coming up to him Gabriel gave Sirius a warm hug. “You’re dressed in your red Auror’s robes, and no one knew you were coming.”

“Moony, didn’t you let them know I was coming to get you?” Sirius chastised playfully, as he squeezed Gabriel tight. He didn’t know why, but he always felt better when he was around the little boy.

“I didn’t know who was coming, and I did tell Becky,” Remus defended. “Well, I suppose introductions are in order.”

“I know most of the gypsies.”

Remus nodded, and then introduced Sirius to the werewolves, Becky and Ann. Sirius enthusiastically shook everyone’s hands, even the other werewolves which surprised them. Remus watched Sirius and looked torn between happiness, embarrassment and resignation.

“Do you need to leave now or would you like to stay for dinner?” Becky asked.

“Only a fool would turn down a meal from a lovely lady, and as I’m not feeling foolish at the moment we would love to stay,” Sirius said dramatically and bowed.

Becky placed her hands on her hips and looked at him reproachfully before smiling and shaking her
head.

*Bok is Turkish for ‘shit’*
Chapter Forty-seven

Parseltongue is in bold.

April 20th evening

Sirius’ barking laughter rang out into the cool spring night, as they sat around the fire. Dinner had been lovely, with Sirius being ostentatiously polite. After dinner Philip, Lucas and Rose and her kids left to go back to the clan. The rest of them had settled around the fire, an uncomfortable silence had settled over them until Vincent had asked, “Remus how did you meet Sirius?” That had been almost an hour ago, and many stories about the ‘Marauders’ had been told in that time. Gabriel had cuddled in-between his Dad and Baba, keeping a tight grip on their hands as Remus and Sirius told stories about James and Lilly Potter. The stories were funny and made him laugh, but it was still bittersweet to be hearing about his parents for the first time.

As the laughter died down Sirius said with a sigh. “God I miss them. I will find my godson and make things right.”

“It wasn’t your fault, Sirius. You couldn’t have known they would throw you in jail without a trial.” Remus said trying to comfort his friend.

Ignoring Remus’ words Sirius turned towards Vincent. “Did Remus ask if you had seen Harry?”

Vincent didn’t want to lie to the man whose desperate gray eyes were locked onto his. “Yes, he did.”

Sirius fell back against the pillows with a sigh, assuming that the gypsies had never run into Harry. Remus scooted closer to his friend and wrapped an arm around his shoulders.

Gabriel had never felt bad about hiding from the wizarding world, until now. These two men had loved his parents, and him when he was a baby. They now felt sad, hopeless, and guilty for letting down their friends and the baby they remember. Strengthening his shields, Gabriel let go of his fathers’ hands and walked over to the two friends sitting down and forcing his way in-between the two men, cuddling against them. Sirius and Remus stiffened with shock for a moment and then relaxed and snuggled up to the small boy. They sat silently for a while and then Sirius spoke. “I wish I knew if he was safe, you know. Is he loved and being taken good care of?”

Gabriel cleared his throat. “In your stories you mentioned ‘Potter luck’ several times. I bet Harry has that same lucky charm on him.”

At this Sirius grinned. “Of course little prongslet has the Potter luck. Why didn’t I think of that! Right now he is probably sitting on a throne learning how to be King of some wild exotic country! And just in the nick of time he will swoop in and save the day shocking everyone!”

Remus shook his head at his friend’s excitement. He still felt uneasy about where Harry was. Sighing he scooted closer and buried his nose in Gabriel’s back. The boy smelled of fresh spring air, earth, wood smoke, and a spicy floral scent, which Remus guessed was his soap. Underneath very faintly was another scent, something which said pack and home.

Gabriel could tell Remus sensed something so carefully he turned, and looked into his amber eyes. “Who are you loyal too, Remus? A young child does not run away from a happy home?”
Remus’ eyes widened as the knowledge came to the forefront of his mind. He knew, but the ability to hold onto the thought or say anything about it was withheld from him. “How old were you when you came to live with the gypsies?”

“I ran away from home when I was five,” Gabriel answered.

The wheels in Remus’ mind began to turn. “I am loyal to Harry Potter. As for anyone else I don’t know.”

Gabriel leaned in and whispered, “Harry Potter will return. Please just wait.”

“Yes, I can wait.” Gabriel smiled and kissed his forehead, making the last 10 minutes a vague yet comforting memory of a dream.

Not long after, the two men said good-bye, promised to see them at Summer Solstice and portkeyed back home.

“Cherub, are you okay?” Vincent asked concern lacing his voice. Gabriel shook his head ‘no’ and was quickly wrapped up in the strong arms of his Dad and Baba.

“I didn’t think there were people who actually loved me and wanted me back.” Gabriel said sadly. “There are those who want Harry Potter safe, because I am needed to defeat Voldemort. The Weasleys want Harry Potter back simply because I am a child and I should be safe and loved. But Remus and Sirius, they knew my parents, and they don’t want ‘Harry Potter defater of Voldemort’ the want their friends child, they want progslet.” Gabriel was silent for a moment as tears flowed down his cheeks. “I don’t know what to do with that, and I have never really missed my parents since I found you and left the Dursley’s. And even there is was the idea of being rescued by people who loved me and not really James and Lilly Potter I didn’t even know their names back then, let alone anything else.”

“Gabriel,” Mudiwa began his deep voice vibrating through his body, “it is okay to grieve for those you have lost. I am glad you know something about your parents. As for Remus and Sirius you can be their friend, and then when you return to the wizarding world you will already have an established relationship with them.”

“I know I just which I could stop them from hurting.” Calming down Gabriel wiped his damp cheeks and looked up at his Dad and Baba. “Thank you,” he said with a soft sleepy smile.

Vincent smiled down at his son. “Anytime, now let’s get you to bed.”

April 27, 1991 Last day at Oma’s farm.

3am

Gabriel woke with a gasp. Casting a soft luminos he reached for the dream journal next to his bed and began to write.

At first it was me again, I was scurrying through a forest looking for a magical creature to devour. As I came closer to a sleeping crup, and the lust for pain, death and blood overwhelmed me I was able do the dream techniques Aurora has been teaching me, and I pulled out of the foul creature. This non-descript blobish thing attacked the poor crup, sucking up its blood and stealing its magic. Once it had fed its eyes glowed red. “Hogwarts I must find my way to Hogwarts” it said. Then it began to move south through the forest. I am so glad I was able to separate myself from the monster in my
dream it is the first time I have been able to, and the first time I haven’t woken up vomiting.

Gabriel set the journal back on the bedside table, and gently picked up Aurora who was sitting on the bed waiting for him to be done. “Why? Why do I keep dreaming of this monster?”

Aurora sighed, as best as a snake could, this wasn’t going to be easy, and Gabriel certainly wasn’t going to be happy. “Your scar pulses with Dark Magic when you dream of the monster. I believe the monster is Voldemort, or at least what is left of him, and the scar connects you to him.”

“No! I don’t want to be connected to that madman! Aurora how do we stop this!” Gabriel cried tears running down his cheeks.

“Little Angel, hush please it will be all right. You are progressing very quickly in being able to control your dreams. This way you will know what he is doing, and where he is going. You will be able to do good with this I promise.”

“He kills helpless creatures, Aurora I don’t want to see or feel that.”

“I know little angel, I know we will work on it. You will be okay.” Aurora hissed curling around his shoulders rubbing his damp cheek with her head. Gabriel huddled in his bed for a minute trying to calm down, but Aurora’s comfort wasn’t enough, he needed his fathers. “Aurora I am going to my fathers do you want to come along or stay here?”

“I’ll stay here, just put me on your pillow it will still be warm.” Gabriel smiled at her and did as he was told. “It will be all right little angel just wait and see.” Aurora hissed softly as he stood to leave.

Gabriel stood for a moment watching his Baba and Dad sleeping. Normally they would have woken by now, but after waking up every night this week to Gabriel’s screams and throwing-up they were exhausted. Feeling guilty he thought about going back to his own bed, but he knew he wouldn’t be able to sleep. They were sleeping on opposite sides of the bed, maybe if he was careful he could just slide in-between them and they wouldn’t wake up. Slowly Gabriel crawled up their bed. The duvet was soft and silky beneath his hands, he had to move slowly and stay focused so he wouldn’t slip. Finally he reached the head of the bed, and was able to slide in under the warm sheets. Laying his head down he smiled at having not woken up his fathers. Turning to his right he saw the slow and steady rise of his dad’s chest, yep still asleep. Turning to his left, he almost screamed when he looked into alert gray eyes.

“Are you okay?” His Baba asked his voice rough and even deeper from sleep.

Gabriel smiled even as his eyes filled yet again with tears. “I am now.”

His Baba opened his arms and Gabriel crawled into the comforting warmth crying himself back to sleep.

7am

Vincent woke to the sounds of birds chirping and soft morning light filling the room. Turning he saw his husband holding their son tightly in his arms. Gabriel had tear tracks dried on his cheeks. ‘He must have had another nightmare. I can’t believe I slept through it.’ Vincent thought. The sunlight and birdsongs were slowly waking up his sleeping family. Scooting closer, Vincent propped himself up on an elbow and ran his fingers through his sons thick black hair. Even though Gabriel looked adorable in a headscarf, like a little pirate, it was a shame his hair needed to be covered. Oh most of it was visible, but Gabriel’s hair was so beautiful. Thick glossy black locks with gentle waves and soft curls at he ends, which very few got to enjoy because he always has it pulled back. Vincent sighed at
his melancholy thoughts as he continued to run his fingers through Gabriel’s hair, keeping watch over his slowly waking family.

Mudiwa slowly woke feeling Gabriel sigh in pleasure and try to burrow more deeply into him. Opening his eyes slowly in the morning light, he saw his husband looking sadly at their son while petting his hair. As if Vincent could tell he was being watched he turned and worried lavender eyes looked into sleepy gray ones. “Is he okay?” Vincent asked softly.

“Yes, he climbed into bed in the middle of the night. I don’t thing he threw-up, but he was upset. He cried himself back to sleep, but didn’t talk about his dream.” Mudiwa answered softly.

Gabriel had been fighting to stay asleep, but when he heard the worry in his Dad’s voice he woke up. Keeping his eyes closed and not moving, Gabriel startled his fathers when he whispered. “Aurora says I am dreaming about Voldemort, that when I am having my nightmares she has felt dark magic coming from my scar. She thinks I’m connected to him.”

Looking at each other in horror the two men didn’t know what to say so they just held their son as if they could keep him safe in their arms. Gabriel soaked in the warmth and love for a while before he spoke again.

“Last night was the first time I was able to break away from Voldemort’s mind and just observe, which is why I didn’t sick-up. I was in his body, or what is left of it, while he was killing those animals. Aurora thinks I will gain more control and be able to find out what he is doing so we can stay one step ahead of him.”

“I don’t want you to be dreaming about that monster.” Mudiwa growled angry that his child was going through such things.

“I agree, how do we block your connection?” Vincent demanded.

“I don’t want to see what Voldemort is doing either, but I do need to know what is going on, and what if I can help people because of something I learned in my dreams?” Gabriel asked. “I am learning a lot from Salazar’s book on Mind Magic. I just started the level two book, which has chapters on lucid dreaming, controlling your dreams and protecting yourself while you dream.”

Vincent and Mudiwa’s eyes locked in silent conversation. “We want to know about each and every dream,” Vincent said.

Mudiwa added, “You need to practice blocking them all together, so you can get peaceful sleep some nights.”

“If the dreams begin to affect your health we will step in,” Vincent finished.

Gabriel smiled softly, “Thank you for understanding and helping me.”

“Of course, we will always support you,” Mudiwa said, and kissed Gabriel’s forehead. The three of them lay together until Gabriel’s tummy rumbled.

Mudiwa laughed, “I guess it is time to get up.”

1pm

Gabriel sighed as he looked down into the fields below as soon as everything was packed they were leaving. He loved being here, and the past week while emotional had been really fun. Freja had taught him how to read runes and had given him a book and gotten him some glass runes her son had
made for him, all untouched so he could develop his own relationship with the runes. Oma had taught him how to bake several different pastries and cakes, which had been a lot of fun, and delicious. Gabriel had also gotten to play with Freja’s grandchildren, Albin and Gisele, together they had run all over the valley. Now however it was time to leave for the next show. Gabriel was pulled from his thought by a soft pop, turning he saw Philip.

“Hello, Gabriel I was hoping you would still be here. I found someone to help train you.” Philip said as he gave Gabriel a soft hug. “My son is able to meet with you twice a week.”

“Thank you, what is your sons name? Where will we meet? When do we start?” Gabriel asked excitedly.

Philip laughed at Gabriel’s exuberance. “Come on let’s go get your father’s so they can hear this too.”

Once they were all settled around Becky’s table with warm cups of tea, Philip told them what he had been able to arrange. “My son Lysander is willing to train Gabriel in magic, both defensive and offensive, twice a week. He has created a portkey, which will take Gabriel to the training room. I can’t tell you exactly where it is, because the council meets in the same building.”

“Would one of us be able to go with him?” Vincent asked.

“I am afraid not, it was difficult enough to get permission for Gabriel. I do understand your need to make sure your son is safe. If it helps at all Gabriel will not be leaving the room, and only my son, my wife and I are able to enter the room.”

“Has your son taught before?” Mudiwa asked.

“Not officially, but he has younger siblings and cousins who he has taught things too. I have found him to be a patient teacher.” Philip answered hoping they would accept his offer. “How about I bring Lysander to meet you tonight, and you can see how you feel about him teaching Gabriel then?”

Both Mudiwa and Vincent visibly relaxed. “That would be perfect, thank you,” Vincent said.
Forty-eight

Chapter Forty-eight

A/N We all know that the books the Founders wrote would be in an ancient language. I am not even going to attempt to try writing like that, so please forgive my modern translations.


Gabriel let go of the amber teardrop pendant Lysander had given him to use as a Portkey. Looking around the room for some clue as to what they were going to do tonight, Gabriel saw the familiar polished wood floors, high ceiling, and wall covered in mirrors. Due to its size Gabriel suspected that this used to be a ballroom, but Lysander had never told him. Currently the room was empty so Gabriel began to practice. He still didn’t have a wand; Lysander had said that since he could do spells without one, it would hinder him to use a wand, as it added an extra step to the process of casting a spell. Gabriel thought about the charm he had read about in Rowena’s seventh level Charms book, it was a shield of spinning air which blocked spells and tore them apart. Rowena had written, ‘Spells are focused energy, they are not solid, so when holding this air shield think of the wind as it scatters the autumn leaves across the ground. Imagine the spell coming at you as a ball of leaves and when it hits your shield it will fly apart, away from you.’

Gabriel held up his hand and called on the element of air letting it spin outwards as he threaded in the shielding charm. Gradually he sent in more energy creating a bigger shield until it was large enough to protect his entire body. Thankfully he had learned enough from Lysander to not lose the shield when he felt his teacher pass the wards around the room and open the door.

“Good evening, Gabriel. What have you created?” Lysander said, his voice calm and his accent an interesting mixture of his mother's Czechoslovakian and his father’s Turkish. Lysander was a born vampire and a wizard. His coloring was inherited from his mother: golden-blond hair, which he kept stylish and short, sky-blue eyes and creamy skin. However, he had his father’s height and lean features.

“It’s an air shield I read about in Rowena’s books. It's supposed to not only block a spell, but tear it apart,” Gabriel explained.

Lysander laughed. “Well, we shall have to test it out,” and he began throwing jinxes at his student.

Thirty minutes later Gabriel lay panting on the floor, exhausted. “Well,” chirped Lysander happily, “that worked really well, the air shield even broke apart a cutting hex. Now on to the next bit of fun.”

Gabriel groaned and watched as Lysander half skipped, half walked over to a box he’d left by the door. Reaching in the man pulled out small common objects such as rocks, feathers, pens, nuts, and silverware and proceeded to throw them about the room. Walking back over to Gabriel, Lysander rubbed his hands together in glee, an evil smirk on his face. Gabriel groaned again and sat up. He loved coming to his training sessions, he was learning a lot and Lysander was a great teacher, but he was also rather sadistic.

“We are going to transfigure the objects around the room into different things. We’ll stick with items that won’t hurt, as we will be throwing them at each other. We can cast shields to try and block each other. The messiest person at the end loses.”
Gabriel stood up, grinning and walked over to the other side of the ballroom.

“Ready, steady, go!” Lysander called.

Gabriel quickly summoned a handful of rocks to him and transfigured them into water balloons. Moving so that hopefully Lysander wouldn’t be able to hit him with anything, Gabriel took aim and launched his first balloon. Soon the air was filled with water balloons, mud balls, paint balls, even a few pies. Gabriel was covered in goop and laughing hysterically when Lysander finally called a halt to their game.

With as much dignity as ever Lysander smoothed his hair back from his forehead causing blobs of mud to fall to the floor. “Very well done, Gabriel; I think we have a tie. That will be all for today; let’s clean up and then you can go.”

Gabriel tried to hold in his laughter at the insanity of his teacher standing there, being all proper while covered head to toe in goop, but it was too much. He began to laugh a wild, carefree laugh that had him clutching his sides and falling to the floor.

Lysander smiled, he had been hoping for this. Gabriel was far too serious and had been allowing his future to weigh him down. They did not need a soldier or a killing machine. What they needed and hoped for was a warrior who fought for peace. As long as this powerful, beautiful child could laugh then there was hope for a future for all of them.

June 20th. Ottery St. Catchpole.

Gabriel carried the crates full of books into the large tent and tried to figure out how he was going to tell Professor Snape about his dreams. In dreams he had watched as the creature Voldemort now was made his way to a town. There Voldemort had found a hotel and had watched for three weeks before someone suitable had come along. Voldemort had been gleeful, as the bumbling, fearful little man had told another guest he was the Professor for Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts. Gabriel shivered as he remembered how Voldemort had stalked the man through the forest, sneaking up on him as the Professor bent to examine an unknown footprint on the forest floor. Voldemort had gathered all of the magic he had stolen from the magical creatures and thrown himself at the man, binding them together. Gabriel had woken screaming when red eyes had stared at him out of the back of the man’s head.

Gabriel shook his head and tried to focus on the job in front of him. If he didn’t keep his shields up he could be affected by the energy in the books. Hitting the play button on his cassette player, Gabriel lost himself to Concrete Blonde’s Joey. Singing along in perfect pitch and inflection he placed this year’s stock of books and trinkets on the tables.

Severus, as every year, stopped and watched Gabriel for a minute before announcing his presence. He wasn’t sure why he did this, it had just become a habit. The music this year was different and Severus wasn’t sure he liked it. There was a roughness to it which irked him; however there was also a rich sensuality to the singer’s voice, which he did enjoy. When the song ended there was a loud click, and Gabriel went over and took the cassette out, replacing it with a new one.

“I think you will enjoy this much more, Professor,” Gabriel said with a smirk, without actually looking at the tall, dark man.

“Oh really, you think you know me well enough to pick out music for me?” Severus said, hiding his shock at the boy having realized he was there.
Gabriel turned and smiled brightly at him, and Severus couldn’t help himself – he smiled back, although much more softly. When the overture for The Phantom of the Opera came on Severus was shocked and then began to laugh. “Very well, you do know me well enough to pick out music,” Severus acknowledged once he’d caught his breath.

Gabriel grinned. He now noticed the packages Professor Snape carried and walked over to him. “What are those?”

Severus smirked, he might be amazing at gathering potion ingredients, but Gabriel was still just a child, and easily tempted. “What are what?”

Gabriel’s eyes narrowed playfully, he knew he was being teased. “The odd-looking, cloth-covered package and the brown, paper-wrapped one in your hands.”

“Oh, these? Well, nothing much really,” Severus said calmly. “Just something I brought for you.”

Gabriel grinned and bounced over to the Professor. “For me, really? What are they? Can I open them?”

Severus smiled at Gabriel’s innocent exuberance. “Yes, brat, you can open them.”

Gabriel reverently took the package Professor Snape handed him. Turning it over in his hands he guessed it was a large book. “What are they for?”

Severus smiled. It was refreshing to see a child who was surprised by a gift rather than feeling entitled to one. He loved his godson dearly, but the boy really was showered with material things.

“They are to say ‘thank you’. You helped me out a lot by letting me buy potions ingredients for far less then they were worth,” Severus said simply.

Gabriel’s brow furrowed, “But you have been paying me much more now that you have your inheritance, and have been selling the potions you created. Plus you helped people. You don’t owe me anything.”

Severus couldn’t help but smile again. “That is the great thing about a present, it isn’t owed, it is given.”

Gabriel set the package down on the table and wrapped his arms around the stoic man. “Thank you!”

Severus hugged Gabriel back and chuckled. “You haven’t even opened it yet.”

Gabriel blushed and went back to the gift. Peeling back the brown paper he saw a large leather bound book. The title read Hogwarts, A History.

“I hope it is acceptable,” Snape said. "You frequently ask me questions about the school, and I just thought you might enjoy learning more about it.”

Gabriel smiled and looked into nervous black eyes. “I really like it; I can’t wait to read it. I bet I will have even more questions for you next year.”

Severus cleared his throat. “Well, if your fathers approve of this gift you might not have to wait until next year.”

Gabriel cocked his head to the side watching as Severus placed the other package on the table and lifted off the fabric. A silver cage was revealed with a beautiful snowy owl inside.
“She’s beautiful, is she for me?” Gabriel asked, sticking a finger between the bars to stroke her soft, white feathers.

“Yes, she is for you. If your fathers say you can keep her,” Severus said sternly.

Gabriel smiled and gestured to the three crates on the table. “Those are for you to go through. I will be back.” With that he ran from the tent to find his Baba.

Severus was partway through the first crate when Gabriel flew back into the tent breathing hard and dragging Mudiwa behind him.

“Look Baba, isn’t she beautiful! Professor Snape got her for me. She won't be any trouble, I promise to take care of her all by myself. And just think how useful an owl will be. Please, Baba, please,” Gabriel begged, alternating between clutching Mudiwa’s arm and lovingly petting the snowy owl.

Mudiwa rolled his eyes and said calmly in his rich voice, “I am sure you would take very good care of her, and yes, she is beautiful. However, your Dad also needs to approve a new pet, so go and get him.”

Gabriel sighed, but ran to get his Dad.

“I hope I haven’t caused any trouble,” Severus said.

Mudiwa shook his head. “No, we were thinking about getting him an owl for his birthday; however I am no good at saying no to him when it comes to pets. Vincent is the one to be rational with a cute little animal while Gabriel's big green eyes are looking up at him,” laughing Mudiwa continued. “Last summer Gabriel had talked me into letting him keep a baby polecat of all things. Vincent was the one to put his foot down.”

Severus chuckled as the huge, beautiful ebony man admitted to being undone by cute animals and his son’s eyes. He was about to say something when Gabriel dragged Vincent into the tent. Vincent carefully looked over the owl, while running his index finger over his chin as if he was really considering whether or not to keep the owl.

“You promise to take good care of her?” Vincent asked.

“Yes!” squealed Gabriel as he bounced on the balls of his feet.

“And you will get the paperwork she will need?”

“Yes, I can ask Mr. Weasley for help when we see him tomorrow.”

“If I may,” interrupted Professor Snape pulling out a scroll from within his robes. “I already have the papers needed.”

Gabriel squealed with delight and threw himself onto his dad. “Please Dad, please please please please.”

Vincent laughed, “Okay, I give in. You can keep her.”

“Thank you!” Gabriel shouted as he hugged everyone in the room, before going over to his new owl. “Hello, beautiful, I shall have to think of a good name for you.”

“What will you name her?” Vincent asked.

“I don’t know, something will come to me, I'm sure.”
An hour later Professor Snape was finished, and just about to leave, when Gabriel came over to him. “Professor, can I talk to you for a minute, please?”

“Certainly,” Severus answered and followed the boy to a secluded corner of the tent. He could tell Gabriel was really upset about something. Despite what most of the students thought of him, Severus frequently counseled his Slytherins, and could tell when something wasn’t quite right.

They sat down on a pair of foldout chairs. Gabriel twisted the hem of his white tee shirt agitatedly. “You seem like a very logical man, but I am asking you to listen and to trust me,” Gabriel said, his emerald eyes pleading with Severus.

“I am listening,” Severus said softly.

It wasn’t a promise, but Gabriel knew it was the best he was going to get. “I have been practicing divination including dream interpretation, and I’ve been having very vivid, recurring dreams. Please just hear me out.” Gabriel paused until Severus nodded sharply. “There is an evil coming to Hogwarts. It is drawn by the lure of immortality. It hides within someone welcome at the school. It is wrapped in purple. I know that isn’t a lot of information, but I know it is true. Even if you don’t believe me, please just keep my words in mind and your eyes open. Please,” Gabriel begged as a single tear slid down his cheek.

Severus wanted to scoff at the boy, but Gabriel was so upset. Gently, he wiped the tear from the boy's skin. “I trust you, and I will remember what you have said.”

“Thank you, I don’t want anyone to get hurt. You will be careful?”

“Certainly,” Severus said and was shocked as Gabriel threw himself into his arms. Severus wrapped his arms around the now crying boy.

“I know it sounds insane, but the dreams are so awful, and they just keep repeating,” he sobbed.

“Hush now, I remember what you said. Evil drawn to Hogwarts for immortality, it hides within someone, and is wrapped in purple,” Severus repeated for Gabriel’s sake hoping it would calm him.

“Thank you, Professor Snape,” Gabriel said once he had calmed down. “Can I write to you, just for fun?”

Severus smiled softly, “I would like that very much.”


Remus smiled as he watched everyone around him laughing and talking. The performance had been amazing, and watching the gypsies – and especially Gabriel – do such amazing things had been breathtaking. He watched as Gabriel tried to teach the Weasley twins some tumbling tricks. Sighing, he saw Sirius chatting up one of the young ladies who had done a contortion act. Suddenly strong arms wrapped around him as a hot, strong body pressed against his back.

“Hello, Remus,” Soto said against the sensitive flesh of Remus’ neck.

Remus shivered, “Hello, Soto. You and Elena were so beautiful tonight.”

“Thank you. Are you here alone?”
Remus moaned softly at the question and all it implied. “I am here with friends.”

“Do you have to go home with them?” Soto asked running his hands over Remus’ muscular torso. “Elena and I would love to have you tonight.”

Remus relaxed back into his lover’s body. “I am sure I could stay.”

Soto gave a throaty chuckle. “Perfect.”

Sirius, who had moved closer once he saw his shy friend wrapped up in Soto’s arms, was shocked. Remus in a threesome? Remus having sex? Maybe he needed to watch his old friend more closely.

Gabriel yawned as he got ready for bed. It had been a really fun night. He always enjoyed seeing the Weasleys, Cedric, Luna, Sirius and now Remus at the Solstice party. Bill hadn’t been able to come as he was busy working in Egypt. Gabriel wondered if Charlie would be with them next summer as he was off to Romania in a few days to train as a dragon handler, which sounded brilliant. Gabriel checked his pockets before taking off his trousers, frowning as he felt some crinkling package in his pocket. He pulled out a silver-wrapped sweet and smiled. Ron had brought him a chocolate frog. He wasn’t as close to Ron as he was to the twins, but they did get along much better now than they had before. Smiling, Gabriel unwrapped the chocolate frog and gasped as it jumped from his hand. Quickly he grabbed it and bit into the now unmoving milk chocolate. He gave a soft hum and picked up the wrapper, some kind of card was inside it. Pulling it out he saw the writing on the card was all about Albus Dumbledore. Gabriel puzzled over this and exactly what this man was going to be in his life. He knew Philip didn’t trust him, but so far all Philip would say was that he would ‘tell him about it later.’

Pulling on his pajamas, Gabriel walked over to his owl’s perch. “I have thought of a name for you. Well, actually I heard one of the kids tonight talking about having to do a History of Magic essay and choosing a witch named Hedwig. What do you think about that name? I don’t know why, but Hedwig just seems to fit you.”

His owl looked at him deeply then hooted happily. Hedwig it was.
Forty-nine

Chapter Forty-nine

Warning: There is a scene at the end of this chapter with a third party description of rape and murder. It is not detailed, yet is still disturbing. No one is physically hurt during my story - it is a past event.

Witchdragon

Parseltongue is in bold.

September 1st 1991. Hogwarts

Dumbledore sat in his office and stared at the envelope made out for Harry Potter. The letter inside was the standard first year greeting and equipment list, but it was the envelope which had Dumbledore puzzled. It read: Harry Potter, still alive, finally happy, not ready to be here. The school owl that was to deliver the letter had dropped it on his desk weeks ago. Dumbledore was frustrated; no matter what he tried he couldn’t get the envelope addressed any other way. None of the spells, charms or potions he had tried succeeded in locating the boy. Angrily, Dumbledore stood up and began pacing. “What I am going to do, Fawkes? What am I going to tell everyone? The Wizarding world depends on me to protect them, to tell them right from wrong, to keep evil at bay, and right now I need Harry Potter to do this! It is my honor to be a beacon for the Light in these dark times and somehow I must find a way to keep everyone feeling safe, even while The Boy Who Lived is missing.”

Fawkes began to sing softly, hoping to ease the man’s mind. After defeating Grindelwald, a younger Albus Dumbledore needed to come to terms with all of the horror he had seen and committed in order to defeat the evil man. Albus never did heal from the trauma of that war, instead he allowed the public to cast him as their savior and a warrior for the Light. So quickly was he called upon to help and guide the rebuilt Ministry that the only comfort he could give himself was ‘the ends justify the means.’ Fawkes had tried to help, singing frequently to the broken man. Unfortunately, Albus saw the phoenix’s behavior as a sign of his purity and he became even more fanatical. Deciding that Albus Dumbledore was too powerful to leave unattended, Fawkes stayed on, watching over the man and offering comfort and guidance where he could.

Once Slytherin’s familiar woke, Fawkes had frequently talked to her, and he’d gone to see the newest ‘savior’ and pawn of Albus Dumbledore and the Wizarding World. Deciding to help the young man, Fawkes had used his magic to help conceal the boy and asked the castle to address his envelope. When Gabriel finally came to Hogwarts, Fawkes would bond with him, but right now he could protect the Little Angel by watching over Dumbledore and sending messages to Aurora.

The Sorting Feast

Severus Snape scowled as Dumbledore’s newest idiotic Defense Against the Dark Arts Professor sat next to him. Severus was exhausted; they had just finished setting up the protection for the Philosopher’s Stone, and just what Dumbledore was thinking having that thing at Hogwarts was beyond him. This was a school, not a secure facility or a military outpost.
“G-g-good evening, P-p-professor Snape,” stuttered Quirrel.

Severus’ eyes narrowed as he focused his glare on the frightened little man. Nodding his head sharply he inwardly cringed at the man’s odd smell which seemingly came from his purple turban. Turning back to the students he watched as McGonagall led the first years into the hall. Something nigged in his mind as he watched the Sorting begin. Snape sighed softly; he wished Gabriel was coming to school here. It would have been nice to have someone besides his godson who would be pleasant to teach. ‘Wait,’ Severus thought, ‘Gabriel… the Philosopher's stone… Quirrel’s purple turban… Is this what Gabriel’s dream meant?’ Severus wasn’t one to believe in divination; in fact he made a point to scowl frequently at Trelawney, the Divination Professor, to keep her away from him. But he didn’t believe in random coincidence either. Clapping politely as another student was sorted into his House, Severus began plotting ways to find out if Voldemort had indeed made his way into Hogwarts.

Draco watched the other students with a cool, calculated gaze. Inside he was nervous and excited just like all the other kids, but he had a reputation to create. He was a Malfoy after all. Vaguely listening to the Headmaster’s speech he sized up the other students: there were leaders within each House, and some strong older students, but no one could compete with him. He knew that his money, station, and magical strength set him apart from everyone here. A headache began to set in, and Draco sighed softly. His godfather had taught him to see and read auras; it had really helped him stay away from his father when he was angry. Lucius Malfoy had a perfect mask and you couldn’t tell what he was feeling until it was too late. But his emotions colored his aura, enabling Draco to hide until his father had calmed down.

Before his headache became too strong Draco looked over the tables once more. There were varying degrees of magical strength amongst the students, and oddly enough the Mudbloods and half-bloods were just as strong as the pure-bloods, not at the bottom of the spectrum as Draco had expected. The colors within their auras showed if they had specific strengths and there too it didn’t seem that blood purity made any difference. Draco mentally shrugged and let go of the mental focus needed to see auras, hoping the headache would now go away.

“So,” Blaise said, “no Harry Potter.”

“Dumbledore didn’t say anything about it,” Pansy added.

“Indeed,” replied Draco mimicking his godfather. Draco turned to his two best friends. “Let's go to the dorm.”

They got up and followed the prefects down into the dungeons, after settling in the three friends gathered on Draco’s bed and pulled the curtains. With a sigh they all dropped their masks. Pansy’s face, which had looked harsh with her sharp cheekbones and jet-black hair, softened as she smiled at her friends. Blaise, who had looked unapproachable with a cool aloofness, sparkled with mischief now.

“Without Potter here we will rule the school,” Draco stated.

Blaise drew a mocha-colored hand through his soft black curls. “Do we want to do that? What about the older students?”

Pansy snorted, “We aren’t going to attack them, just let them know who we are and that we are better than them.”
Draco looked into her sparkling sky-blue eyes. “There is no need to go after anyone directly, I agree. It shouldn’t be hard to claim our place in the school.”

“And if Potter shows up?” Blaise asked, honey-brown eyes contemplative.

“We will already be established,” Draco quipped, “He will have to find his own place within the school. Now, what do we know about the other students?”

September 2nd. The Great Hall at Hogwarts

Dumbledore smiled down at all of the excited young faces as they talked with their friends and ate breakfast. As he sipped his tea and watched the owl post fly in, Minister Fudge came barging into the hall.

“Good morning, Cornelius, what can I help you with today?” Dumbledore asked cheerfully as the hall went silent.

Waving a copy of the newspaper about, the Minister asked fearfully: “Have you read the paper this morning? Is this true?”

Dumbledore smiled mildly. “I am afraid I haven’t read the paper yet. Not only has it just arrived but it gives me indigestion to read while I eat.” This comment sent a wave of giggles through the students.

“Rita Skeeter has an article in here saying Harry Potter didn’t show up last night to be Sorted. She has three different theories as to why. What is going on? Is any of this true?” Fudge demanded as he waved the paper about again.

“As I have not read the article yet I’m afraid I cannot answer that question. Why don’t we go to my office…” Dumbledore was saying when Fudge interrupted him.

“She says Harry might be training in secret and accuses us of hiding him away! And here,” Fudge said pointing to the paper, “she questions if he has been captured by Death Eaters! And here it says that he could be a squib! A squib, Dumbledore! I really must know what is going on.”

Dumbledore sighed. Everyone was now staring at him, except for Severus who was looking at him smugly with an ‘I told you so’ look. “I have known for some time that Harry Potter was missing from his relatives’ home. We have been looking for him ever since. We have no idea where he is, and no idea who he is with. However, I do know that he is alive and happy. The reason I didn’t inform anyone is because I didn’t want the Death Eaters finding out that he is missing.”

“Well, they know now!” Fudge screeched.

“Come Cornelius, let us discuss this in my office; the children need to get to class.”

“Yes, of course; thank you,” Fudge said distractedly.

Once the Minister and the Headmaster left the hall everyone started talking all at once. Severus smirked as he watched the chaos. Looking down at his Slytherins he saw Draco looking back at him, one eyebrow raised in question. Severus just shrugged and standing, swept out of the room. He had students to teach or terrorize, whichever they deserved.
Gabriel smiled as Professor Snape's gray owl landed in front of him. Cooing softly, Gabriel removed the scroll from the owl’s leg. “You can rest on Hedwig’s perch in the bus,” Gabriel offered as he unrolled the scroll. Smiling, Gabriel read: “Let me know if you have any more dreams, SS.” inside the scroll was a newspaper article telling how the professors of Hogwarts had found out that the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher had been trying to break into a secure part of the castle which had held the Philosopher's Stone. The man, Quirrel, had also been caught killing unicorns in the forest and drinking their blood. Unfortunately, before he could be taken into custody he ran off into the Forbidden Forest and was found dead a week later by the gamekeeper, Rubeus Hagrid. Of course Dumbledore had been credited with the capture, but Gabriel knew the truth. At the bottom of the article was a line pleading with Harry Potter to return to them soon, and how they hoped his special training was going well.

So that is how they dealt with my disappearance, Gabriel thought as he set the paper down. Gabriel had seen most of what had happened through his dreams, and he knew that Voldemort was creeping around Britain, but for now the evil man was quiet and there wasn’t much to tell. Putting the letter in the bus and away from prying eyes, Gabriel walked out and into the fair, just enjoying what was around him. He had spent yesterday going on all the rides with his family, and today everyone was off doing their own thing. Most of the adults were making repairs and planning their route for the next season. Ria, Naveen and Kamala were shopping, not only in the fair but also at the nearby market; the transient gypsies were in charge of the booths and resting, and Gabriel was going to watch Tarkan* perform.

Gabriel danced as the music flowed around him. He enjoyed the elements of traditional Middle Eastern dance, which had found their way into Turkish social dancing. Sensuously he moved his body to the music, circling his hips and chest. The crowd danced and cheered as Tarkan sang and danced across the stage. Suddenly there was a hand on his shoulder, and turning Gabriel saw a pleasant-looking, middle-aged man. The man smiled at him and motioned for Gabriel to follow him. Gabriel shook his head; he didn’t know this man and he certainly wasn’t going to walk off with him. Gabriel tried to step away, but the man reached out quickly and grabbed his arm. Feelings of desperation and desire flowed from the stranger as Gabriel struggled to get away. The emotions were overwhelming and Gabriel’s own fear was breaking down his barriers. Suddenly he was flooded with the images and pain of the boys this man had got hold of before. His head swam with fear and pain, and he desperately wanted to be sick.

“Stay alert! You need to get away!” hissed Aurora fiercely as she slithered from around her master's neck and down his arm. Quickly she sank her fangs into the predator's hand forcing him to let go. “Run, Little Angel, run!”

Gabriel staggered for a moment and then tore through the crowd running as swiftly as possible. He didn’t stop until he was back at the tents. Frantically he looked around, making sure the man hadn’t followed him. “You're home, calm down, you're home,” Aurora hissed soothingly.

“Gabriel, what’s wrong?” Soto asked as he grasped the boy's shoulder.

Gabriel screamed and turned so quickly he fell to the ground before scurrying away. Vincent, Mudiwa and Adonis came running.

“No!” shouted Soto, “I don’t know what happened, but when I touched him, he screamed and…” Soto didn’t know what else to say, so he simply gestured to the boy pressed against the side of a tent,
looking at all of them with fearful, unseeing eyes.

Mudiwa stayed back from his son and sat down on the ground. “Cherub, sweetheart, we can tell that something bad has happened and we would really like to help you.”

“You are safe. Your family is trying to help you, Little Angel. Focus on where you are.”

Gabriel blinked and slowly came back to reality, looking straight into worried gray eyes. “Baba,” he whispered before turning and vomiting. Instantly Mudiwa was at his side, holding back his hair and holding him up. Gabriel’s whole body shook, and finally when there was nothing left to vomit he passed out.

“Bloody hell!” yelled Vincent as he moved forward to help his husband and son. “What's happening?”

“I have no idea,” explained Soto. “I saw Gabriel run in as if someone was chasing him, and then when I touched his shoulder he screamed and crawled away from me.”

“Let’s get him into bed. We can talk to him when he wakes up,” Mudiwa suggested, standing up with Gabriel still in his arms. Together Vincent and Mudiwa stripped Gabriel down to his boxers and tucked him into bed. “I don’t see any marks on him.”

“I don’t think anything happened to him physically,” Vincent said. “I can feel some nasty emotions stuck to him, but I can’t tell what they are.”

“I suppose we'll just have to wait with him until he wakes up,” Mudiwa said unhappily. Vincent nodded and walked into his husband’s arms. They held each other and watched over their sleeping son.

Within an hour Gabriel’s eyes fluttered open. Looking around, he was surprised to find himself in his room with his Dad and Baba watching him from the foot of his bed. Slowly it all came back to him; tears filled his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

“Gabriel?” Vincent questioned, wanting to make sure touching him would be all right.

“Daddy,” the boy said in a broken voice.

Both men moved quickly surrounding their son as he cried. Once his sobs died down to soft hiccups and sniffles, Mudiwa reached over and handed Gabriel a glass of water and a headache potion, which Adonis had brought in for them earlier.

“Gabriel, sweetheart, we need you to tell us what happened,” Mudiwa said softly.

Gabriel nodded and sat up. “I went to the concert like you said I could. A strange man came up and grabbed my shoulder. At first I simply thought he had the wrong person, but he tried to get me to go with him. When I tried to get away he panicked and grabbed my arm. All of this emotion hit me, and it scared me so much that… I tried…but I couldn’t.”

“Your shields dropped,” Vincent said softly.

Gabriel looked down at the bed and nodded. “Yeah, they dropped and I got hit with all of this disgusting…” Gabriel wrapped his arms around himself. “He wanted to rape me. I could feel it; he was desperate and turned on. He had done it before; he loved the pain and fear he caused.” Tears steamed down Gabriel's cheeks and he wanted to stop, but kept talking knowing it would help. “He absorbed all of their pain and fear, he wanted it, owned it, and all wrapped up in that was his
emotions, how he felt while he hurt them. And now it's all inside me, and I know he didn’t touch me but I can feel what those other boys felt.” Gabriel started to hyperventilate.

“Gabriel, look at me,” Mudiwa said firmly. “Breathe, just slow your breathing down, we will work through this okay.”

While his husband helped Gabriel calm down, Vincent desperately tried to control his rage. He understood how Gabriel felt; sometimes emotions came at you so intensely that they felt like your own. While Gabriel hadn’t been physically hurt he had emotionally lived through several brutal rapes and deaths as if they were his own. They could help him release the energy, but emotionally it would be a slow healing process.

“Gabriel, love, let’s get you into a cleansing bath okay?”

Gabriel really didn’t want to move, but when he looked into his Dad’s pleading lavender eyes he stood up. Soon Gabriel was soaking in a spicy scented bath; it was the blend his dad used for when anyone was psychically overloaded. It had frankincense, sandalwood, rosemary and cloves in it. Gabriel sighed as he felt his nerves being soothed, and the negative energy was gently drawn from his body.

“You need to drink something,” his Baba said handing him a cup of mint tea. Sitting up a bit, Gabriel took the cup and began to sip the hot, sweet tea. “I will be back in a few minutes, okay? Your dad will stay here with you,” Mudiwa told him.

Gabriel began to panic. “Where are you going?”

“I’ll only be gone a minute, I promise. I just need to let everyone know you're not performing tonight.”

“No, I can, I’m sure…” Gabriel began, but was soon interrupted.

“You are not performing tonight; it is not up for discussion. Everyone here has made last-minute adjustments before when someone is sick or injured.” Mudiwa spoke softly yet firmly and crossed his arms over his chest. Gabriel sighed, there was no arguing, he wasn’t performing tonight.

The bath salt recipe comes from Scott Cunningham’s book “The Complete Book of Incense, Oils, and Brews”

*Who is Tarkan? Middle Eastern dance (belly dance) mixing with modern club.
Chapter Fifty

Author's notes: Two quick things; first, Gabriel’s healing is discussed, and so mentions of non-con and child abuse are talked about – it is not graphic. Second there are three time-jumps in this chapter. I hope it’s not confusing.

Witchdragon

December 20th, 1991. Switzerland, Becky’s Farm

Vincent looked out the large picture window of his mum’s house at the fierce snowball fight. Gabriel was in the middle of it laughing and having fun, but he held back as he had ever since Turkey, and while Vincent understood, it broke his heart. Gabriel now kept his distance physically from people he didn’t know, and when he smiled it didn’t always reach his eyes. As he became more proficient at keeping his empathic shield up the tension in his body relaxed, but it never really went away.

Vincent sighed, he wasn’t sure it ever would.

“I remember when you lost a bit of your innocence,” his mum said interrupting his thoughts. “We were traveling through Poland and you went to introduce yourself to the people camping next to us. They had children your age and you wanted to play with them. The father sneered at you yelling, ‘Nasty gypsies, scum! Get away from my family.’ No, one had ever spoken to you like that before. You never approached people with the same openness after that day. Three of us had to hold your father back from beating the man up.”

Vincent nodded, “I remember that day. I guess every child goes through it at some level and every parent has to watch.”

“Vincent, you haven’t just sat back and watched. You have been there for him, helping him heal, holding him when he is scared. He still looks at you with the same trust in his eyes as before.”

“Gabriel is so amazing, and both Mudiwa and I feel blessed to have him as our son. He has worked so hard to heal from what has happened, and to strengthen himself so he can stop something like that happening again.” Vincent looked down at the carpet and whispered, “Does it make me a bad person that I regret not being able to kill that monster? Because every time my son wakes up screaming from a nightmare I wish I could have been the one to kill him.”

Becky reached up and wiped away the tear falling down her son’s cheek. “No, it makes you human, and a parent.” After a brief pause she asked, “What happened to him anyway?”

“Thank you,” Vincent smiled. “Gabriel had taken Aurora with him when he went to the concert, and she bit his attacker.” Chuckling darkly he continued, “We had Adonis pinned to the ground trying to stop him from going after the man once he found out. I never would have expected so much rage and violence to come from him; usually he’s easy going and relaxed.”

Anyway, we had Adonis pinned to the ground and he is yelling at Gabriel to tell him what the man looked like. Poor Gabriel was crying and being held by Soto, whom I think was simply trying to calm Gabriel down enough to get the information Adonis was asking for. Aurora slithers into that mess and informs Gabriel that the ‘humans were far too slow and he has already been dealt with.’ Adonis then collapsed against the ground and began sobbing. Gabriel threw himself onto Adonis, who started apologizing to Gabriel for not being able to protect him. At this point everyone is crying and holding each other. Finally, we all just piled into our tent and slept on the floor. Mum, it was
“For the next three days Gabriel slept in the middle of a large group of people. After that he moved back to his bed and the nightmares started. Everyone took turns sleeping with Gabriel so he wouldn’t be alone when he woke up from the nightmares. I don’t know what to do. I don’t know how to help him, Mum.”

Becky stood at the window holding Vincent's hand and just letting him talk. The group was supporting Vincent, Mudiwa and Cherub, but sometimes he just needed to vent his feelings with someone else. “You are doing so much, by being there, honoring his feelings, giving him space and time. I have friends who have reclaimed their lives and bodies after being attacked. Most found it helped to relearn their bodies, and so they took up some form of physical activity such as running, yoga or dance, things you already do. I can give you the titles of some self-help books Gabriel can work with, and, if he chooses, the name a councilor he can write to and call.”

“Thank you Mum. I seem to be saying that a lot today.” Vincent grinned.

“That is because I raised you to be a polite young man. Now call everyone inside, I have hot chocolate and cinnamon rolls ready to come out of the oven for tea,” Becky said, then patted him on the shoulder and went into the kitchen.

Vincent shivered as she left and the cold air surrounded him. “Mum has tea on, come inside!” he called out.

Gabriel turned and smiled at his dad. Feeling how sad Vincent was, Gabriel ran straight for him and let Vincent scoop him up into a hug. Wrapping his arms and legs tightly around the slender man, Gabriel pulled back his dad’s jumper and dropped a snowball down his back.

Vincent jumped and then screeched. “Bloody hell, that's cold!” He tried to open up his sweater, but Gabriel had him firmly trapped. “Oh, you're in for it now!” he exclaimed and managed to get his hands onto Gabriel’s ticklish sides. Gabriel squealed and squirmed under the attacking fingers. He held on as long as possible but finally had to let go. Vincent looked down into a truly happy face. Gabriel’s eyes sparkled with laughter, his cheeks were pink from the cold, and he radiated joy.

“Dad, I’m okay. I know I'm safe here, and the new meditation you have shown me is really helping me separate my emotions from those forced on me. I know I won’t ever be the same, but I'm sure I will be as sex-crazed as you and Baba one day.”

“Cheeky brat!” Vincent exclaimed. “I'll get you for that later; right now Oma has fresh cinnamon rolls and hot chocolate waiting for you.”

Gabriel grinned and took off his coat and boots. “Brilliant.”

February 10th, 1992

Vincent sighed in dismay as the hotel manager and his family approached them just as they were about to leave. For the past two weeks, they had been attending an alternative-healing workshop in Digne, France. In trade for performing several nights during the conference they were all able to take different classes in several styles of massage, reiki, aromatherapy, reflexology and crystal therapies. It had been wonderful; all of the people were really nice, although some were very ungrounded and flighty. Gabriel had even participated in several of the massage classes and had felt comfortable enough to work with people he had just met. The only downside had been the hotel manager.
The hotel was a renovated chateau with acres of private land and the manager had allowed them to
 camp on the grounds, as long as they stayed out of sight, which was accommodating of him. But he
 was creepy. Instantly Gabriel hadn’t liked the man, so they all had been wary of him. His wife was
 odd too, and seemed extremely uncomfortable with all of the unconventional people around her.
 Their ten-year-old daughter looked sad and withdrawn. Gabriel and Kamala had both made an effort
to try and get to know her, but it had been unsuccessful.

“I wonder what he wants,” Mudiwa said.

“I have no idea, but I doubt we will like it,” Vincent answered.

Gabriel slipped between the two of them. “Why are they carrying suitcases?”

“We’ll find out,” Vincent said under his breath. “Monsieur and Madam Burby, how can we help you
this afternoon?”

Monsieur Burby straightened himself up and looked Vincent directly in the eye. “You can take
Lynette with you.”

“Excuse me?”

“Monsieur Dragonheart, our daughter is not normal. She is a freak. We have tried everything we
could to make her normal, but nothing has worked. We do not want her with us any longer.”

Vincent was about to reply when Madam Burby spoke. “When she is very emotional she can make
things happen, strange things, and seeing as you are,” she paused as if looking for a polite yet
accurate word, “unconventional, we hoped you could deal with her freakishness.”

Gabriel had grabbed his Baba’s hand during this, it reminded him too much of the Dursleys.
“Madame, I think I understand; your daughter is special. We can help you understand what is going
on with her.”

“Non!” Monsieur Burby exclaimed. “We do not want her any longer! Will you take her or not?”

At this Gabriel stepped forward and walked over to Lynette who was crying and clutching her
backpack. Knowing she didn’t speak English very well, Gabriel asked in French, “Do you
understand what is happening here?”

“Oui,” she said without looking up.

“Would you like to come with us?”

Lynette sniffed and wiped at her eyes, “Oui.”

Gabriel held out his hand, “Come along then, we're just about to leave. Have you ever been to Italy?
We're going there next for a friend’s wedding.”

Lynette looked up and her blue-gray eyes were so sad. “Non, I have never been to Italy before.”

As Gabriel led Lynette away, Vincent fought the urge to beat the man in front of him to a bloody
pulp. “You are an utter bastard!” Vincent hissed as he and Mudiwa took Lynette’s bags and walked
to the buses.

“This is a first,” Mudiwa commented, “I don’t think we've ever been given a witch or wizard
before.”
“No, we haven’t, and I don’t know what to do. We can’t keep her for long. Any accidental magic might alert others to Gabriel, and she can’t find out who he is. It is much harder for him to conceal himself from witches and wizards.”

“True,” Mudiwa said and then paused in thought. “What about Signora Ligabue? She runs that small, private magic school near where Luca lives. I believe we are going to see her anyway so she can buy some potions ingredients.”

Vincent smiled, “Brilliant! Last time we saw her she was complaining about how lonely she was with all her children grown up and on their own. You, my love, are very clever. I shall have to reward you.”

Mudiwa smiled, “I am sure we can agree upon something.”

June 15th, 1992. Sennen

Gabriel sighed deeply as Jaime stroked his hair and looked over his memories of the past year. He had already seen Jaime’s year; he and his family had traveled south and seen stunningly colorful fish and a turquoise ocean dragon. Jaime was just finishing watching the part when Lynette had come to live with them, learned she was a witch, and met Signora Ligabue. Thankfully they'd got along really well, and it was a smiling Lynette who waved goodbye to Gabriel when they left Italy.

“You're blocking something from me, why?” Jaime asked, and there was hurt and confusion in his voice.

“There was a man in Turkey and he wanted to hurt me. When he touched me I got the memories of the other boys he had hurt in the past. I don’t want you to see it,” Gabriel said softly.

“Are you okay? Did he hurt you?” Jaime replied.

“He didn’t physically hurt me, but I was forced to see what his victims went through from their perspective and his.”

“How?”

Gabriel sighed, “He wanted their pain. He owned it and cherished it. He basically carried around a psychic imprint of what they went through.”


Gabriel turned and looked into the warm black eyes of his friend. “Let’s go and see our dads; I think they can explain better than I can.” Standing up, Gabriel held out a tanned hand into which Jaime placed his pale hand. Together they walked over to where Jacob, Vincent and Mudiwa were sitting. Jaime’s mum, Miriam, was staying in the water this year as she was pregnant and soon to give birth. Sitting down near their fathers, they waited for the conversation to be turned their way.

“Everything okay?” Vincent asked feeling some unease from the two friends.

“I was trying to explain about Turkey, and I thought it best to get you to help,” Gabriel answered shyly.

Mudiwa turned to Jaime. “How much did he show you?”
“Nothing, it is completely blocked off.”

Jacob turned quickly to look at Gabriel who was now hugging his knees to his chest in a protective gesture. “Cherub, are you okay?”

Gabriel smiled softly. “I’m much better.”

Hearing this answer didn’t help soothe Jacob’s worry, Vincent cut into the conversation. “Let me explain, in November a man approached Gabriel; when the man grabbed Gabriel’s arm his shields dropped. Gabriel was forced to feel the emotions from the man’s previous attacks: both the man’s and his victims.”

Jacob, pausing to think over what he’d been told, turned to Gabriel. “Was it just the emotions you felt?”

“No, some of the physical sensations came through too,” Gabriel, whispered.

“I’m so sorry,” Jacob said with tears in his eyes.

“I really am better,” Gabriel rushed to reassure him.

Jaime interrupted. “I still don’t understand what is going on. What did this man do? And why would he hurt children?”

“Come here, son,” Jacob said holding open his arms. Jaime climbed onto his father’s lap. Once he was settled on his Da’s lap he turned and saw Gabriel was being held in between his Dad and Baba.

“Jaime,” Jacob began, “sometimes humans can be very imbalanced mentally, and they enjoy hurting people. Sometimes they want to hurt children; it feeds the sickness inside of them.”

“What did the man do to them?” Jaime demanded. Jacob looked to Vincent and Mudiwa for the answer.

Mudiwa cleared his throat. “He would rape young boys and kill them.”

Jacob tightened his hold on Jaime, who was simply looking at Mudiwa as if he had grown two heads. Finally he seemed to understand what had been said. “NO! That’s wrong; you said sex is beautiful and joyous! No one would ever do that to someone, especially not a child. Da’, tell them!”

“I’m sorry, son, but sometimes people are so sick they turn sex into a weapon and hurt others,” Jacob said.

“Gabriel,” Jaime said softly, “you had to feel what they felt?”

“Yes.”

Seeing how much his friend was hurting Jaime got up and walked over to him. “Come with me.”

Gabriel’s sad green eyes looked into Jaime’s and he allowed himself to be helped up. Together they walked to the water; Jaime laid down in the waves and pulled Gabriel down next to him. “I hate the fact that there is something you have to hide from me, but I thank you for protecting me.”

“You’re welcome, I wish I didn’t have to keep anything from you,” Gabriel answered softly. “I’m not complaining, but why are we lying in the waves?”

“Mum and Da' always say everything can be healed with the caress of the sea and being held by
someone who loves you,” Jaime answered simply. Gabriel smiled and snuggled in closer to his friend.

The week passed as it normally did. Gabriel went with his fathers to the Atchison’s farm, only this time Jacob and Jaime came with them. It was wonderful, and Jaime could see the fairies that Gabriel had met on his first time there. They watched movies, swam, ran around and had a great time. The only difference was that Jaime was more physically affectionate. It was sweet and innocent and seemed to heal a part of Gabriel that he hadn’t yet realized was hurting. Jaime knew what Gabriel had seen and felt, and yet he still touched him. Jaime didn’t see him as dirty or broken, and that lightened Gabriel's soul.

On their last day together Jaime and Gabriel were once again cuddled up on the beach where the waves could wash over them.

“Gabriel.”

“Yes?”

“I’m going to miss you.”

Gabriel smiled. “I’ll miss you too.”

Jaime tugged at Gabriel’s hair getting him to scoot up so they were face to face. “I love you.”

Gabriel looked down into the rich black eyes of his friend. “I love you too.”

“May I kiss you?” Jaime asked softly.

Gabriel blinked, a bit confused; they had kissed each other’s cheeks often. “Yes.”

Jaime smiled softly before he leaned up and kissed Gabriel’s soft red lips. Gabriel gasped softly and then returned the kiss. It was a soft kiss, just a sweet brush of lips together, yet it sent tingles through both boys. Pulling back Gabriel smiled down at his friend. “I've never kissed anyone before.”

Jaime smiled, “Me neither.”
Chapter Fifty-one

A/N This chapter is dedicated to MysticSong who suggested “In Demand” by Texas- if you haven’t seen the video go watch it now. It will help make one bit funny.

June 20th, 1992. Malfoy Manor

Draco Malfoy waited excitedly for his godfather to come down so they could leave. His parents had gone on holiday with his two-year-old sister Cassiopeia, to their château in Southern France. While they were gone for the next month Draco’s godfather Severus would be staying with him at the Manor, and today Severus was going to take him to meet his favorite supplier of potion ingredients. Uncle Severus had asked him if he wanted to start training for his Potions mastery as he had done so well in Potions class last term. Draco had said yes immediately and then had to promise to keep up his grades in all his other classes. Turning, Draco smiled brightly as his godfather came down the stairs. Only with Severus and his best friends Pansy and Blaise could he let his guard down safely.

“Are you ready Draco?”

“Yes, Uncle Severus,” Draco chirped. “You look very nice.”

Severus inclined his head. His robes were simple fitted black cotton and his hair was shiny and soft being free from the potion he used to protect it while working. “Now Draco these people are my best suppliers and I expect you to on your best behavior.”

Draco drew himself up, “Of course Uncle Severus.”

Severus smiled and opened his arms. “Come on then, let’s go.” Draco wrapped his arms around Severus and let him Apparate them to Ottery St. Catchpole. Severus hugged his godson tightly then let him go, and walked to the big tent where no doubt Gabriel would be stocking books.

Draco looked around at all of the different people chatting happily as they set up tents, booths and tables. He wanted to cling to his godfather’s hand; he felt uncomfortable around so many squibs. The only one he had ever been around was Filch, the caretaker at Hogwarts, and he was mean. Trying not to show how he was feeling around all of these strangers Draco calmly entered a large sky-blue tent with his godfather. Inside he saw a boy placing books onto a table against the side of the tent. He wore charcoal gray trousers, which looked like sleep pants but were thicker. His shirt was a pale green tunic with silvery-gray flowers embroidered on the cuffs and hem. He wore a silvery-gray headscarf over his waist-length black hair, which was done up in a thick plait. As he put away the books he danced and sang along with the music he was listening to.

“Like a river flows, surely to the sea. Darling so it goes, some things are meant to be. Take my hand take my whole life to. For I can’t help falling in love with you.” *

Draco looked up at his godfather who seemed quite content to stand here and wait until the song was over. Draco looked around the tent; in front of them was a table with two large wooden crates, which he assumed contained the potions materials they had come for. The tables the boy was at had rows of old books on them, which Draco hoped he would get a chance to look through. When the song ended the boy turned and smiled brightly. Draco almost gaped as beautiful emerald eyes met his, and while they were welcoming and warm he could tell there were walls up behind them.

“Hello, Professor Snape, how was your year?” the boy said as he walked over to them.
“Gabriel, as I was still teaching it was horrid for the most part,” Severus said in a bored tone of voice even as he looked closely at Gabriel. “I would like to introduce you to my godson, Draco Malfoy. Draco, this is Gabriel Dragonheart, one of my best suppliers.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Gabriel said extending his hand.

“Likewise,” Draco said, a bit unsure what to do with the boy’s hand.

Gabriel’s brow furrowed. “Do you not shake hands?”

Severus cleared his throat. “Actually, it is a Muggle custom. Because of how our magic and potions work wizards don’t shake hands with people they have just met.”

“Oh, I am sorry,” Gabriel said to Draco. “What do wizards do when they meet?”

“We place our hands together in front of our chest, palms together to show that we aren’t going to do any magic, then we bow our heads slightly,” Severus explained.

Gabriel did as Severus explained. “It’s nice to meet you, Draco.”

Draco smirked and placing his palms together in front of his chest bowed. “And you, Gabriel.”

“Well, your materials are over here,” Gabriel said as he went over to the table and took the tops off of the crates. “Just let me know when you are ready for my stuff. And if you need any help, let me know.”

Draco reached into his robe to pull out a piece of parchment his father had given him when his godfather spoke. “Gabriel, what happened?”

Gabriel smiled sadly. “I should have known that you would tell something was different; I’m okay.”

“That doesn’t answer my question,” Severus insisted crossing his arms over his chest.

“I only get such a short time in your company; I do not wish to make it unpleasant.”

Severus scowled. “You know if you ever need me you can owl me.”

Gabriel beamed up at the stoic man. “I know, Professor Snape, thank you.”

Severus nodded and began unpacking the first crate.

“Do need help, Draco?” Gabriel asked pointing the list.

“My father asked me to get these items for him. Can I purchase small amounts?” Draco asked, feeling uncomfortable as he wasn’t sure what potion his father was making.

“Of course you can, let me see the list and I can let you know which ones we have,” Gabriel offered holding out his hand. Gabriel paled as the small scroll was placed in his hand. Opening it up he saw a list of ingredients that when mixed with blood in a powerful ritual would tell if a child was a squib or not. Carefully dropping his shields he shivered as he felt Mr. Malfoy’s intentions. They would need to be in Southern France in three weeks. “We have everything listed here; I will get you some small containers and a set of scales so you can buy precisely what you need.”

Severus had carefully watched Gabriel; he hadn’t forgotten the boy’s reaction to the ‘bad books’ when they first met. “What does Lucius need, Draco?”
Draco shrugged and handed his godfather the list. Severus scowled fiercely. Lucius you bloody bastard! Severus thought as he looked over the parchment. This potion was a horrible thing; it ripped the magic out of a child so it could be measured. It was a painful spell and if the child was a squib they rarely survived. Ever since Voldemort had shown up at Hogwarts in Quirrel’s head, many of the Death Eaters had been doing little things to prepare for their Lord’s return. Severus sighed. If he wanted to be able to spy on them he couldn’t do anything about this, and unfortunately he could think of several families who would be joining the Malfoys for the ritual. “I’ll help you gather everything, Draco.”

“Thank you, Uncle Severus,” Draco said politely, wondering exactly what was wrong.

Once Gabriel returned he went back to stocking books and then knickknacks onto the tables. A woman’s lovely voice and the sound of fun music filled the air. Draco was having trouble concentrating on the material in front of him as Gabriel was shifting and twisting to the music in a very distracting way.

Severus smirked as he watched his godson out of the corner of his eye. He had noticed that Draco appreciated both the male and female form, and watching him try and ignore the attractive young man dancing not far from them was entertaining. Tapping his foot to the music Severus smiled as he recognized the song playing, and began humming along with the music as he returned his focus to the ingredients in front of him.

Draco’s gray eyes widened comically as he heard his godfather humming. Bloody hell! And to Muggle music! Draco listened carefully to the words of the song.

But now I’ve got someone who cares for me.
Wrote my name is silver sands.
I think you know you’ve lost the love of your life.
You said I was the best you ever had.

Because I’m in demand.

You’re thinking of the ways you should’ve held my hand
And all the times you’d say you didn’t understand.
You never had our love written in your plans.

“I love this song!” exclaimed a golden man as he walked into the tent. “Alan Rickman is so hot in this video. Hey, Cherub, I brought you some lemonade and three glasses. Why do you need three glasses anyway?”

Gabriel rolled his eyes. “Thanks Adonis, Professor Snape is here and he brought his godson with him.”

Adonis closed his eyes briefly, cursing that he hadn’t even noticed there was anyone else in the tent. Turning, he smiled at the two men. “Hello, Professor, I’m glad to see you survived the urchins again this year.”

Draco scowled at being referred to as an ‘urchin’. “Mr. Dyonusius, I would like to introduce my godson Draco Malfoy; Draco, this is Adonis Dyonusius.”

“Mr. Dyonusius,” Draco said formally and bowed.

“Oh, pish, please call me Adonis,” he said bowing, his golden eyes sparkling. “So, Professor Snape,
are you going to be joining us this year for Solstice?"

“Wait!” Gabriel shouted and ran over facing Adonis. “Okay, go ahead.”

Severus looked puzzled but turned to Adonis to answer him. “Actually I am; Draco’s parents are on holiday and I usually attend their Solstice celebration. I am planning on Draco and I at least coming tomorrow and watching your performance.”

At first Adonis seemed really pleased and then his mouth dropped open in shock. “Cherub,” he snarled, “how did you get this right? You haven't had an accurate reading in over a month! For a whole bloody month every reading has been wrong, and now….” Adonis’ eyes widened in shock, and Gabriel moved behind Severus for protection, grinning madly. “You conned me, you little brat!” Adonis exclaimed.

“They all told you not to bet with me,” Gabriel giggled. “Professor Snape, I am so glad you're coming tomorrow,” Gabriel said changing the focus of the conversation. “I think you'll both really enjoy the show, and afterwards everyone brings a dish to share for dinner. There is so much good food,” he said, jumping in front of Severus with his eyes bright with excitement. “This year we're all going to sleep out under the stars! Well, at least all us kids are going to, and you are both welcome. I have an extra sleeping bag Draco can use, and I'm sure if you would rather sleep on a real bed someone will let you stay with them.”

“Thank you for the invitation, Gabriel. I will discuses the possibility with Draco.”

“Perfect! Well I should get back to stocking,” Gabriel said cheerfully. “Oh, and Adonis, here.”

Adonis looked at the folded pace of paper in Gabriel's hands and groaned. This was not going to be good; the bet had been for a week of servitude. “When does it start?”

Gabriel laughed. “I'm not that cruel; Monday morning.”

Adonis shoved the paper in his pocket. “I'll read it later then.” Just before he left he gathered up his courage and turned to Severus. “Professor Snape, if you would like to stay on Saturday night I have plenty of room in my tent.”

“I will keep that in mind,” Severus said his voice deeper than normal. Adonis blushed, Draco gaped and Gabriel grinned.

Draco left his godfather to settle the accounts and browsed through the books. As he got closer to where Gabriel was placing delicate glass bottles on display he asked, “Who comes to the Solstice party?”

Gabriel thought for a moment. “Well, people you go to school with: the Weasleys, Luna Lovegood, Cedric Diggory, Tracey Davis, Daphne Greengrass, Susan Bones and Su Li, just to name a few. Plus, of course, a bunch of adults.”

“What do you do?” Draco asked trying to sound casual and as if he didn’t really care.

Gabriel smirked, “Well, a lot of people come an hour or so before the show so they can look over what we have brought with us to sell this year. Then at four we put on a show. There are clowns, acrobats, and mystical feats of strength and beauty.” Gabriel laughed. “Afterwards, those who can do so strengthen the spells on our buses, equipment, tents and trunks while we get cleaned up. Then we cast a circle, have dinner, play, and usually the evening ends with story-telling. It really is a lot of fun. I hope you come,” Gabriel said sincerely.
Draco smiled softly. “It sounds like a lot of fun, I’ll see if I can talk Uncle Severus into it.”

“Gabriel, I'm done, it's your turn,” Elena called out. “It was wonderful to see you again, Professor Snape.”

“And you, Miss Ermo,” Severus said bowing slightly.

“Okay.” Gabriel said pulling out his case. “I don’t have anything new this year. I have lots of snake material, werewolf and selkie fur, and… oh, I do have a few sea-dragon scales.”

June 21st. Ottery St. Catchpole

Draco waited, appearing bored, for the show to begin. He had been able to talk Severus into arriving half an hour before the show so they could do some shopping. He’d been surprised at all the lovely things for sale and had bought several presents. Draco had found a wicked-looking sword for his father, a delicate glass perfume bottle for his mum, and a handmade doll for his baby sister. He’d also found fun things and yummy-looking treats for his friends and a book for his godfather. Thankfully the gypsies had a place where people could store the things they had bought before the show. Draco had seen several of his schoolmates and even a few house mates here today.

The lights dimmed and music began to play. After a moment, a precession began to file onto the stage. There were guards who were dressed in oriental fashion, followed by four men carrying a chair with a young girl sitting in it. Behind them were more guards. They carried the girl to the rear of the stage area so she could watch over everything that was going to happen. Regally she sat on her throne, in a deep blue dress with a delicate white-and-silver design that Draco couldn’t make out. On her head was a crown of silver accented with pearls. Once she was seated the men who had carried her in, plus all but one guard, knelt in front of her and walked off the stage.

The music changed to a sultry guitar, and two men came out. Bowing to the princess, they began to move. The beautiful, ebony-black man slowly lifted his partner above his head where he then stretched his body out and finally balanced on one arm. Draco watched in awe as the two men smoothly moved from one pose to another. Each pose showing their strength and the delicate balance they were able to achieve. After several minutes the music changed to a more playful piece and the boy from yesterday came out, his hair in a tight bun, much like the chestnut-haired man with the tan skin. The three of them managed to get themselves into seemingly impossible poses which caused many to gasp. For the last bit of their act Gabriel curled into a ball and the two men tossed him back and forth several times.

Draco clapped as they finished and watched the girl dismiss them, seemingly unimpressed. Then a large silver wheel rolled onto the stage, with Adonis inside it. Looking up, Draco saw his godfather's eyes widen as he took in the half-naked, golden man. Adonis showed such control as he spun and twirled within the large wheel. Draco wondered what it would be like to be that strong.

Next, a woman came out and somehow managed to contort herself into tight positions that made Draco cringe. He could barely touch his toes! Clowns who ran around each other trying to set up a tent followed her. Draco laughed, he was with his godfather and it was dark, so it was safe to laugh here. When the clowns left some of the guards from before ran out and talked to the stoic guard who hadn’t left the princess's side.

“A man in black was spotted in the forest!”

“Stay here with the princess, I will go and investigate,” the soldier in charge said. The others saluted
him as he exited the stage.

A large group of people came out with ropes and began spinning them around. Once they had four ropes going people were jumping and running in and out of them. One rope would have four people in and then suddenly they would scatter. Some would do tricks like flips or jumping a second rope while jumping the big one. It was mesmerizing to watch. Draco clapped loudly and was glad that he had bought a jump rope earlier.

The light went out completely and everything was black for a moment, Draco reached out and took his godfather's hand. Severus smiled softly in the dark and squeezed Draco’s hand before hiding their hands in the sleeve of his robe. Suddenly there was a soft blue light, then a green light, and a pink, and finally a purple one, and then it started all over again until there were two of each type of light.

Then the lights began to move and Draco gasped as they formed arches and circles in the air, as if they were magic. Then two thicker, yellow lights appeared in the middle and began to spin creating the most beautiful patterns.

When the lights came back on there were six tall wooden poles in the middle of the stage. A sleek-looking Asian man walked out, his black hair in a bun on top of his head. Holding himself away from the poles he began to climb up using only his arms and turning slowly as he went. Two others came out, Draco thought they were Gabriel and Adonis, and they too began to climb up the poles the same way. When they reached the top they flipped upside down and, using only their feet to hold on, slid down the poles. Soon nine other people came out, including the couple that had done the first performance. The men and woman jumped, climbed, slithered and leapt all over the poles. They were amazing and made everything look effortless.

When they had finished they took the poles down and were quickly replace by clowns. This time the clowns pretended to do all of the acts they had seen so far. It was very funny and Draco found himself laughing again. After the clowns, a stunning Indian couple came out and walked a tightrope. They did flips, and the man held his partner above his head and walked. At one point she rode a unicycle up there! Draco wondered how they did everything without magic to help them.

The soldier who had left earlier came back out and whispered something to the other guards, sending them away. A woman came out with a bunch of thin hoops and placing one around her waist, began to spin it. One by one the hoops were placed on her body, over her legs, her arms, her waist and neck, and she spun them all, some in different rhythms. Draco was distracted from her act by a hand appearing next to his foot. Quickly he looked to his godfather who was already watching the hand closely. It wasn’t long before a black-clad body slithered up from under the raised seats. Looking to make sure he hadn’t been seen the person turned, his face covered in black cloth, but laughing green eyes told them who it was. Placing a finger against his lips Gabriel asked them to be quiet; slowly he moved into the aisle.

Keeping low he slithered down towards the stage stopping whenever the guard would search the audience for intruders. As the woman with the hoops left waving goodbye to the clapping audience, Gabriel leapt from the stands causing people to gasp and scream as he pulled his sword from its sheath on his back. Gabriel shouted in what Draco guessed was Japanese at the soldier who had a sword in his hands and stood in front of the princess.

The two men shouted at each other in angry-sounding Japanese and began to circle slowly keeping their swords close to their bodies. Suddenly silver flashed and the ringing clang of steel on steel made everyone gasp as the two began to fight. Draco leaned into his godfather. The fight was fierce and, while he knew it was part of the show, Draco had been swept up in the magic of the performance just like everyone else. The two men danced all over the stage, twisting and turning as they fought. Gabriel slipped and fell behind a screen, which was lit in such a way that you could see the mens'
shadows. They saw Gabriel fighting from the ground, but the soldier was fierce and suddenly brought his sword down through the boy on the ground. Gabriel screamed and arched up before slumping to the ground.

The soldier came out and wiped his blade on a cloth before putting it away. “My princess, your mortal enemy has been defeated, you are safe.”

“Thank you,” she said softly, “you do me a great honor to defend me so venomously. Please accept the post of general as my reward to you.” The man knelt in front of his princess and allowed her to place a medal on his uniform. The crowd cheered. The princess clapped twice and cheerful music began to play. A large group of men and woman came running out onto the stage and began a tumbling act. A trampoline was brought out and they did amazing flips, which had them landing onto another person’s shoulders, sometimes onto those who were already standing on another person’s shoulders. The show ended with laughter and zealous clapping.

When the lights came on and people began to leave Draco turned to his godfather. “Thank you, Uncle Severus, I had a brilliant time.”

Severus looked into sparkling carefree eyes and smiled. “You are most welcome, Draco.”

*Can’t Help Falling in Love
Chapter Fifty-two

Draco chatted with a couple of his friends from school while Severus talked with Mrs. Weasley. Draco was a bit nervous as the Weasley twins eyed him with interest. Severus had warned him that school rivalries needed to stay at school, so he was trying to stay calm and not make comments about the hideous orange shirt Ron was wearing.

“Cherub!” the Weasley twins called out, running to a figure dressed in head-to-toe black.

Gabriel turned and smiled at them and began walking their way. “Hello, how is everyone?” Gabriel asked.

“Cherub, dear, you were wonderful!” cooed Mrs. Weasley pulling him into a hug.

Gabriel stiffened slightly, but returned the hug. “Thank you, it’s a lot of fun.”

“Enough of that…”

“…we want to know…”

“…what acts you were in,” said Fred and George uncharacteristically seriously.

Gabriel blinked in surprise, then answered. “I was in statue, the first act, the jumping ropes, Chinese pole, and the sword fight.”

“You’ve been holding out on us!” they exclaimed together.

Gabriel grinned. “Have you managed to get permission to travel with us?” Gabriel asked.

“Not yet…”

“…but we are…”

“…working on something.”

Mrs. Weasley groaned and Professor Snape looked at them suspiciously.

Gabriel laughed. “Let me know how it goes.” Turning to Professor Snape and Draco he asked, “How did you two enjoy the show?”

Severus smiled softly. “It was rather extraordinary.”

Gabriel grinned and turned to Draco. “I really enjoyed myself,” Draco said.

Gabriel grinned again. “Are you staying for the celebration?”

Severus looked thoughtful, “As long as Draco being here isn’t going to be a problem. Some of the children he fights with at school are here, and for myself I don’t want to ruin anyone’s evening by having their professor present.”

“Draco can stay with me, everything will be fine.” Gabriel said, getting excited.

The twins draped their arms across Gabriel's shoulders making him stiffen for a moment before
relaxing, “We promise to be…”

“…on our best behavior.”

Mrs. Weasley sighed. “I know my Ronald and young Draco do not get along, but this is a special place and everyone is welcome here.”

“Yes,” said a warm voice as Adonis joined them, “you must join us.”

Severus turned to his godson. “I would like to stay, Uncle Severus.”

Severus inclined his head. “I will need to go back to the Manor and get our things. Shall I take your purchases with me?”

“Yes, please,” Draco looked around trying to remember where they were being stored.

“We need to get cleaned up. We will see everyone back here in about thirty minutes or so,” Adonis said, smiling at Professor Snape.

Mrs. Weasley smiled. “Wonderful, Arthur just popped round to get our food for the pot luck, I’ll go and start on spelling the kitchen.”

“See you all in a bit,” Gabriel said as he walked off to the tents and buses.

Draco stood between his godfather and Daphne Greengrass. Leaning towards the Slytherin girl he hissed, “What happens now?”

“They guide us through casting a circle,” she whispered.

Draco’s brow furrowed, and he turned to Severus who just shrugged his shoulders at him. Draco hated not knowing what was going on. Scowling he looked around; he could see some of the gypsies mixed throughout the circle, but none of the people his godfather had pointed out to him. Finally eight people walked into the center of the circle. Draco saw Gabriel now wearing tight black trousers, much like he had worn the day before, a deep green tunic and black headscarf. Gabriel was holding hands with a young girl in a vibrant pink sundress. Draco guessed she played the part of the princess in the show.

A tall, muscular man with damp, wavy, chestnut hair stepped into the center. “Hello everyone, I’m Vincent Dragonheart and I want to welcome you to this year’s Solstice celebration. I want to go over what we are going to do for those who are new, or never remember, really quickly.” People chuckled softly and the atmosphere relaxed. “My son Gabriel is going to walk behind everyone and draw a circle using herbs of protection. After this we will call in the elements one by one. We will talk you through this process so don’t worry.”

Draco watched as everyone moved to his or her respective places. He was still feeling unsure but hiding it behind his Malfoy mask.

“After we cast the circle I will light the bonfire,” Vincent gestured to the pile of wood behind him. “Then we will pass out paper and pens so we can do the ritual. I will explain all of that later. Now please remember we are gently calling in the elements; we do not want to actually create any of them,” Vincent chuckled. “Also, if you need to leave the circle please ask one of us to open it for you. We will take it down after we have burned our papers.”
Draco was surprised when he felt the soft tingle of magic as Gabriel passed behind him sprinkling herbs onto the ground. Draco watched Gabriel as he walked around the circle of about fifty people. Gabriel’s movements were deliberate and focused and the feeling of magic increased with every step. Draco looked around to see if everyone could feel the subtle magic. Severus certainly could, the Weasley twins and Lovegood seemed to be feeling something, but not very many others; interesting. As Gabriel came to the end of the circle he was drawing he turned and stepped inside as he connected the two ends with a handful of herbs. As the circle became whole something tangible was felt, everyone seemed to sense it and the air around them felt alive.

One by one the gypsies guided them through visualizing and drawing in the elements. The energy swirled around them, and Draco took a deep breath feeling unsettled at being surrounded by such unfamiliar magic. It felt completely different from what he used and created with his wand. This magic was alive, vibrant, and wild. Turning slightly to look at his godfather he saw the controlled man was also taking focused, deep breaths. Their eyes connected for a moment; Draco saw no fear so he turned his attention back to the gypsies. The entire ritual was a unique experience Draco had never considered there was any other type of magic in the world than what wizards and witches created with their wands.

Gabriel watched the fire consume his paper; the tears filling his eyes distorted the light. When he felt his Baba’s strong arms wrap around him, Gabriel turned and buried his face in the strong chest and cried. There had been a lot of good in this year but also a lot of pain. He felt the circle released as he heard Vincent say to everyone. “By the earth that is her body, by the air that is her breath, by the fire of her bright spirit, and by the waters of her living womb, the circle is open, but unbroken. May the peace of the Goddess go in our hearts, merry meet and merry part, and merry meet again. Blessed be.” Gabriel simply held onto Mudiwa until he felt those around him moving away.

After a few moments Gabriel heard his name spoken. Looking up he saw Remus and Sirius standing a few feet away. Gabriel wiped his eyes and moved towards them. “Hello Sirius, Remus, how are you?”

Remus moved forward and opened his arms. Gabriel smiled and walked right into them. “I’m well, how are you?”

“I’m doing well. It’s been a hard year, but all in all a good one.” Gabriel sighed as he relaxed into the man’s embrace. “You’re looking well.”

Remus blushed slightly; he had been doing the few things Philip and Lucas had trusted him with. He was running everyday and taking Qigong classes along with yoga several times a week. Before he could say anything Sirius’ patience ran out.

“My turn! You’ve had him long enough,” pouted the handsome gray-eyed man. Reaching out he grabbed Gabriel and pulled him into a fierce hug. Gabriel gasped and stiffened, then berated himself: how long would he react like this? Sighing, Gabriel hugged his godfather.

Remus and Mudiwa had both seen Gabriel’s reaction, but Sirius remained oblivious. “You’ve grown so much in the past year!” Sirius exclaimed as he stepped back from the young man.

“He has grown far too much in my opinion,” said Mudiwa. “Why don’t you come and sit with us? Dinner should be soon.”

“Oh, I have to get my spanakopita,” exclaimed Gabriel and ran off.
Mudiwa shook his head as he watched his son run off. “Come on, I’ll show you where our blankets are set up.

Gabriel sat down next to Draco, who seemed decidedly uncomfortable. The kids and adults were sitting together, Gabriel assumed because of the presence of Draco and Professor Snape. Sirius was talking with Mr. Weasley and pointedly ignoring Professor Snape. Lupin was asking Severus how he was enjoying himself, and Severus, who was clearly uncomfortable but being polite, was answering. The other kids were all chatting amongst themselves, and not including Draco yet. Gabriel was determined to remedy this issue and soon. Looking down at his plate he picked up a treat he hadn’t seen before: small cheesecakes. There were three flavors, plain, strawberry and blueberry. Gabriel picked up the blueberry one and moaned as the flavor hit his tongue, it was glorious. Smiling he took another bite, humming happily.

Severus’ eyes widened in shock and he turned as Gabriel had let out a low moan. He smirked when he saw Gabriel enjoying the cheesecakes he and Draco had made. “I will take that as a compliment,” he said, amusement lacing his voice.

Gabriel smiled and turned to face the Potions master. “You made these? They're wonderful.”

Severus inclined his head. “Thank you, but I cannot take all the credit; Draco helped.” Draco’s cheeks tinged pink against his will even as he smirked at the shocked looks on his schoolmates' faces.

“So you can make something other than nasty tasting goop?” Sirius snickered, not able to be ‘good’ any longer.

Severus sneered, “And other than your musty canine smell just what are you sharing with everyone tonight, Black?”

Everyone gasped and tried to cover up their amusement. Sirius was puffing up, getting ready to retaliate, when Gabriel interrupted: “Oh, hush, both of you!” Turning to Severus he said, “And if you’re going to make food this good, you’ll have to come back next year.” He picked up the plain cake and hummed as he ate it. Sirius pouted for a moment longer until the Weasley twins began asking him questions about his days as a ‘Marauder’.

Adonis came over and sat down as close to Professor Snape as he could manage without invading the man’s personal space. “Gabriel, what have you put in your mouth this time that has you moaning?” As soon as the words left his mouth Adonis turned beet red. Gabriel’s eyes widened in shock, and he tried not to choke on the food in his mouth. The others chuckled in amusement. Severus simply smirked at the blushing man, and handed him one of the small cakes.

The conversation had become stilted after Adonis’ blunder. Gabriel wasn’t sure what to do, but he did want to catch up with some of his friends. “Remus, you didn’t get a chance to tell me why you are looking so good.”

Remus blushed, but answered Gabriel's question. “I have been keeping up some of the things I learned on my travels. I've been running every day, and I found a nice studio which teaches yoga and Qigong.” Gabriel smiled happily; the things Remus had learned in Switzerland were helping. “In fact, the Prewetts asked me to say hi.”

Remus blushed, but answered Gabriel's question. “I have been keeping up some of the things I learned on my travels. I've been running every day, and I found a nice studio which teaches yoga and Qigong.” Gabriel smiled happily; the things Remus had learned in Switzerland were helping. “In fact, the Prewetts asked me to say hi.”

Adonis jumped in. “Quinn and Isabelle?”

“Yes, how do you know them?” Remus asked.
“They have traveled with us several times,” Adonis answered.

The Weasleys had all paled and paid attention to the conversation. Mrs. Weasley asked, “Their last name is Prewett?”

At this point Vincent and Mudiwa walked over and sat down. “Are we talking about Quinn and Isabelle?”

“Hello, Vincent,” Remus said. “Yes, we are. I've been taking classes with them for the past year.”

“How are they?” Mudiwa asked.

“They seem really well. Their classes are full. They even have several other people teaching; I think some might be relatives.”

“Oh, Camellia and Justin?” Gabriel squealed.

“Sorry to interrupt,” said Molly Weasley softly. “But are they…squibs?”

All of the gypsies stiffened slightly. “Yes,” answered Vincent.

Mrs. Weasley looked embarrassed. “I don’t mean to be rude, it's just that my maiden name is Prewett.”

“I see,” said Vincent as his posture relaxed. “If I remember correctly, Quinn’s father Nicholas was born to magical parents. I have no idea where they were from.”

“I can give you the address of their studio if you want,” Remus offered.

“Thank you, Remus, I’ll think about it,” Mrs. Weasley said softly. She had a second cousin named Jonathan, whose son Nicholas had mysteriously disappeared around the age of twelve. Shaking her head to clear her thoughts she turned to Gabriel. “Well now, Cherub, what do you have planned for tonight? Are you children still planning on sleeping out here under the stars?”

“Yes, anyone who wants to can sleep here. As for a game, Kamala and I thought long and hard…”

“That must have hurt,” said George.

“Poor lad,” agreed Fred.

Gabriel rolled his eyes. “Anyway, back to the game. Kamala and I have something planned, and some of the other kids helped set everything up. We won't say what it is until we're ready to play. However we're hoping that some of the adults will be brave enough to join in.”

“Oh, of course we will,” Adonis exclaimed. “Won’t we, Soto?”

Soto, who had just walked over to them, looked suspiciously at Gabriel's mischievous eyes. “Of course, I'm up for any challenge our sweet little Cherub can dish out.”

Gabriel merely grinned wider. “Draco, will you be staying?” he asked the blond.

Draco shrugged. “Uncle Severus?”

“I am happy to stay as long as you are having fun. I don’t know about Gabriel's game, however. I think I will wait to see what it is.”
“Chicken!” exclaimed Sirius. “Me and Remus will play, won’t we?”

Severus sneered at the flea-ridden mutt but managed to hold his tongue.

Remus sighed. “I agree with Severus, I'll wait and see what the game is.”

Gabriel turned to his fathers. “Baba, Dad, you're going to play, aren’t you?”

Mudiwa sighed as he looked into big green eyes. “Once everything is cleaned up from dinner…”

“Kamala!” Gabriel called, and soon the young girl in the pink sundress came running to them. She plopped down gracefully into Gabriel’s lap.

“Yes, big brother,” she said sweetly.

“First, have you met Professor Snape and Draco?” Gabriel asked.

“No.” Waving at them she said, “Hello, I’m Kamala and I’m five.”

Draco smiled at the pretty little girl, thinking of his sister Cassiopeia, and how she might act in three more years. “It's very nice to meet you, Kamala.”

“Kamala,” said Professor Snape inclining his head. “I hear you and your brother have something special planned for us tonight.” He was hoping the young girl would spill the secret.

Kamala’s brown eyes sparkled in happiness. ‘Yes, it's going to be so much fun! We've been getting ready for days. And no magic is allowed it’s a rule! Except with the clean-up, ’cause…”

Gabriel placed his hand over his sister's mouth. “Don’t ruin the surprise. Come on let’s go and set everything up!”

Kamala nodded at the two of them. She jumped up, leaving behind slightly worried and bewildered family and friends.

*Closing from Circle Round.

**Spanakopita is Greek filo pastry filled with spinach and cheese - usually feta.
Chapter Fifty-three

Gabriel stood where everyone could see him. They had finished eating and Mrs. Weasley had put charms on what was left so it would stay fresh. “Good evening, everyone. Every year, we kids play a game usually tag, but Kamala and I decided to spice things up. All around you will find containers filled with these.” Reaching into the bucket at his feet he pulled out a translucent, squishy ball. “This is a water balloon, and we will be having a water balloon war. There are no teams, no sides, and no magic allowed! Also please don’t hit anybody in the face. The person who is the driest at the end wins.” Gabriel looked around; most of them still seemed confused, however the other gypsies smirked at the challenge. “Those of you who are too scared, or too old,” he said, looking at Professor Snape in challenge, “should make yourselves a shield or something to stay dry. Now, I can see that not everyone understands the idea of a water balloon, so please allow me to demonstrate.” Gabriel took the green blob in his hand and threw it full force at Adonis, who had been looking the other way.

Adonis gasped as the cold-water drenched the front of his white tee shirt leaving it transparent. Slowly the golden man stood up. “You had better run, Gabriel.”

Gabriel just laughed. “Everyone who wants to play, find some balloons. Mrs. Weasley, will you shout ‘go’ in five minutes, please.”

Mrs. Weasley nodded and helped those who didn’t want to get wet form a shield to cover them.

Draco looked up at his godfather. “Are you going to play?”

Severus knew Gabriel's taunting was all in fun, but he couldn’t resist the challenge, or a wet Adonis. “Yes, and Draco, I’ll play to win.”

Draco grinned and ran off in a different direction than the others had gone, hoping to find a good hiding spot and some water balloons.

Laughter rang out over the field, mixed with shouts of shock as cold water balloons exploded over running bodies. They had been playing for fifteen minutes, and the supply of water balloons was only half gone. Severus peeked out from the shadows and watched in awe as Gabriel ran across an open space without getting wet. The boy was not only fast, but also seemed to sense the balloons coming. Quickly he dove, leapt, rolled, and flipped out of way. While doing this he aimed and fired the squishy balls at barely visible figures, never stopping and never missing.

“He’s amazing,” said Draco as he watched the squib boy fly across the ground. He was hiding for a moment with his godfather. He had slipped and skinned his knee. Severus had cast a healing charm and Draco was just waiting for it to take effect. Draco was damp, but not nearly as wet as some others. Severus, of course, was completely dry. “How is he doing that?”

“I think it is a combination of acrobatics and martial arts,” Severus answered as he watched Gabriel spin, avoiding one balloon while launching one of his own. “Your time’s up, I’ll give you one minute to get away.”

Just before Draco left, Severus heard him say, “I want to be able to do that.”
Severus was thinking about training Draco and watching Gabriel slink back into the shadows so he didn’t notice the balloon sent his way. Suddenly a body was pressed against his and spun him round several times just as a balloon hit the tree where Severus had been standing.

Severus turned, and there stood Adonis, eyes bright, shirt plastered to his muscular chest, which was heaving from running. “Sorry about grabbing you like that, Professor Snape, but you hadn’t got wet yet.”

“Severus,” he said looking into Adonis’ golden eyes. “I would like you to call me Severus.”

Adonis beamed, “Adonis then, please.”

“I think there’s someone over here!” They heard some of the kids shout.

Severus grabbed Adonis and pulled him further into the shadows. Their bodies were pressed firmly together. Adonis looked at Severus’ mouth and then into his obsidian eyes. Slowly the two men moved closer to each other, stopping as their lips were a mere breath away, each giving the other a chance to pull away.

After a moment Adonis closed the small distance separating them moaning as they came together. Severus’ lips were soft and so warm. The kiss was gentle and cautious. Adonis pressed closer and darted his tongue out running it lightly over Severus’ bottom lip. Severus hesitated and then opened his mouth letting Adonis in. As Adonis entered the dark man for the first time his whole body trembled. Severus tasted bitter and rich like espresso coffee and Adonis loved it. His tongue reached out, caressing and learning the other man’s mouth, then sliding along Severus’ tongue as if asking it to play.

Severus was trying not to get lost in the kiss. They were in public, they could get hit with water balloons, and he didn’t know where this was going to lead. However the hot firm tongue was now stroking his and he couldn’t hold back any longer. Severus placed one hand on Adonis’ firm hip, and buried the other in his silky hair pulling him closer as he took over the kiss. Adonis groaned and melted against him as their tongues dueled. Severus shivered as strong arms wrapped around him, and the world melted away.

For several minutes they kissed, melting into each other until the need for a proper breath made them pull apart. Adonis would have attacked Severus’ neck, but he knew what a private man he was so instead he rested his forehead against Severus’, both of them gasping for air and clutching each other. “Stay with me tonight?” Adonis whispered.

Severus didn’t say anything for a moment. It had been a while since he had taken someone to bed, and this wasn’t as casual as his normal encounters, but the man felt so good in his arms. “Yes,” he replied huskily.

Adonis grinned and released the breath he had been holding. “We had better get back before they try and find us.” Softly he kissed Severus before walking back into the game.

Thirty minutes later the balloons had run out and everyone was gathered together again. Severus smiled; he hadn’t been hit once, the only one close to being as dry as him was Gabriel, everyone else was sopping wet. Severus smirked as water dripped off the end of Black’s nose. Gabriel had said not to hit anyone in the face, and Severus had obeyed that rule, but the top of the mutt’s head - now that had been his best shot all evening.

It was close to midnight when the kids were finally convinced to set up their beds. Gabriel had stuck close to Draco, and the others had quickly accepted him, except for Ron. Gabriel finished putting his
and Draco’s sleeping bags together and looked around for Ginny Weasley. He found her standing near her parents.

“Hey, Ginny, are you leaving?” Gabriel asked.

Ginny sighed, “Maybe mum and dad are talking about it. Luna will be here and my stupid brothers, I don’t see the problem.”

“Kamala is going to be sleeping with us too, maybe that will help. And I think Ria and Naveen said they would sleep near us.” Gabriel looked over to where Mr. And Mrs. Weasley were talking with his dad. Stepping closer he whispered. “I wanted to talk to you. I have been having this really weird dream about you. Someone gives you a journal, and when you write in it, the journal writes back. I know it sounds crazy, but the book is evil.” Gabriel kept his eyes locked on Ginny’s, willing her to believe him. Handing her a purple journal Gabriel continued. “Please believe me, and accept this as a replacement. In my dream you really seemed to like the journal. When you find it, could you send it to me? Or give it to Professor Snape?”

Ginny looked into the emerald-green eyes and, seeing only truth, she nodded. “I will keep an eye out for the journal you described and I will be happy to send it to you, but I don’t know about giving it Professor Snape, he seems really mean.”

Gabriel smiled, “I will talk to him. I want you to get rid of the evil thing as soon as you find it. Now let me see if I can’t convince your parents to let you stay.”

Ginny watched the gypsy boy walk away and ran her hand over the beautiful journal. ‘He is rather cute, even if he is a squib,’ she thought.

Severus had just got Draco tucked into his sleeping bag, and put cushioning charms and protection spells around him. “If you need me I will be right over there,” Severus said, pointing to a dusty orange tent.

Draco smiled at his godfather. “I will be fine, thank you for staying with me.”

“Yes, well, good night, Draco,” Severus said, trying not to blush.

“Good night, Godfather.”

Severus was almost to Adonis’ tent when a voice called to him; turning he saw Gabriel. “Yes?”

“Professor Snape, I had another dream,” Gabriel said softly.

“What about?”

“Well, there is a diary and it will be given to Ginny Weasley. I told her about it and she promised to send it to me, or better yet give it to you. However if bad things start to happen, please know she is being hurt and used.”

Severus nodded. “I will keep a close eye on the girl. However, I would like to know more.”

Gabriel’s brow creased in thought. “I don’t know much, just something about the Chamber of Secrets being opened.”

Severus sighed. “Thank you Gabriel, now you should get to bed.”

Gabriel smirked. “Good night, Professor, I do hope you will be able to rest.” Quickly he skipped off
before he could get into trouble.

“Cheeky brat, isn’t he,” Adonis said, sidling up behind Severus.

“Indeed,” Severus said his voice low as he felt the body heat from the other man. “I’m sure you will make sure I get everything I need tonight.”

Adonis smiled and took a long pale hand in his. “I will certainly do everything I can to make sure you’re well satisfied come morning.”

Gabriel smirked as he watched the two men leave. Climbing into his sleeping bag, which was between Draco’s and the twins'. All of the Weasley kids had stayed, even Percy who was sleeping on the edge of where the boys were set up, talking with a pretty girl named Penelope. Luna, Ginny, Kamala, and Susan were on the other side of Penelope and giggling happily. On the other side of Percy were Cedric Diggory, Owen Cauldwell, and Roger Davis. “So what are we talking about?” Gabriel asked.

“Well we are…” began Fred.

“…just trying to get some…” continued George.

“… help with a potion…”

“…and Draco isn’t helping!”

Draco sighed in exasperation. “I am happy to help as soon as you promise nothing will be used on me.”

“But Draco,” they whined together, “we’re going to sell them. We can’t promise that!”

Gabriel laughed. “Well, what are you looking for? Maybe I can help.”

“They want something to protect a potion from the sugar they are mixing it with,” Draco sniffed.

“We are making…”

“…prank sweets!”

“Oh well, have you tried agar?” Gabriel answered.

“That’s brilliant!” George exclaimed.

“Ta, mate!” said Fred, as they turned to each other and began plotting.

“Thanks, Gabriel, now no one in Hogwarts will be safe,” sneered Draco.

“Oh, well, that doesn’t really affect me,” Gabriel teased.

Draco’s mouth fell open in shock. “Prat!”

Gabriel chuckled, and then yawned. “Sorry; I’m tired, it’s been a long day.”

Draco yawned in response. “Me too, it was a lot of fun. I’m glad we came.”

Gabriel smiled. “It’s been fun being with you. I hope you can come back another year.”

“That will depend on my parents. They usually hold a fancy Solstice party every year. This year they
are out of town.”

“Oh, where did they go?”

“We have a chateau on the outskirts of Le Lavandou, in Southern France. They're there for a month, and Uncle Severus is staying with me.” Draco answered.

Gabriel filed away the name of the town for later. “Well, I suppose we will just have to do as much as possible tomorrow morning before you leave.”

Draco snorted. “I doubt Uncle Severus will want to hang around all morning.”

Gabriel raised an eyebrow in shock. “I think Adonis will keep him in bed until lunchtime if possible.”

Draco’s gray eyes widened and he looked towards the tent his godfather and entered just a short while ago. “No! You've got to be joking!”

Gabriel laughed and settled down into his sleeping bag. “Nope, and I really hope Professor Snape puts up a silencing charm, Adonis is rather vocal.” Draco choked on this bit of information. “Now go to sleep; the sun will wake us up much earlier than you think.”

Severus looked around the tent, it was much larger than he had expected. There was a white couch, which looked very soft and comfortable, two matching chairs, and a light wood coffee table in the middle. Letting himself be led to a long shoji screen decorated with realistic butterflies, Severus saw Adonis’ bed. Adonis turned to him and placed a golden hand on his chest. “What do you want? I don’t want to pressure you into anything,” he said nervously.

Severus smirked, he was a fully trained wizard and studied the Dark Arts, and Adonis was worried about making him do something he didn’t want to. Leaning in, he dropped his voice, making it deep and husky, and whispered into the golden man’s ear. “I want you naked and spread out on that bed. I want us to spend the night kissing, licking, rubbing, and thrusting. I want to bury myself in that perfect arse of yours making you scream my name in pleasure, and then after you have recovered, I expect you to pound me into the mattress.” Licking and sucking on the earlobe in front of him, Severus whispered. “And Adonis, I want this all now.”

Adonis body trembled with lust, his breath coming in soft pants. Grabbing the hem of his tee shirt he ripped it off, and stepped back. His hand quickly undid the tie on his cotton trousers and let them fall to the floor and stepped out of the white cotton, thankful he had kicked off his sandals as soon as he walked into his tent. Gracefully he lay down on the bed in small, light-blue satin pants. Adonis grinned as he watched Severus; slowly he stretched, keeping his arms above his head and his legs slightly apart. “Is this how you want me, Severus?”

“Yes.” Snape moaned as he took in the golden man’s beauty. Lean muscles rippled under golden skin, which glowed against the indigo bedspread. Long, potion-stained fingers began undoing the buttons of his robes. He only had a few hours with this man and he wasn’t about to waste a second of it. “You look so perfect spread out and waiting for me,” Severus said, watching as Adonis’ cock began to grow harder under the satin. Just before Severus dropped open his robe, he paused. He was not even close to the beauty of his partner and he became self-conscious.

Adonis could tell Severus needed a bit of coaxing. Slowly he brought his hands down running them slowly over his chest. “Please, Severus, join me. I have been waiting for so long to have you to
myself.” Lust flared in Severus' onyx eyes and robes were cast aside; Adonis gasped at the man before him. Severus had milk-pale skin and lean ropey muscles. His chest was defined and had a thin smattering of black hair that Adonis was looking forward to rubbing against.

Clad only in black, silk boxers Severus advanced on his soon-to-be lover, the heat in the golden eyes making him forget any insecurity. Adonis groaned as Severus' body pressed into his; their mouths hungrily met as hands explored hot flesh. Severus pulled back briefly before exploring Adonis’ neck, nipping and sucking on the sensitive skin. Adonis moaned and arched, his cock hot and aching.

“Severus, I can’t wait, I need you so badly, let me suck you,” the blond gasped.

Severus shivered at these words and flipped them over so Adonis was now on top of him. Quickly Adonis slithered down the pale body stopping to tease pink nipples with soft licks. When his lover moaned at the stimulation Adonis grinned. Shifting so he was kneeling by Severus’ hip, Adonis gently pulled down the black silk boxers, exposing his prize for the first time. Adonis felt his mouth water. Severus’ cock was long and beautiful, with a dripping purple head peeking from sensitive foreskin. Forcing himself to wait, Adonis fully removed the boxers before settling in. Gently he lapped at the precome leaking from the swollen prick, which twitched at the sensation. Adonis moaned at the bitter flavor and needed more. He leaned over taking the length fully into his mouth. Sucking on the hard flesh, Adonis quickly established a rhythm that had Severus moaning and bucking into his mouth. Adonis loved the feel of Severus' cock in his mouth and became almost impossibly harder as his tongue traced the thick vein, and teased the swollen head and foreskin.

Severus was overwhelmed with pleasure. Reaching down he grabbed Adonis’ legs and tugging him closer removed the blue satin bikinis. Encouraging Adonis to straddle his face Severus opened his mouth and, arching up, enveloped the rigid prick in the wetness of his mouth. Adonis shivered as the wet heat of Severus’ mouth surrounded him. Cocks were worshiped with mouths and tongues, moans of pleasure causing even greater stimulation to sensitive flesh. Adonis gripped the milky white hips in front of him as he felt his balls tighten and warm tingles pooled in his groan. Long fingers bit into his arse. Looking down he saw Severus’ toes curl, and he began to suck harder. Soon Severus flooded his mouth with hot come, which Adonis greedily swallowed even as his own orgasm ripped through him.

Once he could no longer hold himself up, Adonis gracelessly flopped onto his side. Panting, he turned and crawled up the bed resting his head next to his lover's. Black eyes looked into his and they kissed languidly.

Severus smirked softly. “Well, that was a good start.”

Adonis laughed. “Yes, it was. Don’t worry, by the time I let you leave my bed, neither of us will want to sit down.”

Severus moaned as his spent cock gave a twitch of interest. “I do hope you’re not planning on keeping me waiting?”

Adonis grinned and pulled his lover in for a kiss. “Never.”
Chapter Fifty-four

Draco yawned as he leaned back in the chair. The sun and cheerful chirping of birds had woken him, and everyone else sleeping outside at the bloody crack of dawn! His eyes drifted closed, and he listened to the noises of Gabriel and Soto preparing lunch. Soon after they had woken Mrs. Weasley had popped over and begun helping make breakfast. Soon they were stuffing their faces with scrambled eggs, French toast and sausages, which Draco noticed Gabriel and the other gypsies didn’t eat. After breakfast they had played tag and Gabriel taught them how to spin poi. Draco was surprised not only at how much fun he had, but also how welcoming everyone was. Too bad it couldn’t continue during school, his father wouldn’t approve of his son associating with Weasleys.

It was almost noon, and everyone else had gone home. Draco tried not to think about why he hadn’t yet seen his godfather. Gabriel suggested that they both have some lunch in his room while watching a movie, whatever that was. Draco dozed softly for a while until he heard his godfather’s voice.

“Good morning, Gabriel; did you have an enjoyable evening?” Severus asked formally.

Gabriel smiled brightly, “It was brilliant. And you, sir? Did you get enough rest?”

Adonis winked at Gabriel over Severus' shoulder, as the regal man attempted not to blush. “Yes, well… Good morning, Draco.”

Draco was shocked at Severus’ stammering. “Good morning, Uncle Severus. Are you hungry? I think lunch will be ready soon.”

“Thank the goddess, I’m starving!” exclaimed Adonis.

“I was thinking about returning to the Manor,” Severus said.

“Oh, but I was going to show Draco The Princess Bride,” Gabriel said pleadingly.

“The what?”

Adonis gasped, “Oh, now you have to stay Severus. The Princess Bride is a great movie, and there is tons of food.”

Seeing that Severus wasn’t convinced, Draco turned pleading gray eyes on him. “Please, Uncle Severus. I’ve never seen a movie before.”

Severus pinched the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger. “Oh, for Merlin's sake! Fine! We can stay.”

Soon Severus, Draco, Gabriel, Adonis, Soto, Elena, Mudiwa, Vincent, Kamala, Ria, and Naveen were all piled into Gabriel’s room eating falafel and pitta bread sandwiches, fruit salad, and lemonade. Draco gasped and whispered questions to Gabriel throughout the movie. Severus, too, was engrossed in the film, having only seen one as a small child.

Two hours later their Slytherin guests were reluctantly ready to depart. Severus was having a quiet conversation with Mudiwa and Vincent then approached Gabriel. “After getting your fathers’ permission I would like to give you this,” Professor Snape said holding out a squared silver box to him.
Gabriel’s brow wrinkled in confusion as he took the box. Opening it he gasped, inside was a wide, silver wrist-cuff. Magical creatures were engraved all along it, and a soft thrum of magic could be felt coming from the cuff. “It’s beautiful, thank you, Professor Snape.”

“You are most welcome, Gabriel. I have placed tracking spells on it, so this way if you need my help and send me an owl I can locate you quickly.”

Gabriel placed the cuff on his right wrist, as the left still held his adoption bracelet. Smiling, he felt the Professor’s magic warm and dark against his skin.

June 24th. Training room in the Magical Creatures' Council House.

Lysander watched as Gabriel went through the maze he had created in the ballroom. Phantom attackers would pop out of nowhere casting spells and attacking with weapons. Gabriel was fierce; he seemed to know where and when he would be attacked. The spells he used were advanced and lightning-fast. Efficiently, Gabriel made sure each opponent wouldn’t be able to get up again without killing them, and in most cases causing them very little physical harm. Lysander marveled at the power and skill the young boy showed, Gabriel had already learned to cast the Unforgivables. Lysander had found a sick cat that needed to be put to sleep for Gabriel to cast Avada Kedavra on. Gabriel had been able to kill the poor cat, but promptly threw up. For the next three classes Lysander had his young pupil cast the killing curse on live plants and targets over and over again, until he could do it easily and without getting sick. It was a challenge to teach someone so young how to let the destructive power of the universe flow through his body, but not into his body. Lysander wouldn’t have taught him so early, but Gabriel had insisted that he needed to be able to cast the killing curse before he could learn better spells to protect himself with. He said that if the killing curse was taught last he would see it as the ultimate spell, and it wasn’t.

Lysander clapped as Gabriel finished the maze completely unscathed. “That was amazing, Gabriel.”

Gabriel smiled at the pride in the blue eyes of his teacher. “Thank you, Lysander. I feel really comfortable with most of my defensive and offensive spells, along with my reflexes.”

“Well you should, you have great teachers!” Lysander smirked flipping his short blond hair back with great theatrics.

Gabriel laughed at his teacher. “Can I make a request?”

“Of course you can.”

“I need to study healing magic, specifically healing nerve damage from magical overload.”

Lysander waved his hand, and the room was instantly transformed back to the ballroom, and a white leather couch and coffee table appeared near them. “Let’s sit down,” he said as tea appeared on the table. Lysander poured each of them a cup, and after taking a sip simply said, “Explain.”

Gabriel had told Lysander about his dreams; as his family had all agreed it would better to be open and honest with Lysander about what was happening so Gabriel’s training could be more complete. Gabriel explained about meeting Draco and the list of potion ingredients. “In a few weeks they are going to perform that horrible ritual and Draco’s sister along with another child will be found to be squibs. They don’t have the magical strength to heal from the ritual. I have talked to Aurora about it and she told me their nervous system would be overloaded and damaged. She said they would be in
a lot of pain. Lysander, I need to be able to help them.”

Lysander looked into the desperate green eyes and sighed. “Of course I will help you. Unfortunately the healing spells I know will only be temporary and not completely effective. They will need potions made specifically for them, by a Potions Master.”

“I have the Potions Master part covered, but I need to keep them safe and stable until he can get to us, which could take several hours.”

Lysander nodded in understanding. “All right, we will make a nerve-soothing potion, that should ease the pain until help can arrive and it shouldn’t interfere with any other potions, but I will double check. As for healing spells, there are several, but for you to practice them however someone will have to have the Crucius curse cast on them so you have something to fix.”

Gabriel shuddered; Lysander had cast Crucio on him when they were learning the Unforgivables. At the time he had been grateful that he only had to cast it once to show that he could. Gabriel nodded; he needed to learn how to heal a damaged nervous system.

When he got home, Gabriel quickly went into the bathroom and took a hot bath. He now knew the spells which would help the young squibs, but he had hated hurting Lysander like that. Lysander, of course, played it down saying: ‘These are simply the sacrifices heroes like us must make.’ Gabriel had completely healed Lysander, and he shouldn’t even feel sore tomorrow, but still, casting that curse on a friend had been horrible. That evening Gabriel crawled into bed with his fathers, holding onto them tightly.

July 10th, 1992. Le Lavandou, France. 9pm

The house elf, Dobby, quietly appeared at the crossroads his master had told him to come to. His whole body shook as he placed the screaming children down on the ground. He didn’t want to obey his master’s orders, but direct orders were almost impossible to ignore. Large tears fell from his round eyes, and his bat-like ears drooped even more than normal. “Dobby is sorry, he must leave you here. Master said, and master took your names, so goodbye, little ones.” A noise drew Dobby's attention. He was ordered to leave the little ones, but he wanted to protect them.

Two men and a boy walked towards them. The boy knelt down and looked Dobby right in the eye. “We are here to help them, will you let us?”

Dobby quivered in happiness, “Yes, please, these babies are needing help. Master wants me, so I must go back. You are great, you will take good care of these babies.”

The tall, black man spoke: “Yes, we will. Now go, we don’t want you to get into trouble.”

Dobby wailed, “Such good men to be concerned with Dobby. No one cares about Dobby! Such good men…” And with a ‘pop’, Dobby vanished.

Gabriel shook his head at the crazy house elf’s behavior. Placing his hands upon the two small children he sent soothing, calming energy into their damaged bodies. It wasn’t much, but they were now able to sleep, shutting out the cruel world. Gabriel picked up the little girl, cradling her in his arms. Her skin was unnaturally pale, and there were dark purple circles under her eyes, which even in sleep were clenched in pain. Her hair looked like moonlight and her features were a softer version of her brother Draco’s. Gabriel wondered what color her eyes were.
Vincent knelt and picked up the other child, a little boy who looked to be about a year old. His mocha skin was ashen, and he too had dark circles under his eyes and was grimacing in pain while he slept. His hair was black, and framed his face in a short halo of small, soft curls. The boy reached out a small pudgy hand and gripped Vincent’s shirt, as a soft whimper came from his pink lips. “Hush, little one, we will have you safe soon enough.”

The three men hurried back to their bus half a mile away. Gabriel and Vincent curled up on the sofa, surrounding the small children with their bodies and energy. For weeks they had practiced emanating calming, healing energy while at the same time blocking outside energy. The children had no protection right now, their nervous system had been stripped clean and they would feel everything to a painfully intense degree. As soon as everyone was settled Mudiwa drove them to safety, and hopefully to find help.

Thirty minutes later Gabriel called to Hedwig. “Hello there, beautiful girl,” he crooned to his snowy owl. “I’m ready for you to deliver the letter now.” Gabriel had planned ahead and already written a letter to Professor Snape and had it tied to Hedwig’s leg. “I know it’s a long journey, but I need you to fly as fast as you can, please, girl?”

Hedwig chirped and hopped onto her master’s shoulder giving him an affectionate nip on the ear. Then she flew to the window Mudiwa had opened and took off into the night as fast as she could to bring help.

July 11th. Severus Snape’s quarters at Hogwarts. 1 am

Severus sighed as he set down his book and flinched as he noticed how late it was. He didn’t like getting so far out of his routine, but he could rarely resist the temptation of a good book. Setting down A Touch of Frost® Severus stretched and headed off to bed. Most people would have been surprised at Severus’s choice of book, however his father had been a Muggle, and the only good thing he had ever received from him was a love of mystery books. Unbuttoning his robe, Severus was contemplating who the killer was when there was a frantic tapping at his private door. Scowling, he flung open the door and yelled in shock as a white owl slammed into his chest. Barely catching the poor creature before it hit the floor, Severus checked over the exhausted owl in his arms; it was Gabriel’s owl, Hedwig. Quickly he untied the scroll and read the letter, all the while carefully holding Hedwig.

Fury and relief warred within him as he realized that Lucius and the others had gone ahead with the ritual. Gabriel had found two squib children that had been abandoned. Carefully he set the owl in a nest of pillows he made on the chair. Quickly gathering up everything he might need, he ran to the boundary of the Hogwarts’ wards so he could Apparate.

Severus had needed to break the journey into two jumps, he simply wasn’t powerful enough to Apparate all that distance at once; not even Dumbledore could have done it. Careful to make noise so he didn’t surprise anyone, Severus walked into the gypsies' camp.

Elena looked up as she heard someone approaching and breathed a sigh of relief when Professor Snape came into the light. “Thank the Goddess you’re here! Quickly, come with me,” she exclaimed and rushed to Vincent and Mudiwa’s tent.

Severus waited a moment, allowing his eyes to adjust to the soft candlelight, before heading to the sound of singing. A warm tenor voice was singing what sounded like a lullaby, but Severus couldn’t discern the language. Pulling back the flap, Severus stepped into Vincent and Mudiwa’s bedroom. A few candles flickered, barely keeping the darkness at bay. Adonis sat as far away from the bed as he
could get. He waved to Severus while continuing to sing the sweet song. Looking at the bed, Severus saw Gabriel and Mudiwa, their bodies coming together to create a circle, and in the center of the circle were two small toddlers. They were whimpering softly, tears flowing down their chubby cheeks, obviously desperate for sleep yet unable to relax.

Severus put up his Occlumency shields and tried to keep his energy as neutral as possible. Slowly walking closer he bit back a gasp as he saw his goddaughter and Blaise Zabini’s baby brother being protected by the human circle. Whispering, Severus said, “I need to know what you have given them so far, if anything, and how long ago you found them.”

Gabriel turned his head to look without moving his body. “We found them about five hours ago, and we have given them small doses of the two potions on the table.”

Severus nodded and picked up the two vials; he recognized them instantly. Both were simple potions to soothe and support the nervous system and would not interfere with anything he would need to administer. “I need to perform a magical scan on both of them. I will keep it as light as possible, but I am not sure how it will affect them.”

“We understand,” Mudiwa said softly.

Severus raised his wand. “Please do not touch them until I am finished.” Casting the first diagnostic spell on the little girl, Severus had to fight to continue as she screamed. His skin became clammy as he cast another one. With a shaking hand he turned to the little boy who had already begun to cry. An ear-piercing shriek came from the small boy as he was overwhelmed by the scans. As soon as Severus lowered his wand, both Gabriel and Mudiwa moved to curl more tightly around the hysterical children. Vincent had come in when he'd heard the screams and joined his family on the bed as they calmed the toddlers down. Severus reached over and grabbed the two potions, handing them to Vincent. It only took a few minutes for both toddlers to calm, although they were still shaking and whimpering.

“As you know both have severe nerve damage extending into their eyes and brains. I will need to make a potion to rebuild the myelin sheath, which coats and protects the nerves. The little girl also has damage to her heart and the boy needs potions for damage done to his lungs,” Severus said calmly even as he dug his fingernails into his palm.

“Do you know them?” Vincent asked.

Severus, nodded a grim expression on his face. “I do, however I cannot remember their names. It would appear that they have been fully disowned by their parents. I can tell you the girl is Draco Malfoy’s sister and my goddaughter. She is two years old and her birthday is today. The boy is Blaise Zabini’s half brother; his mother remarried, again recently. If I recall correctly his birthday is April 29th, so he is almost fourteen months old. Now if you will excuse me for a moment I need to use your toilet and then I will administer what potions I have before returning to my lab.”

“Of course,” Vincent said. “Adonis can show you where it is. Thank you so much for coming.”

Severus nodded and turned to Adonis. Adonis had seen Severus turn pale and his skin become clammy while he was casting the diagnostic charms on the babies, he still didn’t look well. He led Severus quickly to the nearest loo. Severus stormed in and immediately fell to his knees as he threw up. Adonis rushed over and held back the long black hair and rubbed the man’s back. “I’m here, everything’s all right, Severus. It needed to be done; you wouldn’t be able to help them otherwise,” Adonis said soothingly.

After his stomach was emptied, Severus sat back against the walls, eyes closed and breathing
shallow. “I have never caused a child harm before, never.”

Adonis sat down next to his lover and held his hand. “I know you haven’t, and you wouldn’t have this time if they hadn’t needed your help. And you will help them, with your knowledge you will be able to help them heal, and soon we will have two crazy toddlers running around.”

Severus sighed and looked up at the ceiling. “It won’t happen too soon, because of their age and the amount of damage done I will need to take things slowly. They should be out of pain in three days, but the sensitivity could last up to a month. I am afraid if I try and heal everything at once their small bodies will go into shock. They literally need to re-grow most of their nervous system.”

“What can I do to help?” Adonis asked looking worriedly at his lover.

Severus didn’t even have the energy to snark. “You are helping already,” he said softly, and even as the words left his lips he vowed to deny ever saying it.

Once Severus had cleaned up he went back to the children. Rummaging through his bag he found a calming draught, a mild pain suppressant, and a general healing potion. He had made them for St. Mungo’s, specifically for their pediatric ward; it was a lucky coincidence that he hadn’t shipped off the order yet. Within moments of being given the potions both children fell into a restless sleep.

“They should sleep for several hours,” Severus pronounced.

Placing a piece of parchment on the bedside table Severus added, “Here are instructions for administering each potion specifically to each child. I need to return to my lab and work on potions tailored to each child. Unfortunately it will take me at least twelve hours to make them.”

“Thank you, Professor Snape, I don’t know what we would have done without your help,” Mudiwa said softly.

Severus inclined his head. “You are welcome. Thank you for rescuing my goddaughter, and my student’s brother. Everyone should get some sleep while they can; I’ll be back soon.”

Gabriel yawned loudly. “G’night, Professor, and thanks.”

“Good night, Gabriel. I’ll bring Hedwig with me when I return.”

“Oh, umm, thanks,” Gabriel said, and he fell asleep.

*I haven’t actually read the book, but I have watched the series, which is wonderful.

Rakina- The books (there is a series) are well worth reading, they are by R D Wingfield. I recommend them! I have several on audio cassette, read by David Jason. Wonderful!
Chapter Fifty-five

2pm, July 15th, 1992. Malfoy Manor

Draco waited impatiently in the Floo room for his best friends Blaise and Pansy to arrive. He needed to speak with them urgently. Four days ago his parents had come home without his baby sister, whose name he couldn’t remember. His father had simply said, “Your sister’s dead,” and walked off to his study. His mother had become teary-eyed, and briefly hugged him before hiding in her room. Draco had been shocked by this news. They hadn’t brought her body home; no one had said anything about a funeral or what happened to his beloved sister.

Draco wasn’t stupid; he knew something was going on. Going to the Manor’s library he began looking up possible reasons why he couldn’t remember her name. There were very few options that he knew of so it didn’t take long for Draco to find the disinheritance spell his parents had used. They must have been in a hurry, thought Draco. It was the easiest spell in the book and only worked on those who participated, so his sibling bond with his sister was still there. Why in Salazar’s name would they disinherit a two-year-old? What could she have done? Draco thought as he paced the library. Not wanting his parents to find out what he was doing, Draco pulled out his wand and sent the book back to its place on the shelf.

His eyes widened and his body began to tremble as he stared at his wand: a squib, oh Merlin, a squib! Tears began to fill his eyes, as he realized his parents must have killed his beautiful little sister because she was a squib. Rage filled him as he thought of the gypsies; they would have taken her, she could have been happy, and instead they had killed her. The windows began to rattle as Draco’s magic leaked out. Taking a deep breath Draco calmed himself and put on his Malfoy mask. What happened to his sister had to be kept secret – for now. Straightening his robes, Draco pulled down a few other books and left them lying about next to his favorite sofa, just in case his parents checked up on what he had been doing.

The next morning Draco walked past his father’s study and heard his father yelling. “Severus, I have been trying to get hold of you! I need a potion.” Draco listened more closely as he heard a hard edge in his godfather’s voice.

“I’m rather busy right now; can’t this wait?” Severus snapped.

Lucius pretended that he hadn’t heard the question. “Narcissa and I are going to have another child. I want to make sure it isn’t a squib.” Draco closed his eyes, he was right.

“Where is my goddaughter?” Severus demanded.

“Dead,” Lucius said without feeling. “Now, about that potion.”

“I will not make such a thing! It ensures the child won’t be a squib by allowing the child to steal its mother’s magic during birth if it doesn’t have enough of its own. If the child tuned out to be a squib it could kill Narcissa.”

“This is for our lord, Severus,” Lucius said coldly. “He will want to see an army of pureblood followers when he returns and I’m doing my best to provide that. What are you doing?”

“How dare you?” hissed Severus. “I’ve maintained my position in Hogwarts all these years. Dumbledore trusts and confides in me. Something far more valuable than a snot-nosed brat wearing
nappies. I’m too busy for this, I have things to do.” The Floo whooshed as Severus left.

Draco was stunned, his father had killed his sister and was willing to kill his own wife to supply followers to some man a baby had defeated? Malfoys were a pure, magnificent line – they weren’t supposed to bow and scrape to someone else, and certainly not give the lives of their family for someone else’s glory. As these thoughts swirled in Draco’s head memories of his time at Solstice and school flashed past. Maybe his father was wrong about a lot more than the Dark Lord.

The Floo finally flared and Pansy gracefully stepped out of the green flames. “Hello Pansy,” Draco said politely.

Pansy smiled and gave Draco a soft kiss on the cheek. “Draco dear, how are you? Is Blaise here yet?”

“No, not yet. You look lovely today.”

Pansy smiled and smoothed down her ice-blue summer robes. For a while they continued making polite small talk anyone could hear; after tea they would go up to Draco’s room and have a real conversation.

Five minutes later Blaise Flooed in uncharacteristically stumbling out of the hearth; he looked awful. His skin was ashen and his eyes swollen from crying.

“Oh Blaise!” cried Pansy rushing forward. Blaise fell into her arms and held her tightly.

Quickly Draco rushed to his friends and wrapped his arms around them. “Don’t! Not yet; we need to get through tea with our Slytherin masks in place and then once we're in my room it'll be safe to talk.”

Pansy and Blaise both nodded. They straightened their robes, and Blaise cast a concealment charm on himself so he looked healthy and content. Draco’s parents were waiting for them in the rose garden and it was well over an hour before the three friends could get away. Thankfully Lucius and Narcissa had a Ministry function to attend that evening, leaving the three friends with only house elves to watch over them.

Draco was grateful for the manor's wards, which enabled him to do magic without it being detected by the Ministry and he cast privacy and locking spells on his room. Climbing onto his large, satin-covered bed he settled down next to Blaise and Pansy. “Blaise, you first,” said Draco soothingly.

“When my mum and Carlos came back from their trip they told me my baby brother was dead.” Blaise’s eyes filled with tears, and his chin trembled. “They wouldn’t tell me what happened, and worst of all I can’t remember his name!” Blaise exclaimed tears trailed down his cheeks. “I can see his face, remember his laugh and the song I would sing to him at night, but I can’t remember his name.”

“Oh, Blaise! I am so sorry,” cried Pansy moving so she could wrap her arms around her friend. Pausing for a moment she said, “I can’t remember his name either. What's going on?”

Draco sighed then whispered, “The same thing happened to my baby sister. I can’t remember her name either.”

Pansy let out a sob and Blaise pulled their friend into the hug. Together they clung to each other and cried.
“Why?” Blaise whispered brokenly.

“I think I have worked it out,” Draco whispered. “I think our parents performed a ritual to test if they were squibs. They were and so they were disowned before they were killed.”

“Dear Merlin, no!” gasped Pansy. “That’s horrible! I didn’t think anyone did that anymore. I remember when my cousins were sent away because they didn’t get a letter for Hogwarts. Everyone acted as if they had never existed, but I don’t think they were disinherit completely.”

“What’s really horrible,” Draco sneered, “is that my father wants to have another baby and this time have mum take a potion to ensure the baby is magical, a potion which could kill my mother.”

“Why are they doing this?” Blaise asked, his voice hoarse with grief.

“Dad said it was for the Dark Lord,” Draco explained, then taking a deep breath he took a chance: “And if that is what his followers have to do, then I won’t become one of them.” He then told them about his time at the summer Solstice celebration. The happiness of the squib gypsies, the interesting Muggle things, and all that he had found out about the rituals and potions used on the innocent children while their parents stood by watching.

When he was done, Blaise turned bloodshot brown eyes to his. “My mum has always been neutral, and I will not serve such a monster.”

Pansy nodded, “I agree, my parents might be all for him, but no way am I going to be branded into service.”

“So now we need to train, and keep our eyes open,” Draco said decisively. “We need to have a plan in order to get away from our parents and the Dark Lord.”

Pansy sighed, “It would be nice to have an adult on our side.”

“Well, we shall watch them all and see if we can find anyone to trust,” Blaise stated simply wiping his eyes.

Draco smiled, he was so grateful that his friends were with him on this; he wasn’t sure if he could do it without them.

8pm, July 15th. Belgium

Severus followed the tracking spell, until he found himself at a very odd-looking site. Before him was a large flat area where many cars, tents and bus-like vehicles were parked. Severus could see people walking about, children playing at the small park area, and the light of many campfires. For the past four nights Severus had visited then checked in on the children, and each night the Dragonheart Gypsies had been at a new campsite, but never one like this.

Staying in the shadows Severus walked to the far end, where he could see the colorful buses and tents he was familiar with. Somehow they managed to be off on their own with no other campers near by. As he got closer to them Severus could see people in the firelight. Warm laughter and soft music filled the air. Walking past others Severus quickly made his way to Adonis, who was easy to find in the soft light.

“Good evening, Adonis,” he called.
Adonis turned smiling golden eyes his way. “Good evening, Severus; how are you?”

“I am well; and you?”

Adonis grinned playfully. “I’m much better now. Come, I’ll show you where the little ones are this evening.”

Severus smirked at the flirting while he followed his lover. Tied between two buses was a hammock in which Gabriel was rocking both toddlers. “How were they today?” Severus asked softly so as not to startle the sensitive children.

Adonis smiled softly. “So much better. I think the constant pain is finally gone. They will still only let Gabriel, Vincent and Mudiwa touch them, but we can work around that.”

Severus nodded, he would normally do a scan to see how well his potions were working, but that would cause more damage than good at this point. “That is good news; maybe everyone can finally rest well.”

“Good evening, Professor,” Gabriel said his voice a soft coo as if he was talking to the toddlers. Sleepy green eyes looked into Severus’. “How are you?”

Severus snorted at how everyone seemed concerned about his own health when he was here to check on the children. “I’m fine; tell me how they are doing,” he demanded softly pointing to the two babies peacefully sleeping on Gabriel’s chest.

“So much better,” Gabriel said a smile lighting up his face. “They both ate a little today and drank a lot. Also while I was in the water with them, we were able to bath them. Their sleep has been deep and restful and they actually played today! We blew up a balloon and they batted it around.”

Much of the tension Severus was holding onto melted away as he heard this. All of these things were really good signs that both children would be all right. “I will make a potion for the bath that should help them deal with the water, and will have a healing effect. I also have with me their potions for tomorrow.”

“Thank you, Professor Snape.”

“Yes, Severus, thank you so very much. The amount of work you have done has been amazing,” Adonis said as he reached out and squeezed Severus' shoulder.

“Yes, well, she is my goddaughter. By next week I think their bodies will have healed enough so I can make a more stable potion once every two weeks instead of daily.”

“What will happen when you go to school, Professor Snape?” Gabriel asked.

“The potions they will require aren’t overly challenging to make, and I should be able to get away for a little while every few weeks. After two months I will switch them to different potions depending on their needs. At that point a basic nerve tonic should be enough, I can make enough of that one for several months at a time,” Severus answered, all the while doing a visual inspection of the two sleeping children. Both were a bit thin, however their cheeks were rosy and they looked peaceful in sleep.

“Can you stay for dinner tonight, Severus?” Adonis asked hopefully. “Mudiwa is making African food tonight.”

Severus tilted his head slightly to the side as if considering the offer. “I have never had African food
before, and I do have the evening to myself, so yes I will join you for dinner.”

Adonis beamed. “Wonderful.”

Severus leaned back against the pillows and sighed in contentment. The food had been wonderful. They had eaten the thick spicy stews with soft pancakes instead of utensils.* For pudding they had custard with warm ginger biscuits, and now Severus stomach was pleasantly full and he felt a bit sleepy. The conversation that evening had been very pleasant, and he found Soto to be very knowledgeable on different types of philosophy. And all of them had opinions about politics, both Wizarding and Muggle. Currently the conversation was geared towards the two toddlers who were sitting between Mudiwa and Vincent, playing with their custard and sometimes getting it into their little pink mouths.

“They need names,” Elena insisted.

Vincent sighed. “We normally don’t take in squib children. Gabriel was an exception. We’ll take them to Mum’s village and find them parents.”

Mudiwa’s laugh was rich and deep. “Love, it will be months before it would be safe for them to go with someone else. Already we are forming bonds with them. Do you really think any of us will be able to let them go?”

“But two toddlers will be such a big change for the troupe,” Vincent argued.

Ria snorted. “No more than Kamala was!”

“Hey!” cried Kamala indignantly.

Vincent turned to his husband. “We have never talked about having more children in our family.”

Mudiwa smiled indulgently; Vincent’s emotions had been so raw due to the near constant contact with the two damaged toddlers. “Vincent my love, you are a wonderful father and I would love nothing more than to add to our family.”

Tears filled the fragile empath’s lavender eyes as they gazed lovingly into his husband’s soft gray eyes. “I love you.” Quickly he turned to look at his son. “What about you, Gabriel?”

Gabriel smiled. “I can feel the bond already; saying that we are a family is just a formality.”

Mudiwa looked sharply at the non-answer. “But are you okay with it?”

“Yes, Baba. I would love to have them in our family.”

“So they need names!” demanded Elena. Everyone laughed softly at this.

Kamala had scooted closer, careful not to touch the toddlers and tossed them a blue balloon. Both babies beamed at the sight of the new toy, and Kamala cooed. “You two are so sweet, just like little angels.”

Mudiwa smirked, Vincent grinned and Gabriel rolled his eyes saying, “Not more angel names.”

The next thirty minutes were full of fun and a bit of yelling as names were thrown around. Severus smirked at all the ruckus, and let his opinion of certain names be known as he sneered viciously at the person who suggested them. Every time he did this Gabriel laughed. Severus turned as Adonis
snuggled up beside him on the pillows. “Are you joining in the chaos?” Severus asked.

Adonis snorted, “No way. Look over at Gabriel and Kamala,” he said pointing out the two siblings who were furiously whispering back and forth. “More than likely they will work out the perfect name between the two of them.”

Severus snorted and leaned, just a bit, against Adonis as he watched the discussion continue.

Finally out of ideas the adults had stopped talking. Sighing Naveen turned to look for Kamala, and saw her and Gabriel sitting by the toddlers with knowing grins on their faces. Naveen groaned, “All right, you two; tell us what we should name them.”

Everyone turned to look at Gabriel and Kamala. “Well,” Kamala began, “as it was an elf who gave the babies to us we thought an elf name would be good. So for the boy we picked Aubrey, it means ‘elf ruler’.”

“The name we picked for the girl actually means ‘fairy queen’, but it seems to fit her,” Gabriel explained. “We picked Tatiana.”

“I think they are very fitting,” Severus said.

Vincent smiled. “I like them.”

“Yes, well done,” agreed Mudiwa. Both children smiled proudly as everyone agreed with the names they had picked.

An hour later everything was cleaned up and the little ones were all in bed. Some of the adults were going to stay by the fire and talk for a while. Others retired to their tents.

Adonis walked over to where Severus seemed to be getting ready to go. “Severus, would you like to stay the night with me?”

Severus looked at the beautiful man in front of him, and remembered all the pleasure they had given each other last time, but he was nervous. He didn’t want to lead Adonis on, and he wasn’t looking for a relationship. “While I would enjoy that very much, I do not think I should.”

Adonis’s brow crinkled in puzzlement. “Why not?”

Severus sighed. “I do not want you to think this is more than it is.”

Adonis smirked. “Well, I think I just asked a friend to have hot sex with me. What did you think I was asking for?”

Severus smirked. “I just want to be clear. I’m not looking for a relationship at this time.”

Adonis smiled softly. “I understand, we don’t owe each other anything, we aren’t obligated or monogamous and if someone finds a partner they choose to be in a relationship with we’ll tell the other.” Turning he walked to his tent. “Now get your sexy arse in here.”

Severus felt jealousy flare through his chest at the thought of Adonis being with anyone else, but unfortunately he couldn’t be in a committed relationship. Pushing the jealousy aside, Severus followed his lover.

*In Ethiopian cuisine they eat with injera, a sour pancake. Many cultures eat with their fingers and
use breads to help scoop up the food. I’m guessing that in Zimbabwe they do a similar thing.
Chapter Fifty-six

Parseltongue is in bold.

September 20th, 1992

Potions Master Severus Snape sat in his office marking sixth year Potions essays. Sighing, he yet again dipped his quill into the pot of red ink. It had been more difficult than normal to adjust to the school year; he missed visiting the gypsies every night and the lack of sex was starting to become yet another stressor in his life. A soft knock on his door made him groan and bark, “Enter!” Although he was available to students, he disliked being interrupted. His obsidian eyes widened as he watched a timid, redhead Gryffindor walk into his office.

“Miss Weasley what can I do you for you this evening?” Severus asked coolly.

Ginny swallowed nervously, clutching a battered black book in her hand. “G-good evening, Professor Snape. Cherub said I could bring this to you.” Holding up the book she waited for his response.

Severus’ eyes widened. Beckoning the nervous first year closer, he held out his hand. Ginny walked forward quickly and handed him the journal. “Take a seat, Miss Weasley,” Severus said distractedly. As he flipped through the book he found it to be blank. Placing it on his desk he turned intense eyes to look directly into her soft brown ones. “Tell me.”

Obediently Ginny began her story. “I noticed the book three days ago at the bottom of my trunk. The next day I found a place to be alone and wrote in it. I wrote nothing special, just my name, and the book answered me. It wrote: ‘Hello my name is Tom Riddle. Nice to meet you.’ I slammed the book shut, and put it back in my trunk.” Taking a deep breath, Ginny continued. “I remembered what Cherub said, and I’m not sure how to reach him, so I waited until your office hours and brought it to you. Cherub said it would be all right.”

“You have done very well, Miss Weasley. Ten points for showing that courage can be balanced with intelligence; maybe you can teach your brothers,” Severus sneered. Ginny beamed brightly at her Professor, causing him to sneer more furiously. “Now go back to your dorm, I would hate to take points for you being out past curfew.”

Ginny got up. “Thank you, Professor Snape.”

Sighing, Severus spoke up. “Anytime, Miss Weasley.”

Ginny stopped at the door, and turned, “Good night, Professor. I will remember that.”

Severus sneered at the closed door; he was getting soft! Picking up the journal he locked his office and walked to his quarters. After placing the journal in a secure location, Severus wrote a brief note to Gabriel, letting him know the threat was over. Severus decided to walk up to the owlery so he could patrol the hallways.

Quietly he opened his door and saw a common sight: Miss Parkinson, Mr. Zambini and Mr. Malfoy walking quickly, trying to get back into the common room before curfew. Severus had noticed a
change in the three children from the first day; they were planning something and trying to be subtle, but they were still children so he could easily tell they were up to something. He longed to tell his godson and Mr. Zabini that their siblings were alive and well, but it simply wasn’t safe, at least not yet.

"Mr. Malfoy," Severus called, stalking closer to the three students. "I have noticed the initiative the three of you are taking in preparing for your future outside of Hogwarts and I find it commendable."

He pulled a thin, dark green book from his robes. "I think you will gain a lot from this text." Handing the book to Draco he spun on his heel, robes snapping, and walked away.

The three friends were speechless. Quickly they made their way into the boys’ dorm room. After pulling the curtains on Draco’s bed and surrounding themselves with privacy and protection spells, they felt free to talk.

"Well I guess we haven’t been as discreet as we thought," Blaise said sarcastically. "Pansy snorted in amusement. "Obviously! Anyway Draco, what’s this with the book? Did you tell Snape what we’re doing?"

Draco looked at the book in his hands. "No, I didn’t tell him anything. All my life Uncle Severus has known when I needed him, I guess now is no different," he said in a soft voice. Shaking his head to bring himself back to the present, Draco read the title: Occlumency by Elsebeth Cordant.

"Puzzled, Draco opened the book to see Severus’ scrawled notes: Before a secret can be told it must be able to be kept. As he read out loud all three friends smiled; they might have found an adult to trust."

Excitedly, they opened to the first chapter and began to read. Meditation: Calming and Clearing the mind.

Oct 12th, 1993. Magical Creatures Council Meeting

The image of Gabriel and Soto flickered in the air as the council watched the thirteen-year-old boy fight the ninja. Hands flew as kicks and strikes were blocked. The two spun around each other, their movements so natural they seemed effortless and so fast one could barely see what was happening. The scene shifted and suddenly the two were fighting with weapons, long staffs cracking against each other, then flashes of silver as they fought with swords. The council was impressed with the young man; it was obvious Soto was his teacher, but their skill was almost equal.

Several council members gasped as Soto knocked the sword from Gabriel’s hand and kept attacking. The young man flipped and rolled to keep away from the sword when suddenly he rolled and came up with a thick piece of rope. Viciously Gabriel began attacking Soto with the rope. Twirling it around his body, Gabriel controlled the rope with amazing precision and soon had disarmed his Sensei.

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They watched as Gabriel transfigured pebbles into metal ninja and throwing knives. The image flickered again and this time it was Lysander Gabriel was fighting. Beams of light flashed from Gabriel’s hand so fast the colors from the different spells blurred together. The wandless magic was amazing enough, but the power and speed behind it made everyone gasp. Lysander’s vampire-enhanced reflexes and strength were the only reason he was able to hold his own against the teen.

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He pulled a thin, dark green book from his robes. "I think you will gain a lot from this text." Handing the book to Draco he spun on his heel, robes snapping, and walked away.

The three friends were speechless. Quickly they made their way into the boys’ dorm room. After pulling the curtains on Draco’s bed and surrounding themselves with privacy and protection spells, they felt free to talk.

"Well, I guess we haven’t been as discreet as we thought," Blaise said sarcastically. "Pansy snorted in amusement. "Obviously! Anyway, what’s this with the book? Did you tell Snape what we’re doing?"

Draco looked at the book in his hands. "No, I didn’t tell him anything. All my life Uncle Severus has known when I needed him, I guess now is no different," he said in a soft voice. Shaking his head to bring himself back to the present, Draco read the title: Occlumency by Elsebeth Cordant.

"Puzzled, Draco opened the book to see Severus’ scrawled notes: Before a secret can be told it must be able to be kept. As he read out loud all three friends smiled; they might have found an adult to trust."

Excitedly, they opened to the first chapter and began to read. Meditation: Calming and Clearing the mind.
Lysander flipped his short blond hair regally. “I really didn’t see that as important, I merely took pieces of memory which highlighted Gabriel’s skills.”

“Philip, be nice,” said the sweet voice of his mum. “Thank you very much, Lysander, for all of your hard work. Could you tell us of his emotional state please?”

“Of course, Council Woman Jaroslava,” Lysander answered with a short bow. This wasn’t a casual meeting and proper titles needed to be used. “Gabriel has formed strong emotional bonds with the Dragonheart Gypsy Clan he travels with. He has two fathers, two sisters and one brother, none blood related, but that doesn’t matter to Gabriel at all. He has close friendships, and is able to make friends rather easily.”

Making eye contact with different council members Lysander continued. “Gabriel is empathic and has learned control, so that the ability is a tool instead of a curse. He seems to be a happy, healthy teenager. Due to his training and life he is more mature than most thirteen-year-olds.”

“And his intelligence?” asked Zellan, a Fay with long, deep-green hair and pale green eyes.

“Gabriel has the Founders’ chest.” Lysander paused here until the gasps and murmurs died down. “He has read all seven years of text books for all the subjects Hogwarts offered and he studies non-magical subjects as well. Currently he’s reading the personal journals and work journals of all four Founders.”

“Why didn’t you tell us this before?” asked Miltor, a Centaur with honey-blond hair and brown eyes.

Lysander straightened up. “Not everyone was happy about a human being the ‘Little Angel’ the Founder’s prophecy spoke of, and I was unwilling to put Gabriel in danger.”

The council members nodded, they were now comfortable with young Gabriel, but it hadn’t always been this way. Every year their acceptance of Gabriel grew as every year another story of his tolerance, friendship and assistance of the magical creatures he met was told to them.

“Lysander,” called out Inanna, a Veela, “I know it might seem rather tedious, but could you please list the subjects young Gabriel has been learning.”

Lysander gave the beautiful woman a cheeky grin and bowed low. “I would be happy to, Council Woman Inanna. Gabriel has studied, Latin, Arithmancy, Runes, Elemental Magic, Charms, Transfiguration, Potions, Healing Arts, Mind Magic, Herbology, Care of Magical Creatures, Astronomy, Divination, Wizarding Traditions, Politics, Dark Arts and their Defense. I know his non-magical subjects include history, mathematics, science, English, and music. And now that he is reading the personal journals of the Founders he is studying mastery level in many of the standard subjects plus Blood Magic and Wards from Slytherin, Wand-making from Ravenclaw, Spell Creation from Gryffindor, and Diplomacy and Treaties for inter-species relations from Hufflepuff.”

Everyone began talking at once. The excitement was almost too much. “Excuse me,” called out Griphook, a Goblin. “He sounds perfect, flawless even, maybe too good to be true?”

Lysander smiled at him. “Council Man Griphook, I can see how Gabriel can come across that way, but I assure you he is human and makes mistakes. He has bad days where nothing goes right. He tries out new moves on me and Soto and winds up getting hurt. He gets depressed, sad, sick, and rebellious. He trips over his own feet sometimes, despite his gifts and his destiny, he is a thirteen-year-old boy.”

Again the council members began to talk amongst themselves, adding this new information into their
conversation, when Voltaire stood up. He had personally known Helga Hufflepuff and was already ancient when this Council had begun. While everyone’s vote was counted equally, Voltaire was their unofficial leader. His black hair fell in soft waves around his face and down his shoulders, his dark blue eyes sparkled with happiness. “Come here, Lysander,” Voltaire whispered. Lysander walked forward letting the power of the vampire’s voice wash over him. When the baby vampire was standing before him Voltaire held out his hand. Dangling from his fingers was the symbol of the Council. Every Council member wore the same amulet around their neck; it enabled them to gain access to the council rooms and let them know when there was a meeting.

Reverently, Lysander took the gold and platinum amulet, lovingly he caressed the yin yang symbol made up of a unicorn and a dragon with a phoenix framing them within the circle. They were the oldest of the magical creatures and while they rarely gave their opinion, at least one representative of each species attended every meeting.

“Give this to Gabriel; it will let his status be known amongst all magical beings. Gabriel Alec Dragonheart is now a member of this council. When he asks, bring him to us, Lysander.”

“Yes, Council Man Voltaire,” Lysander replied in shock.

May 5th, 1994

It was the middle of the night and Voldemort was hidden in an abandoned farmhouse, he wasn’t even sure where. Last week Nagini, his beloved snake, had found him. She had carried him here and even brought him meals. Grinning, Voldemort looked through the window and up to the night sky. He was slowly getting stronger and could feel a faint shadow of his followers through the mark they still wore. He could feel the insanity of those in Azkaban, the sly cunning of those still loyal but not wanting to get caught and the fear of those who had hoped that Lord Voldemort had really died. And every now and then he could feel the determined thrum of one loyal follower desperately trying to break free of his bonds.

A low scraping noise let Voldemort know that his beloved Nagini was back and was bringing him something.

“I’m in here my pet,” he called, pulling himself deeper into the room. Nagini’s wide, flat head pushed open the door and slowly her long body slithered into the room. As she got closer Voldemort could see a person wrapped in her coils. “What have you brought me?”

“Master, I bring you a man. I can smell magic and death on him. He should be easy to eat.”

“So thoughtful, thank you, Nagini,” Voldemort hissed. Moving closer he saw an old man, his clothes dirty and torn. He smelled as if he hadn’t washed in a long time. Nagini had done well; no one would miss him, no one at all. Bending down Voldemort chanted an ancient and dark spell as he sealed the thin opening of his mouth to the tramp’s and began to pull out his magic and his very life from him.

Minutes later Voldemort opened red snakelike eyes. “I feel much better, much stronger. Soon, Nagini, we can begin planning again. Soon we will have our followers back. Soon I will find and kill Harry Potter.”

Nagini emitted an eerie, hissing laugh to join her Master’s high-pitched cackle.
A thousand miles away Gabriel woke with a gasp. Shivering, he took a drink of water from the glass on his bedside table. Everything had just changed: Voldemort was no longer alone and no longer completely weak and helpless. Reaching up, Gabriel traced the Council amulet that hung around his neck. The pendant fit just under the hollow of his throat; it was warm against his skin. He had yet to go to a Council meeting. Oh, he knew that Lysander was waiting for him to ask to attend, but Gabriel just couldn’t bring himself to ask. He wasn’t ready to face those who had been waiting for him for a thousand years.

Lying back onto his bed Gabriel pulled the covers over himself. Just one more year, he prayed to whoever was listening. I just want one more year before I have to deal with politics and those who have an idea of what meeting my destiny means. Please, just one more year, the thirteen-year-old boy thought as he fell back asleep.

Fawkes trilled soothingly. “One more year, Little Angel, I will tell them. Then it will be time to meet your destiny.”

“Do you think he will be ready?” Aurora asked her old friend.

“Yes, he is most likely ready now. But now is not ready for him,” Fawkes stated mystically.

Aurora rolled her eyes. “I agree the time is not right. You will tell the Council?”

“Yes, they have waited this long, one more year will not matter,” Fawkes crooned.

The snowy owl fluttered into the room and settled herself next to her Master’s bed rather protectively. With an indignant hoot she chastised the snake and the phoenix. “He is still a boy! And if he wants one more year then they will just have to give it to him.”

“Of course,” hissed Aurora soothingly to the protective owl. “We all want Gabriel to be safe and happy.”

Hedwig hooted, obviously unconvinced, and ruffled her feathers in agitation as she settled in to watch over her raven-haired human. Fawkes and Aurora talked until morning, when both had to return to the ones they were protecting.
Fifty-seven

Chapter Fifty-seven

April 12th, 1995. Magical Creatures' Council meeting

Fourteen-year-old Gabriel Alec Dragonheart stood in front of the Magical Creatures' Council. Proudly he held his 5'6” frame straight under their gaze. For this meeting he had left his headscarf off, his waist length, midnight-black hair was loose framing his sleek muscular body in soft waves and curls. Gabriel’s face was a mixture of softness and clear sharp lines. High cheek bones and full pink lips gave him a feminine quality while his square jaw and broad shoulders made it known that he was a young man. Currently his large emerald-green gaze was locked with Voltaire’s deep blue. Lazily Gabriel blinked his long black lashes, which fanned out against his golden cheeks.

“Welcome Gabriel, we have been waiting for you,” Voltaire greeted cheerfully.

“Thank you, Council Man Voltaire; I felt it was time,” Gabriel said, his voice still young, but with a hint of the rich tenor it would reach within the next year.

“Has something happened?” asked a Banshee keeping her screeching voice as soft as she could.

“Voldemort has found what he needs, within a few hours he will be back in a physical body and much stronger. I can’t see much more than that. Just a strange little man who has finally broken free from his father’s Imperius curse and has come to help him. Voldemort is angry that no one seems to know where I am, but everything else is blurry so I can’t stop it.” Gabriel sighed and ran his hands through his hair.

Philip smiled at the handsome young man. “Sometimes things need to happen, Gabriel. No one here expects you to save everyone or stop everything.”

Gabriel looked doubtful. A woman to his left chuckled; she had deep purple hair and light blue eyes. Gabriel guessed she was Fay.

“It is true, young man; we are all old enough to understand that one being, no matter how powerful, cannot control everything in this world.”

Gabriel smiled at the lovely woman. “Thank you, it is nice to know that the impossible is not expected from me.”

Soft laughter trickled through the group. A goblin snorted. “You realize the humans will not have the same idea.”

“Quite right,” added a veela male. There were so many Gabriel had given up trying to remember their names. “How do you intend to handle them?”

Gabriel tilted his head to the side. “I have a plan, but I’m not sure...” Gabriel stumbled over his words in nervousness.

Jaroslava smiled softly at the young boy. “You are unsure if your secrets will be kept, and don’t
know how to ask.”

Gabriel looked at the floor, blushing. “Yes.”

Voltaire smiled the young man's confidence and the prophecy made it hard to remember that Gabriel was just a fourteen-year-old boy. “I promise your secrets are safe here.

From behind the seated members stepped forward a large copper and green dragon. “Yes,” she hissed, her voice making everyone shiver.

A pure, shining white unicorn stepped out next. “Yes,” she agreed, calming everyone with her voice.

A phoenix circled the room and landed next to his friend. “Yes,” trilled the beautiful flame-red, orange and yellow bird.

Gabriel took a deep breath as he felt the power in those three simple words wash over the group. “Outside of my family no one knows that I’m also Harry Potter. When my full magical power is released on my sixteenth birthday I will make sure wards are not protecting me. This way Dumbledore will find me. I will make sure all he sees is a happy, playful, carefree teenager. Most likely I will not be able to keep up the act for very long, but it will keep me safe for a while.”

The council members grinned mischievously – not only would that keep the Wizarding world on its toes, but it would drive Dumbledore crazy. Voltaire cleared his throat. “Have you read all of Helga Huffelpuff’s book? Are you aware of the treaties the Wizarding world once held with all of us?”

“Yes, I have finished her book, along with several other political and history books. I’m not in a position to do anything with the treaties.”

“And when you are, will you honor agreements made today, Little Angel?” a centaur asked suspiciously.

Gabriel gave a small bow. “You have my word.”

A nymph clapped her hands, “Well let's begin, shall we? Sit, sit, there is a lot to do.”

Gabriel groaned as he watched every being present pull out thick scrolls documenting the treaties and laws made hundred of years before. They would be here for days.


Gabriel smiled as he watched his family and friends playing at the beach. Naveen was teaching Tatiana and Aubery to swim, while Jaime’s little brother Shawn swam around them in his seal form. Tatiana was almost five years old and looked like a fairy with her smoky gray eyes and white-blonde hair. She loved to dance and only stopped moving when it was absolutely necessary. Aubery was very clever and was constantly getting into something. He loved to build things, and loved tearing things apart even more. His violet eyes would sparkle with glee if you handed him broken electronics; at four he already seemed destined to become an inventor or engineer. Kamala was now nine and just as lovely as ever, her dark almond-shaped eyes and long, thick dark hair were all ready attracting the attention of boys, who Gabriel sent away forcefully and quickly.
Gabriel loved his brother and sisters very much. Everyday they played together, and he frequently helped Kamala with her lessons. Looking over, he watched Ria and Elena talking. Ria’s stomach was nicely rounded showing everyone that there would be a new gypsy soon. Elena was very happy for Ria, but Gabriel could see that she was envious and wanted children of her own. Thankfully Soto wasn’t blind to this either; Gabriel suspected they would be getting married soon.

Gabriel turned his attention to where Adonis, Soto, Vincent, Mudiwa and Jacob were all sitting. The past ten years had been kind to all five men. They had hardly aged at all. They were still handsome, strong, and agile. Only faint lines and one or two gray hairs gave away their actual ages. His Baba and Dad were still very much in love and no matter how hard Gabriel tried to avoid it he was constantly finding them having sex!

Speaking of sex, Adonis was much happier again now that it was summer and Professor Snape was visiting on a regular basis. Snape had never again attended their Solstice ritual, nor brought Draco with him when he bought his potion ingredients. Gabriel wondered if Professor Snape knew that Adonis didn’t see anyone else. After the second summer that Severus spent most of his evenings with them, Adonis had stopped getting involved with other people. It was really sweet, and Gabriel hoped the two of them could be together some day.

Gabriel sighed as he thought of next year. He really hoped that the relationships they had all formed wouldn’t be ruined when everyone found out he was Harry Potter. He thought the Weasleys would be fine after they had yelled a bit; his other friends would most likely be okay too. It was Professor Snape, Remus and Sirius he was really worried about. He planned to tell Remus and Sirius about his time with the Dursleys, so hopefully they would understand why he ran away and still support him.

As for Professor Snape, everyone was worried what this would do to his relationship with Adonis. Gabriel hoped that between the relationship he had already established with the strict man and the potions ingredients he got for him it would be enough to buy him time to explain the situation thoroughly. However, Gabriel was also counting on Severus’ own cunning to not only understand why Gabriel had deceived everyone, but would also be impressed with how well he had managed to stay hidden.

Before Gabriel could become any more engrossed in his thoughts, a cool, wet body slid along his back making him yelp. “If you’re done sunning yourself, how about we go and watch a movie in your room?” Jaime asked playfully.

Gabriel smiled. “That sounds like a lot of fun.”

Twenty minutes later Gleaming The Cube was playing on the telly, and Gabriel was whimpering in pleasure as Jaime kissed and sucked on his neck. Ever since their first kiss the two young boys had enjoyed exploring each other and learning about sex together. Gabriel moaned and arched; he had one hand buried in Jaime’s soft black curls and another running over his smooth, moon-pale skin. Jaime shivered at Gabriel’s touch and pressed his hard length into Gabriel’s. Both boys moaned at the contact and soon were kissing frantically, tongues dancing together as they rubbed against each other, quickly finding release.

They lay together panting softly enjoying the warm feelings which filled their bodies. Jaime sighed and shifted so he lay next to Gabriel. Placing his head on Gabriel’s shoulder Jaime took a finger and began tracing patterns over Gabriel’s golden stomach. “My Mum and Da’ told me to be careful with you.”

Gabriel paused in running the tips of his fingers over Jaime’s muscular back. “Oh, why?”

“They said Selkies can have temporary lovers from the land, but they cannot make a life with them.”
Gabriel took a moment before replying, “Do you want to make a life with me?”

Jaime shifted so he could look directly into Gabriel’s emerald eyes. “I want you to always be a part of my life. We're good friends and I have a lot of fun with you, but no, I don’t feel that way.”

Gabriel’s smiled eased the worry he saw in Jaime’s soulful black eyes. “I feel the same way. I love you. You’re one of my best friends. And I do enjoy watching movies with you.” Both boys blushed and chuckled at this. “But I don’t feel like we're meant to be married or anything.”

Jaime sighed in relief. “I was really nervous, Da’ and Mum insisted I talk with you. They said if we're old enough to be doing things then we're old enough to talk about it and our relationship. I was nervous that you would want something from me I couldn’t give.”

Gabriel ran his hand through Jaime’s soft black hair. “Don’t ever worry about talking with me. You forget how much we share when we talk telepathically. I know how you feel about me. As for sex, do they think we are… you know?”

Jaime blushed. “No, I told them we weren’t fucking, but they said what we are doing counts as sex.”

“Oh!” Gabriel blushed bright red, then became thoughtful. “Are you okay with what we're doing? Do you want more?”

Jaime grinned and moved so he lay on top of Gabriel. “I'm very okay with what we're doing. I love what we're doing. Can we do it again?”

“You are such a snot!” Gabriel chewed on his bottom lip. “You know what I mean.”

Jaime smiled, “I do know what you mean. Sex of any kind should be fun. And it can only be fun when you're ready. There is no pressure and no worries, just fun.” Effortlessly, Jaime shifted them so they were now sitting up facing each other with Gabriel’s legs spread open over his thighs. “Now how about some fun?” Reaching down Jaime grabbed Gabriel’s cock, and began stroking.

The boys clung to each other as the pleasure grew, and in less than ten minutes they were panting, sticky and very happy.

That afternoon while Jaime’s baby brother Shawn went with their mum to eat and have a nap the others played hide-n-seek. Gabriel was currently ‘it’, and he searched quietly around camp for his friend and siblings. Spotting a bit of sunny yellow dress Gabriel crept closer. Kamala was curled up behind a bush trying to be as small as possible.

“Found you!” Gabriel cried causing Kamala to shriek and jump up. Before she could get upset, Gabriel scooped his sister up and twirled her around. Soon they were both laughing and out of breath. “Okay, the rules of the game say you get to pick out the first book that we read.” Kamala grinned and ran off to get a book while Gabriel continued to hunt.

Near some boulders Gabriel heard and crunching sound, quickly he climbed on top and looking down found Jaime who grinned up at him sheepishly. “I forget how loud things are on land.”

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Gabriel gave him a sweet kiss and sent him to get a book, and meet them at the hammock. Soon Gabriel heard soft giggling behind one of the tents. Aubrey and Tatiana couldn’t stand to be very far away from each other so they had hidden together. Peeking around the corner of the tent, Gabriel saw Tatiana trying to look serious, in charge, and ‘shushing’ Aubrey. Aubrey just stuck his tongue
out at his sister and she pulled on one of his shoulder length black curls, giggling as it bounced back into place. Gabriel shook his head at their silliness and taking a deep breath leapt in front of the two kids. They squealed and tried to get away, but Gabriel swept them up into his arms and carried them both over to get books.

Soon the five of them were stretched out in the hammock, with Gabriel in the middle, Jaime on one side, Kamala on the other and Aubrey and Tatiana stretched out on top of them. The first book they read was Cinderella, currently Kamala’s favorite story. This version was set in seventeenth-century France. The illustrations were lovely and everyone enjoyed the story.

When it was over Tatiana asked, “Why didn’t Cinderella take care of her stepmother and stepsisters herself; why did she need a boy to help her?”

Gabriel rolled his eyes playfully, “Well, what should she have done?”

Without hesitation Tatiana said, “Poison them! She cooks all their food; how hard would it be to poison them and then be in charge of everything?”

Aubrey snorted. “What if she got caught?”

Tatiana sneered. “Only stupid people get caught.”

Before the argument could take off Gabriel said, “All right, next book.”

The next one was Jaime’s choice; he had picked The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring, a Russian folktale. Whenever Jaime picked a book for Gabriel to read to him it usually wound up having land animals in it.

“There are too many rules in quests,” Aubrey complained as he handed Gabriel his book choice. Gabriel chuckled as he open up Anansi and the Talking Melon, an African fable about a trouble-making spider. Everyone laughed as Gabriel read the story.

Next was Tatiana’s story, Lon Po Po: a Red Riding Hood story from China. “In this story the girl saves herself, no stupid boy needed,” Tatiana explained to Jaime. Gabriel laughed and read the story, enjoying the rich watercolor pictures.

When that story was finished Gabriel pulled out a new book he had, called Edwurd Fudwupper Fibbed Big. It was really funny, and the pictures were wonderful, Gabriel had trouble reading as he was laughing so hard.

“You do great voices when you read,” Kamala said, wiping the tears from her eyes.

Gabriel chuckled. “Thank you.” Using his magic he turned on his tape player and Loreena McKennitt’s voice softly filled the air. Between the music and the breeze rocking the hammock, soon all five kids were asleep.

Vincent looked down at the children sleeping peacefully; they looked so innocent in sleep as if nothing could ever harm them, and yet in only a year’s time Gabriel would be leaving them to battle an evil that most adults wouldn’t even name. Vincent sighed as he felt his husband’s arms encircle him.

“You're worrying again,” Mudiwa said, his voice soft and deep. “Gabriel will be fine. He is strong, clever and powerful, and has a lot of strong allies.”

“And people who love him,” Vincent added, still watching the sleeping children.
“Yes, and people who love him. He will always have us, my love. And he will always need us,” Mudiwa said, tightening his arms around his husband. “Now if we hurry maybe we could have sex without any kids walking in on us.”

Vincent snorted with laughter and turned in his husband’s arms grateful he wasn’t being allowed to wallow in worry. Running his hands over the smooth, dark skin Vincent sighed and looked into lust-filled gray eyes. “Well that could be fun. I did get some new silk scarves; first one to the tent gets to tie the other up?” Vincent asked, his lavender eyes sparkling with mirth as he pushed away and took off running.

Mudiwa growled and ran after his husband. It looked like they were going to have a fun-filled afternoon.

*Books- I did not make sure the copyright date fit in the time line of my story, sorry if this irks anyone.

Cinderella retold and illustrated by K.Y. Craft
The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring retold and illustrated by Ruth Sanderson
Anansi and the Talking Melon retold by Eric Kimmel, illustrated by Janet Stevens
Lon Po Po: a Red Riding Hood story from China translated and illustrated by Ed Young
Edwurd Fudwupper Fibbed Big by Berkeley Breathed
Chapter Fifty-eight

June 20th, 1995. Malfoy Manor. 9am

Severus Snape looked into the tired, cold, blue eyes of Narcissa Malfoy. “Thank you for your help, Severus, and for making sure we are doing well.”

Severus looked at the sleeping blond baby boy Narcissa was holding. Two nights ago she had gone into labor. It had been much harder than the previous two births, and Severus had been worried the potion she had taken to ensure the baby would be magical was killing her. Despite his original protests Severus had made the foul potion for his friend to take. When Narcissa had been six months pregnant she had come to him, and asked him to make it for her. “I will have to take the potion Severus,” Narcissa had said to him. “And I do not trust anyone else to make it.”

Severus had been livid, but in the end made the delicate and possibly lethal potion. Thankfully everything had turned out just fine. The newest Malfoy, Hydrus, was healthy, Narcissa was healing well, and Lucius would hopefully back off for a while. Noticing the time Severus said, “I need to leave, do you require anything else of me?”

Narcissa smiled softly, “Just one more thing: we would like you to be his godfather.”

Severus gave a sharp bow. “I would be honored.”

“The honor is ours, Severus,” said Lucius as he stepped into the room, his voice silky-smooth and cool. “Young Draco has benefited greatly from your bond.”

Severus inclined his head. “Thank you, Lucius. Draco has taken great initiative in preparing for his future. Now if you will excuse me, I do have an appointment.”

“Thank you again, Severus,” Narcissa said as he swept out of the room.

Severus saw Draco waiting for him at the end of the hall. The fifteen-year-old boy held himself in perfect aloofness. If one did not know him well they would think the young man cold and unfeeling. Severus’s eyes softened as he came closer to his godson. Draco’s white-blond hair was loose and fell in perfect order around his shoulders. His Malfoy mask was in place, his features, now favoring his mother’s, had lost the pointed harshness of his childhood. His shoulders were starting to broaden and his body was hard and lean. Severus had begun training him in Hwa Rang Do* shortly after their visit to the gypsies.

After Voldemort’s defeat at the hands of the Potter brat, Severus had decided he would never be vulnerable again. Being a spy for the Dark Lord had been terrifying, and he never wanted to feel that helpless again. He had studied all forms of magic, and then one day he’d wondered what he would do if he lost his wand or was in a room warded to suppress magic. This had lead to seeking out a martial arts instructor. It had taken three months before Severus had found Hwa Rang Do, a Korean commando-style martial art. It was fast, vicious, and if one worked on the energetic levels you could learn to pull in and focus chi. Learning Hwa Rang Do had helped Severus greatly, he had become physically stronger, more agile, and his self-confidence had increased. Learning to control his chi helped him project his intimidating Professor persona, or hide in the shadows undetected.

“Your mother and Hydrus are doing well, Draco,” Severus said softly.
“Thank you for looking after them both. Can we train today?” Draco asked looking out the window.

Severus sighed, he could tell his godson needed to talk with him alone and burn off some stress. Draco had known about the potion, and the possible fatal effects. That his father would risk his mother’s life that way had been the topic of several of their conversations. “I have an errand to run today, but I can come for tea.”

Draco’s eyes got a faraway look in them. “Potions ingredients?”

“Yes, do you need anything?”

Draco hadn’t been back to see the gypsies. Sometimes he wanted to but to see the life his beloved sister could have been living still hurt too much. “No, I don’t think so. I’ll see you for tea; Pansy and Blaise will also be coming.”

“Very well,” Severus said. The three friends were Severus’ hope for the future, for the other snakes in his house, and certainly worth continuing to spy for. He longed to be able to tell Draco and Blaise that their siblings were alive, but despite how good their Occlumency skills were they were still teenagers and emotions along with hormones could still wreak havoc with them. “Draco, Hydrus isn’t going anywhere. He needs you, go and see him.”

Draco closed his eyes; one tear escaped his golden lashes. He sighed as his godfather’s arms wrapped around him. “Thank you, Uncle Severus.”

“Anytime, Draco.” With one last squeeze Severus left, cursing how late it had become.

Draco took a deep breath and schooled his features; he knocked softly on the door. “Come in,” he heard his mother call.

Draco slowly opened the door and looked around the room; it was empty except for his mum and baby brother. “Hello, Mum, can I come in?”

Narcissa smiled at her son. “Yes, of course Draco,” she said, patting the bed.

“You’re looking well.”

“Thank you, but I fear that is not entirely true. Would you like to hold your brother?”

Draco blushed with pleasure. “Yes, please.”

Narcissa smiled and handed the small blue bundle to him. Carefully Draco cradled Hydrus to him. Looking down into the small, round face Draco smiled as almost-invisible lashes fluttered and baby blue eyes locked onto his gray ones. Draco felt tears fill his eyes as his heart instantly let in the small baby, somewhat against his will. Leaning down he kissed the soft new cheek and whispered, “I will always protect you.”

Ottery St. Catchpole. Noon

Severus stalked towards the tent, his hair still damp from his much needed shower, frustrated that he was late. He hated being late! As he came near the tent he heard lovely classical Spanish guitar and crazed drumming. Brow knit in confusion, he carefully entered the tent. Gabriel was sitting on the ground playing the guitar while Aubrey was banging on a small drum and Tatiana was dancing between the tables. Severus flinched when he saw Tatiana’s hair, it was the usually mousy brown -
they dyed it whenever they knew magical people where about because the Malfoy blonde was just too much of a giveaway. Severus knew the color would wash out in three days, but still he missed her lovely white-blonde hair. “Uncle Severus!” Aubrey yelled, causing his sister to stop mid-twirl. Instantly two very excited children pounced on him.

“How are my godchildren today?” Severus asked. He had instantly taken in Aubrey as his godson once he saw him fighting for his life next to his goddaughter three years ago.

Both of them began talking at once. “Your boxes are on the usual table,” Gabriel offered.

Severus nodded his thanks, and began going through potions ingredients while listening to his godchildren chatter at him. One would think he had been gone more than two days. Even though he could purchase ingredients all the time now, he was still a spy and needed to keep his routine lest someone suspect his growing relationship to the gypsy clan.

“Did everything go well?” Gabriel asked during a pause in the chatter.

Severus nodded, “Both Mrs. Malfoy and Hydrus Abraxan Malfoy are well.”

Gabriel wrinkled his nose at the name. “I’m glad. Kamala made a doll for him.” Gabriel held out a soft cloth doll.

“I will pass it on,” Severus said taking the soft toy. The body was green velvety fabric, and it was made in the shape of a star. Carefully Severus set it aside so it wouldn’t get any of the materials on it.

Gabriel absentmindedly stroked Aurora, who was curled around his shoulders. “We are going to India this autumn and then spending the winter and into spring in Asia. Is there anything special I should be looking for?”

Severus snorted at the question, as if there was only one thing he should be keeping an eye out for. “When will you be there?”

“We will be in India by the beginning of September. Ria is due mid-September and she wants to get settled before she goes into labor. In October we will move on. I know we have shows planned in Bali, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Korea and throughout China.”

Severus thought for a moment. “I will make you a list of things to keep an eye out for. Sounds like you will have a lot of fun.”

Gabriel smiled, “I’m really looking forward to it. I haven’t ever been that far east before.”

Before Severus could answer, Adonis walked into the tent. “Lunch is ready. Oh, hello Severus, how are you today?”

“I’m well, thank you,” Severus said with a smile teasing the corner of his lips.

Gabriel rolled his eyes, and took Tatiana and Aubrey by the hands. “I’m going to get these two cleaned up for lunch and then I’ll be back. Adonis, will you please stay in case Severus needs any help?”

“I will be happy to make sure Severus gets everything he wants,” Adonis said with a purr.

Severus said goodbye to Aubrey and Tatiana without looking away from his lover. Gabriel rolled his eyes again and decided that lunch sounded really good right about now.
Once they had left Severus drew his wand and cast privacy and silencing charms. “When were you going to tell me about Asia?”

“We just decided last night,” Adonis said soothingly.

“I can’t Apparate that far.”

“I know; I’ll miss you.” Adonis smiled shyly. “I do during the school term anyway, but at least then I see you every few weeks.”

“I’m sure there are others…” Severus began.

“No, there are not.”

Severus blinked, then stalked forward; he grabbed Adonis roughly pulling him flush against his body. One hand buried in Adonis’ soft golden hair, the other grasped his hip. “I have had two horrible days. I’ve watched an old friend go through a difficult birth, which could have killed her due to the potion I made for her. I’m exhausted and more than anything I want to fuck until we both can’t move and then sleep for a day. Now not only do I find out I won’t be able to see any of you for months, but that you expect me to believe that you aren’t seeing other people,” Severus hissed dangerously into his ear.

“Your belief is not necessary for the truth to be real,” Adonis said soothingly. “When you came back the second summer, I no longer sought out other company.”

Severus tightened his grip causing Adonis to gasp in pain and desire. Severus didn’t know what to do. He wasn’t good at relationships and there were so many reasons not to get into a relationship with Adonis, but he wanted to, desperately. He wanted someone who was just his. Someone who cared for him and waited for him to come home, maybe someone to love him? Leaning in closer Severus sucked at nipped at Adonis’ ear as he whispered, “Do you want to be mine, Adonis? Should I claim you?”

Adonis melted into his arms and groaned at the words spoken in that deep, chocolaty voice. “Will you be mine also, Severus? Or will I have to share you with others?”

“There are no others,” Severus snarled as he fiercely claimed Adonis’ pink lips. They devoured each other, lips, tongues and teeth battling. Severus brought both hands down onto Adonis’ firm round arse and squeezed. Adonis gasped and placed his hands on Severus’ shoulders and jumped up wrapping his legs around Severus’ waist and bringing their hard erections together. Both men groaned and their kissing became even more frantic, as fingers worked to undo buttons. Soon their naked chests were pressed together, forcing them to break the kiss as they gasped in pleasure.

Taking the opportunity Severus looked around and saw an empty table. Walking over effortlessly as Adonis held onto him, Severus reached the table and laid the golden man onto it. Reaching down, Severus began to undo the buttons on Adonis’ trousers. “I’m going to fuck you so hard you’ll have trouble sitting down,” Severus said his voice rough and rich causing Adonis to shiver in pleasure as he spoke. “I’m going to shove my cock so far up your arse that when I come my seed will mark you and stay inside of you forever.”

“Yes,” Adonis gasped reaching out and snagging a small bottle from his trouser pocket before undoing more buttons on Severus’ robe. “I want you, Severus. I want you to fuck me, claim me, make me yours.”

Severus snarled and leaned down to kiss his lover when a sharp pain ran through his arm. “Bloody
buggering hell!"

Standing up he gripped his left forearm and looked at Adonis in concern. Certainly Adonis had seen the Dark Mark on his arm, but they had never discussed it nor the fact that he was answering the Dark Lord’s summons.

Adonis ran his hands roughly over his face, and then sat up and began re-buttoning Severus robes. “When you come back, I expect you to fuck me like you promised. And once we have recovered I’m going to fuck you until you come screaming my name, and I’m going to pull out of your tight arse and wank until I come letting my seed cover that bastard’s mark, so you can always remember who you really belong to.”

Severus was too shocked to say anything. Adonis leaned forward and kissed him softly. “All buttoned up, let me just fix your hair.” Adonis said running his fingers through the soft strands. “I’ll tell Gabriel you weren’t able to finish going through everything. It will be waiting for you when you get back, as will I. No go! I doubt Voldy is very understanding.”

Severus choked. “Voldy?”

Adonis waved a hand carelessly. “Gabriel started that. Anyway, I'll see you soon?” Adonis asked raising his golden eyes to his lover's black ones. Severus could see the worry and hope in the beautiful eyes.

“As soon as possible,” Severus said with a soft smile and he kissed Adonis’ pink, kiss-swollen lips softly before quickly leaving the tent, dropping the spells as he left.

Riddle Manor.

Severus walked into the dirty, dilapidated building and straight to the Dark Lord. Gracefully he knelt in front of the snake-faced man and kissed the hem of his robe. Severus breathed slowly as he hid his nervousness. He was the only one there; hopefully nothing really horrible would happen.

Finally the Dark Lord spoke, his voice high and accented with a serpent's hiss. “Sseveruss, my loyal sservant, so good of you to come to me. Luciuss arrived earlier and told me of the birth of his sson. He hass pledged him to me. He also told me that you will be hiss godfather.”

“Yes, my lord; Lucius and Narcissa have honored me,” Severus answered humbly.

“I want you to pledge the boy to me alsso,” the Dark Lord hissed menacingly.

Severus thought quickly and then made a vow. “I am marked by you my lord. I am owned, and I pledge my godson Hydrus Abraxan Malfoy will follow in my footsteps.” Severus held his breath hoping his subservient tone would keep the Dark Lord for looking too deeply at his words.

“You pleasse me, Sseveruss. Pleasse rise; I have another matter to discusss with you.” Severus stood and waited patiently for the Dark Lord to continue. “Luciuss told me of the potion you made to ensure hiss wife had a magical child. Three other of my followerss are expecting children; you will make the ssame potion for them.”

“As you wish, my lord. Do you know how far along they are? The potion is time sensitive.”

“Two of them just informed me of the pregnancy, sso no more than three months. The other is due within the next three weekss.”
“I will begin preparing for the potion immediately, unfortunately the woman due to give birth soon is too far along and the potion will not work on her. I am sorry, my lord,” Severus said bowing his head.

“Very well; but you have disspleased me, Sseveruss. You should have told me of the potion yourself. Crucio!”

Two hours later Severus was finally allowed to leave. All he wanted to do was get back to Adonis, but he knew he needed to tell Albus what had happened first. As he neared the door of Riddle manor he heard a low snigger. “Show yourself, Crouch,” Severus snarled.

The small man slunk into the light, and licked his lip compulsively. His silver fingers twitched as he held up Mad Eye Moody’s magical eye. Resurrection spells required a lot of sacrifice. “Hello, Severus, having a pleasant afternoon?”

Severus glared at the odd little man. “I was until now; do you want something?”

“No, no, I’m fine. It has just been quiet around here. Our lord is busy with his great plans so I have been trying to keep out of his way. I wouldn’t wish to disturb him.”

“Of course, maybe I should bring you a book next time I come,” Severus sneered.

“Oh, that would be lovely! Thank you, Severus,” Crouch said happily.

Severus rolled his eyes as he left. Sarcasm was wasted on the insane.

Headmaster’s office, Hogwarts. 4pm

Severus sat sipping the tea the Headmaster had foisted upon him, trying not to let the mild tremors passing through his body show. He had just recounted his time with the Dark Lord, including the potion for the pregnant women and one he was to make to use in attacks.

“Well, Severus, this is most unfortunate news,” Dumbledore said in a kindly, wise voice. “You can’t alter too many potions, or Voldemort will stop trusting your loyalty.” Dumbledore popped a sherbet lemon into his mouth and stroked his beard in thought. “His followers have chosen their fate; go ahead and make the pregnancy potion correctly. Is there a way to alter the combative potions so they work a more slowly, giving our people time to get help?”

Severus clenched his hand into a fist. The old man wielded people like chess pieces. While Severus understood things needed to be done for the ‘greater good’, Dumbledore wasn’t the one brewing potions which could kill women as they gave birth! Taking a slow, deep breath he thought about Albus’ question. “Yes, I can make the potion react more slowly. A general antidote is fairly simple to make, and won’t stop the potion but will significantly slow down the effects. Maybe Kingsley can announce that all Aurors need to keep a vial on them at all times?”

Albus beamed in his proud, grandfatherly way. “Wonderful, Severus! That should work out perfectly. I do hope Fudge won’t be a problem. Despite all the disappearances and my assurances he still does not believe that Voldemort has returned.” Dumbledore sighed in resignation and popped another sherbet lemon into his mouth. “Has Voldemort said anything about Harry?”

Severus shook his head. “He is searching for the boy but has no leads. He’s irritated, but not letting on how much he wants the boy. He is currently planning other things. I know there are key people he wants to control. Other than that, he hasn’t confided in me.”
“This is disappointing news. I need to know more about what he is planning!” Albus got up and began pacing his office. Severus quirked an eyebrow; he had never seen Albus so agitated. “We need Harry Potter, he is the key to defeating Voldemort. I cannot do this without him.”

“Albus, he’s just a boy. What can he do? It would take years to train him properly,” Severus sneered.

“No! You don’t understand. He is the key. He must be on our side, Severus we need to get Harry soon. He must follow our plans, he must be fully on the side of the Light or all is lost,” Dumbledore ranted.

Severus just stared, he knew that Dumbledore used people, but to use a child in this way wasn’t right. He had seen the Headmaster treat all the other Houses better than Slytherin, just as he had when Severus was in school. This almost assured the Slytherins followed the Dark Lord, while the others were willing to fight on the side of the Light. Severus’ eyes narrowed, was that really what the Headmaster was doing; was he preparing the students at this school for war?

“I’m sorry, Severus,” Dumbledore said, interrupting Severus’ thoughts. “I’m just tired and frustrated. We need to find Harry Potter as soon as we can. Well, if there is nothing else, Severus?”

“No, Headmaster; that is all,” Severus said, standing to leave.

“Have a lovely evening, Severus. You of all people deserve friends to be with.” Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled as he watched his spy leave in a huff.

Severus snarled as he hurriedly left the Headmaster’s office. How did that infuriating man know everything? And what about the children, was the Headmaster manipulating them into the roles he felt they should fulfill by what House they were placed in as eleven-year-old children? Severus needed to talk to Adonis.

*Hydrus is a constellation, it means ‘water serpent’.*
Chapter Fifty-nine

Severus moaned as he Apparated to Ottery St. Catchpole, his body trembled, no longer able to mask what he had been through. Slowly he walked towards the bright tents. Gabriel was lying in the hammock with Hedwig sitting on his stomach. Severus smiled as he watched the young man pet the white feathers as he talked to his owl.

“Good evening, Gabriel.”

“Hello, Severus, Adonis is in the big bathroom waiting for you,” Gabriel said his green eyes filled with concern.

“I’ll join him in just a moment, would it be an imposition to have Hedwig deliver a letter for me?” Severus asked as he walked closer.

Gabriel smiled and held out a clipboard, parchment, a quill, and ink. Severus shook his head, and took the offered materials. Once he had written a short note to Draco letting him know that he was all right and would see him tomorrow, Severus turned to the snowy owl. “Hedwig would you please deliver this letter to Draco Malfoy at Malfoy Manor?”

Hedwig gave a happy hoot and held out her leg. After the letter was securely attached she turned and nibbled Gabriel’s ear before taking off into the sunset.

“Thank you, Gabriel.”

“You’re welcome, Severus. Now off with you, there is a handsome man and better yet a hot bath waiting for you,” Gabriel said with a cheeky grin.

Severus smirked and walked towards the forest-decorated bus. Turning, he asked, “Gabriel how do you always seem to know everything?”

Gabriel laughed lightly. “I don’t know everything in fact I know very little compared to others. I just guess well.”

Severus raised an eyebrow in disbelief, turned and went to his lover and the promised bath.

Adonis sighed with relief when the bathroom door opened and Severus stepped into the steamy room. Quickly he rose and went to his hurting lover. Without a word he handed Severus several of his own potions and began unbuttoning the dirty black robes. Once Severus was naked, Adonis led him to the bath and helped him into it. Gently he began to wash the lean, pale body before him. His heart ached at the soft trembling and the bruises marring the milky white skin. It took a while but finally Severus relaxed into the hot water as the potions began to heal the damage that had been inflicted on him.

Obsidian eyes softened as they locked with Adonis’ concerned golden orbs. “I need your help.”

“Well, whatever you need, just tell me,” Adonis answered softly.

“I was forced to promise my new godson to the man who owns me,” Severus said, and sighed.
deeply. “I was thinking of you when I made that vow. I need you to claim me tonight. I need you to make me yours so my vow can be true. I need to protect Hydrus; please help me.” Severus was shaking again, he hated being vulnerable, he hated asking for help, and he hated being weak.

Adonis’ eyes where shining with unshed tears. Leaning forward he softly kissed Severus’ soft pink lips. “I would love nothing more than for you to be mine, Severus Tobias Snape. Let’s get you out of this bath.”

Severus nodded and let Adonis help him out of the bath sighing as he was dried with a soft, thick towel. Adonis wrapped him into a lush terry-cloth bathrobe and set a pair of wool-lined slippers on the floor for his feet. “Come on, Severus, let’s go to my tent.”

Severus simply nodded and let himself be led to the warm, orange tent. His body still ached, and he wasn’t looking forward to the rough, wild sex they needed to have. Adonis had topped before, and normally they both had fun no matter who topped or how wild and fierce their fucking became. Severus was startled out of his thoughts as Adonis guided him to sit down on the white leather couch.

“I’ll be back in just a moment,” Adonis said as he caressed Severus’ cheek.

Severus’ brow wrinkled as he watched Adonis walk away, What could he possibly need? When Adonis came back he was holding a large tray, which smelled heavenly.

“The kids made dinner tonight, but Gabriel assures me everything is perfectly safe to eat,” Adonis said as he set down the silver tray. “We have vegetable soup with dumplings, peach pie and vanilla ice cream. I hope that’s all right?”

Severus smiled a soft, sad smile. “This is perfect, my mum used to make me dumpling soup, and once when my father was away she made peach pie for me.” Severus laughed as he remembered. “We stayed up all night eating the pie. My mum told me wonderful stories about Hogwarts and the wizarding world, stories my father would never let her tell.”

Adonis smiled, pleased that Severus was reminded of happy times. Placing a tray he kept next to the sofa over Severus’ lap, he handed him his dinner. Severus took a cautious taste of the soup; it was delicious. As he looked into the bowl he smiled, it was obvious Aubrey and Tatiana had helped cut the vegetables.

Adonis grinned. “They are both so proud that they helped make dinner telling everyone they cut the veggies. As if we couldn’t tell!” Adonis held up his spoon, which had a large piece of mangled carrot on it. They ate in comfortable silence and soon their plates were empty.

“Do you want any more?” Adonis asked as he gathered up the dishes.

“The pie is certainly a temptation, but I’ll stop,” Severus answered, his belly pleasantly full.

Adonis only smiled and took the dishes away. When he came back he held out a strong, golden hand, which Severus took and let himself be led to the bedroom.

Severus was surprised when Adonis gently maneuvered him onto the bed and kissed him softly. Severus opened his mouth to the sweet tongue, which caressed his lips begging for entrance. Rough hands eased the robe over his shoulders baring his body to his lover’s gaze. “You’re so beautiful, Severus,” Adonis whispered as his hands lovingly touched Severus’ chest, rubbing teasingly over his soft pink nipples pulling a moan from the stoic man.

Adonis leded down and added his mouth to the exploration of his lover. Soft kisses, and teasing
licks slowly overwhelmed Severus’ senses as his lover determinedly touched and kissed every inch of his body. Desperate, lust-filled noises were pulled from his mouth as the gentle touches continued. Severus didn’t think he could take much more as Adonis laved his hipbones and silky golden hair brushed against his neglected cock. “Adonis,” he half snarled, half gasped, “you need to claim me, own me. Stop teasing and fuck me into the bed.”

Adonis slowly lifted his golden eyes and moved up so they were face to face and his body covered Severus’ as much as possible. “One master rules you through guilt and fear, the other through pain and fear. When I claim you, Severus Snape – and I have every intention of doing so – it will be with love and kindness. You will surrender to me as I make love to your sexy body. Willingly you will become mine, not out of fear, but from pure desire.”

Severus shuddered as Adonis’ rich tenor flowed over him, embedding the words into his very being. He wanted to say something, longed for his gift of wit and sarcasm to defend him from feeling too much, from giving himself to this man and risk being destroyed by him, but no words came. Instead his mouth was filled by Adonis’ tongue. Slowly he was kissed breathless as his mouth was thoroughly explored and tasted.

Adonis smirked at the quivering man beneath him. Sliding down the lean, smooth body Adonis rested between strong legs breathing onto the twitching, leaking cock. Slowly Adonis stuck his tongue out and licked the head of Severus’ prick taking all of the precome there; Severus keened softly. Adonis smiled up at him and, keeping his eyes locked with his lover's, he slowly and delicately began licking the silken shaft. Severus’ gasps and moans drove him crazy making his own cock ache with desire.

Reaching out, Adonis grabbed the bottle of lube Severus had made for them and slicked a finger. Barely touching the puckered opening Adonis circled Severus’ entrance, reveling in feeling it twitch under his touch. Adonis leisurely dipped his finger inside his lover, opening him up and caressing him with long, unhurried strokes. Severus moaned and tried to push himself onto Adonis’ finger, but Adonis held his hip firmly keeping the impatient man in place.

Just as he slid a second finger into his lover Adonis drew the long cock into his mouth and sucked. Severus arched and moaned, causing Adonis to smile around his mouthful. Languidly he sucked and licked on Severus' tasty prick as he fingered the tight opening, stretching it to accept his cock. Soon a third finger was added, and Severus moaned his appreciation. Adonis hummed around his mouthful drawing out Severus' pleasure as he sucked lightly and made sure not to rub Severus’ prostate. When he felt his lover was relaxed enough to accept him, Adonis carefully removed his fingers.

Severus opened his eyes as the probing fingers and hot wet mouth left his body. Adonis smiled down at his lover as he removed his clothing. Severus lay on his back limbs sprawled across the bed. Raven black hair spread out over the mint green sheets framing Severus’ flushed face.

Once he was naked Adonis moved back between the strong thighs, enjoying the way Severus’ dark hair tickled his skin. Placing a pillow beneath Severus’ hips, Adonis positioned himself at the puckered entrance and carefully pushed in. It took every ounce of self-control to fill his lover slowly and not pound into the willing body beneath him. Once he was fully seated inside the hot, tight arse Adonis stopped, allowing both of them to adjust as Severus wrapped his legs around him. Leaning down, Adonis took Severus’ lips in a sweet kiss as he began to thrust with the same slow, gentle pace he’d used all night.

Adonis shifted subtly with each stroke until Severus arched, gasping. Deliberately Adonis rubbed against Severus' prostate with every stroke.

“Fuck me, damn you!” Severus snarled as he reached down and dug his fingers into Adonis’ round
Adonis gripped the sheets tightly as intense pleasure tore through his body. God, he loved having his arse played with!

“No, I will not fuck you,” Adonis whispered hotly into Severus' ear. “I’m going to slowly move in and out of your willing body. I’m going to bring you pleasure that you have never dreamed of, and once you finally surrender to me, my love, you will come harder than you have ever come in your life and it will be on my cock alone.”

Severus gasped, too overwhelmed to answer. With every languid thrust of Adonis’ cock the pleasure inside his body grew, yet it never felt like enough. Until finally Severus closed his eyes, and hung onto his lover letting go of the need to control; letting go of what he wanted or thought was best; letting go and trusting Adonis to take care of him.

Adonis moaned as he felt Severus surrender to him. “Yes, my love; that’s it – give yourself to me. Let me take care of you.”

Severus whimpered as Adonis whispered the loving words into his neck. Despite the sedate pace of their lovemaking Severus felt his balls tighten and heat pool in his belly. Merlin, he was so close! And every stroke brought him closer. Never had he felt his orgasm build so completely, it didn’t burst out of him, but rather washed over him filling him with bliss. Arching, Severus screamed as hot come flowed from his untouched cock and his body shook with pleasure.

Adonis didn’t speed up as the hot channel tightened and gripped his cock. He managed to keep the gentle pace even as his body convulsed, filling his lover with hot seed as he shouted Severus’ name; Adonis’ arms shook as he held himself up, not wanting to crush his lover.

Severus smiled up at Adonis and pulled him down cradling, the golden man close to him, running his hands up and down the sweating back.

They fell asleep wrapped in each other’s arms, both unwilling to let go.

June 21st, morning

Severus awoke slowly, as the morning sun gently illuminated the tent. He was blissfully warm and perfectly relaxed. Adonis’ head was pillowed on his chest, his soft breath caressing Severus’ nipple with every exhale. Severus reached up and ran his long fingers through Adonis’ straight silky hair. Last night had been amazing, it had never occurred to him that gentleness and love would be the way Adonis possessed him. It certainly had worked – no one else had ever treated Severus that way, not since his mum had been alive.

Adonis sighed in his sleep and tried to burrow deeper into Severus’ body. Severus smirked, already their bodies were wrapped around each other, there was very little they could do to get any closer. He felt Adonis slowly wake up and then stiffen slightly before settling back down.

“Good morning.” Severus' voice was rough and soft with sleep.

“Good morning love. How are you feeling?”

The question carried a note of insecurity, which puzzled Severus. Shouldn’t he be the one who was feeling insecure right now? He was the one who had been in the vulnerable position last night. “I feel really good, and you?”
Adonis smiled against Severus’ warm chest, the sparse black hair tickling his lips. “Brilliant, I feel just brilliant. Did I give you what you needed?”

Severus paused and thought about this. The vow was a soft, subtle thing, but it did feel complete; Adonis claiming him and loving him last night had been perfect. Severus’ eyes shot open – Adonis loved him! Oh, Merlin! That’s why he sounds insecure; the way Adonis had touched him last night had left no doubt as to how he felt. Severus tightened his arms, holding Adonis closer. “It was exactly what I needed, thank you.”

Adonis melted into his lover’s embrace. “You’re welcome, anytime.”

Severus smirked and was about to comment when a voice called out. “Are you decent in there?”

Adonis sighed and checked to make sure they were covered. “Yes, Gabriel, come on in.”

Gabriel stepped in carrying a large tray. “I’ve brought you breakfast. There’s orange juice, tea, omelets and toast.”

Severus tried not to blush, he was completely naked under the sheet and that only came up to his waist. The room smelled faintly of sex and Adonis had a rather large love bite where his neck and shoulder joined. Adonis, on the other hand sat up happily, not in the least concerned about his nudity.

“It smells wonderful! Who cooked?”

“Elena and Soto made the omelets. I put together the toast and tea.” Setting the tray down on the bed Gabriel asked, “Do you need anything else?”

Severus looked over the tray and seeing the marmalade said, “No; thank you for bringing us breakfast.”

“No problem.” Gabriel smiled.

“Everything looks wonderful Gabriel,” Adonis said.

“Well, I’ll see you both when you’re done. The bathroom should be free by then.”

Severus shook his head as he watched Gabriel walk away. He had always been a very private person, but that wasn’t an option with this group. They were too close and open with each other.

“Oh, by the way,” Gabriel called out. There was laughter in his voice. “Silencing charms or gags… we don’t care which, but you two need to pick one.”

Adonis groaned and buried his face in his hands. “You’re going to Apparate from here, aren’t you?” He asked Severus, not looking forward to the teasing he would have to endure alone.

Severus snorted and picked up a teacup. “Without a doubt.” Adonis laughed and had begun preparing his own cup of tea when Severus said, “I want to talk to you about something.”

“Go ahead,” Adonis answered, a little nervous as to what his lover would say.

“I have begun to question Dumbledore’s motives. I think he may be manipulating people and worse, children, far more than I realize,” Severus said thoughtfully.

Adonis turned serious golden eyes to his lover. “Tell me.”
So Severus did; he told about his experiences at Hogwarts, and how even now almost all the staff and the Headmaster discriminated against Slytherins. He talked about the different times he’d heard Albus ranting about needing Harry Potter to win this war for the Wizarding world. He told Adonis all his doubt and concerns. When Severus was done he looked up and saw a hard glint in his lover's eyes that he had never seen before. Tension and anger seemed to radiate from the normally jovial man. “Adonis, are you all right?”

Adonis gave Severus a strained smile. “I’m fine. It sounds like you have a right to be concerned. I have no idea what you can do, except continue to fight for and protect your Slytherins and yourself. If it becomes too much you can always hide out with us.”

Severus smiled softly. “I agree I don’t see what else I can do at this time. As for hiding here with you, while the benefits are certainly worth considering, I wouldn’t want to put you in danger when Dumbledore found me.”

The icy glint came back into Adonis’ eyes and he grabbed Severus' pale hand. “You would be surprised what we are capable of hiding. If you ever need a safe place, know you can come here.”

Severus quirked an eyebrow at this fierce declaration. He did not want to upset his lover more, and now he was rather curious to know what Adonis meant. He asked: “What have you all been hiding, love?”

Adonis blinked realizing he hadn’t meant to say so much. Smirking he leaned in to whisper in his lover's ear. “Well, obviously if the Wizarding world knew how many glorious, well-hung men there are here we would never be left alone.”

Severus looked at Adonis with the piercing gaze he gave his students when he knew they were lying to him. “I seriously doubt that is what you meant.”

Adonis looked at Severus with pleading eyes. “It isn’t my secret to tell, please don’t ask me to. Can knowing that I would tell you, and I trust you to keep it, be enough?”

Severus sneered lightly. “Can this secret hurt you?”

Adonis shook his head. “No.”

“Will you get in touch with me if you need help?” he asked, resigned to the fact that he wasn’t going to find out anything.

“Always,” Adonis said as he kissed Severus' pink lips. Looking at the clock he saw there was at least an hour before people started showing up. Just enough time, he thought as he pushed Severus back on the bed.

7pm

Gabriel watched his future classmates. He had congratulated Cedric on winning the Tri-wizard tournament and graduating. Ron had brought his dorm mate Neville, who was really shy, nice and rather cute. Ginny brought a girl one year older than her named Hermione who incessantly asked questions. Gabriel smiled he liked the inquisitive girl. There were also more kids from the other Houses who had been brought by friends, including several Muggle-born students. Gabriel was glad he was getting to meet more of his classmates before going to school with them next year.

Turning around, he found the twins who were huddled together whispering, which was never good
for anyone. Walking over he said, “Hello Fred, George, mind if I sit down?”

“Please, mate…”

“… go right ahead.”

Gabriel pulled a large velvet bag from his pocket before sitting down. “Lately I have been feeling like I don’t take enough risks.” This got raised eyebrows from both twins. “So I’m thinking about investing some of my savings. I have two thousand Galleons to invest. I was thinking of helping a small business get off the ground. Do you know anyone who would be interested?”

The gleeful grins which crossed the twins’ faces would have scared most people, but Gabriel only laughed. Once negotiations were finished Gabriel was a silent investor in Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes. He had also passed on the recipe for an ointment that would heal the damage caused by a blood quill. All he would tell the twins was that Defense Against the Dark Arts was going to be really bad this year.
Sixty

Chapter Sixty

November 5th, 1995. Thailand

Gabriel smiled as he took in the market; it was midmorning and things were just getting started. All of the vendors had arranged their wares to entice those who passed by, the sent of exotic spices filled the humid air. Gabriel took Tatiana and Aubrey’s hands and began to slowly explore. Mudiwa and Vincent were right behind them, their focus on getting things to sell later at their shows. Even though Aubrey and Tatiana kept him busy, Gabriel missed Kamala; she along with Ria, Naveen, and Talha, their new baby boy, had stayed in their village in India. They planned on being there until Kamala’s birthday in December and would then fly to meet them in Japan. Ria wanted time to recuperate and spend time with her mum and dad, as they were both getting older.

Gabriel had loved the weeks they had spent in the village with Naanii and Naanaa. He had helped with the chores and spent countless time playing in the jungle. Kamala glowed under the strong love of her extended family. Both he and Kamala had been able to watch Talha being born, it was amazing and when Gabriel held him for the first time, he kissed him on the forehead, as he had his other three siblings, and promised to love and protect him always. Talha now had a faint kiss mark just under his hairline.

Kamala had given Gabriel a long list of things she wanted him to get for her ninth birthday and winter solstice since she wasn’t able to come with them. Last week they had gone to Bali, which had been so tranquil. Not only was the island beautiful, but also the spirituality, which permeated every aspect of their culture, gave Bali a dreamlike energy. Gabriel and Vincent were blissed out the entire time they had been there.

“Gabriel, look, look!” Tatiana squealed pulling him to a stall with beautiful handmade dolls. There were lovely collector's dolls with fine delicate features and elaborate costumes, but the soft baby dolls had captured Tatiana’s attention. They had pale skin and brightly painted faces. The doll she was currently looking at had long black hair made from silk yarn, and a bright pink dress with gold paisleys. Tatiana softly stroked the silk dress and then turned pleading gray eyes to her big brother.

Gabriel groaned and looked around for help, but his Dad and Baba were looking at jewelry three stalls away. Sighing, Gabriel looked back. “Tatiana we just got to the market. Maybe there is something you will want more. I think we should keep looking.”

Gray eyes filled with tears, as her fingers began to play with the bracelet on her wrist, the one that every member of her family wore. The one given to her on the day she had been adopted. “Gabriel, I love her.”

Gabriel closed his eyes; he was far too easy to play. Those big gray eyes, and playing with the bracelet, she knew that always got to him. “Okay, let me pay for her.”

Tatiana squealed in happiness and clutched the doll to her, patiently waiting while Gabriel paid.

Reaching the table where their fathers were Gabriel began looking over the jewelry. Sometimes he could pick out items the teens would want, which his fathers had overlooked.
Mudiwa smiled as his children joined them and chuckled. “Cherub, you have already bought her something?”

Gabriel sighed, about to defend himself when Tatiana spoke up: “Oh, Baba, isn’t she the most beautiful doll you have ever seen! Gabriel is the bestest big brother, I love him,” she finished solemnly looking as serious as a five year old could. Gabriel gestured to his sister as if to say, ‘there, see! you say no to that’.

Mudiwa shook his head in amusement. “She is a very lovely doll, what are you going to name her?”

“I’m not sure yet, I think I need to get to know her better,” Tatiana said.

Aubrey rolled his eyes; sisters were so weird. “Can we keep looking around?” he asked. Jewelry was boring.

“Yes,” Vincent answered. “I want to look around before purchasing anything.” Nodding to the vendor they left. He had lovely pieces, and good prices; they would be back.

“I think you should get some of the ear cuffs,” Gabriel said.

“I agree,” Mudiwa said, “especially the magical creatures; I think they would sell very well.” They chatted about the different things that were for sale, buying some items as they went along. The quantity and quality of plant material was amazing; Severus was going to be very happy this summer.

They were just discussing if they should stop for lunch when Aubrey spotted a booth he wanted to look at. “Gabriel,” he said tugging on his brother’s sleeve. “I want to look over there.”

Gabriel smiled at his exuberant brother. “Give me just a second, okay?” Aubrey nodded keeping his eyes locked on where he wanted to go. Turning to talk to his fathers he saw his Dad looking over a table of gems and his Baba staring at an empty alleyway. Gabriel rolled his eyes. “Baba, I’m going to take Aubrey and Tatiana to look at another booth and then we will go to the big fountain where we saw the little restaurant with the blue door. Why don’t you meet us there?”

For a moment Mudiwa looked a little concerned and guilty, but then he looked back at the alley and at his husband bent over to examine something at the back of the table. “We won’t be too long.”

Gabriel snorted in disbelief. “Come on, guys, let’s go over to that booth and then go and get some lunch.”

“Yay!” Squealed Tatiana.

“Come on!” shouted Aubrey as he pulled his big brother to the booth. Gabriel just laughed and let himself be led over to a booth filled with kites. They were amazing and there were so many different kinds. There were basic diamond-shaped kites, along with boxes, animals, circles with long tails, and some odd-shaped ones, which Gabriel had never seen before.

For several minutes the three siblings stood and admired the beautiful kites. Finally Aubrey pointed up. “I want that one please, Gabriel.”

Gabriel smiled and looked at the kite. It was a beautiful bright turquoise dragon, painted onto a vibrant yellow silk kite. The diamond-shaped kite looked bigger than Aubrey! Gabriel looked at his brother and sighed, large purple eyes gazed hopefully up at him as a curl of black hair fluttered across his mocha cheek. “Okay, but you can’t play with it until we get back to the buses.”
“I’ll be good,” Aubrey said as he bounced lightly on the balls of his feet.

Slowly they walked through the market, headed towards the fountain and the restaurant with the blue door. Now and then they would stop and look at the different booths. They bought quite a bit from one of the spice vendors. The bags of brightly colored spices were very tempting, but unlike the other spice vendors, these spice had a lovely clean fragrance indicating their freshness. The next booth they stopped at displayed crystals of many different types. They were lovely, and Gabriel planned to bring his fathers here after lunch. Aubrey and Tatiana were looking at a small table next to the crystal display. Two young boys sat there selling their own crystals. The man smiled at them indulgently, and Gabriel guessed this was their father. The crystals the boys were selling were smaller and rough, instead of polished.

It looked like both Tatiana and Aubrey had found a crystal they wanted so Gabriel went over to pay, when something caught his attention. The boys had an egg-shaped rock of brilliant white with flame red flecks in it. Gabriel felt it calling to him. Smiling at the boys he pointed to the blue stone Tatiana wanted, the green stone Aubrey wanted, and the egg, and with the little Thai he knew asked, “How much?”

The two boys beamed at getting a sale. “Ten baht.”

Gabriel looked at the rocks again, that was about fifteen pence. Gabriel shook his head, the boys were still smiling, haggling was part of the process, and they expected less. Reaching into his pocket Gabriel pulled out two white bills, each worth 1000 baht for a total of thirty pounds. The boys’ eyes widened and their father sputtered.

“Oh, okay, grab your rocks,” Gabriel said to his siblings hoping they could walk away before the man began to argue. Reaching out he picked up the egg, and placed it into the pack he wore on his back, grateful for the charms on it making it light and much larger on the inside. Aubrey and Tatiana waved as they walked away. “La-gon, khorb koon” *

Soon they were seated at a table in front of the restaurant where their fathers would be meeting them eventually. The sound of the fountain was soothing, after the intensity of the market. They sipped on cold drinks. Tatiana and Aubrey had pineapple and mango juice, and Gabriel was enjoying an iced Thai tea, which was a sweetened chai with milk. They talked about their morning and where they were going next while munching on fried tofu with a peanut sauce. Gabriel was giving his father ten more minutes, and then they would order lunch without them.

Mudiwa watched his children walk away then turned to look at his husband. Vincent was still bent over the table, the dark blue sarong he wore tight against his arse. Mudiwa stifled a groan as Vincent stood up, the white tee shirt so tight Mudiwa could see the play of muscles underneath. Looking back at the alley again Mudiwa walked over to his lover.

“Vincent, I want to show you something,” Mudiwa purred taking his hand.

Vincent quirked an eyebrow and allowed himself to be led to the edge of the market. Suddenly Mudiwa spun Vincent around and forced him into the empty alley. He held his surprised lover firmly against his chest as he focused his thoughts and magic creating the illusion of an empty alley.

“I’m going to fuck that sweet little arse you have been teasing me with all morning. Right here I’m going to take you, where only a thin veil of illusion will separate us from the crowd out there.” Vincent shuddered against him. “You like that, don’t you, the thought of being caught, of all of these strangers watching me pound into you.”
Vincent moaned, “Yes, please.” It wasn’t often that they played this kind of game, but it was a kink of Vincent’s, public sex and being dominated. Vincent gasped as Mudiwa forcefully turned him around and pushed him down over several wooden crates. Hands roughly ran over his stomach and chest rubbing and pinching his nipples. Vincent wanted to cry out as pleasure rushed through his body.

“Hush love, they can still hear you. I cannot stop that, and if they hear you they will come and look, so you will have to be quiet.” Mudiwa viciously twisted his lover’s nipples before pulling back. Reaching down Mudiwa grabbed the dark blue sarong and pulled it over Vincent’s slim hips exposing his lovely arse incased in blue satin pants. Mudiwa groped the firm round cheeks, and then roughly pulled the pants down exposing his lover to his touch.

Knowing he didn’t have much time, Mudiwa reached into his trouser pocket, where he had tucked a tube of lubricant, just in case. Pulling his trousers down just enough to free his aching prick, Mudiwa coated a finger and slid it into Vincent. “Hush, love, don’t make any noise or we will be discovered.”

Vincent bit back a moan, as Mudiwa quickly prepared him. He wasn’t use to having to be this quiet. Normally he was very vocal and this was torture. Gasping, Vincent leaned forward as his back arched onto the blunt head of his lover's cock pressing against his entrance. In one smooth move Mudiwa’s thick cock penetrated him. “So good,” Vincent moaned softly.

“Yes,” Mudiwa said as he began to move in and out of his lover hitting his prostate. He started out with fast, hard strokes which left both of them panting and moaning softly. “You’re so hot and tight; you feel so good,” Mudiwa said as he bent over Vincent’s back and thrust into him. “You love it when I fuck you, don’t you? Are you watching the people walking by? Does it get you hot thinking they could see you being fucked on my big dark cock? Does it excite you to know they can hear every sound you make?”

“Oh, oh, oh,” Vincent moaned under his breath coming in thick white spurts all over the ground.

“You did like that, you little slut,” Mudiwa groaned. “I didn’t even touch you and you came.” A few more thrusts and Mudiwa came with a soft groan, emptying himself into his lover's body. Carefully, Mudiwa pulled out, watching as Vincent’s hole clenched as if trying to keep him from leaving. “Are you all right?” Mudiwa asked as he pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped them both clean.

Vincent sighed happily. “I feel wonderful, although I bet sitting will be tricky for a bit.”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to hurt you.” Mudiwa said as he straightened Vincent’s clothes.

Vincent turned and kissed Mudiwa’s full lips. “It was wonderful. I loved every minute.”

Mudiwa grinned. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Vincent said before claiming his lover’s lips yet again.

Their fathers arrived just as the waiter brought out the food. Gabriel wisely had ordered enough for everyone. Gabriel had ordered pad tai with shrimp for Aubrey and Tatiana, and a bowl of coconut curried vegetables with tofu for himself. He got a bowl of the noodles and a bowl of curry for his dads – they could share or fight over who got what. Gabriel rolled his eyes as they sat down and tried not to choke when Tatiana noticed something was wrong with their fathers.

“Did something bad happen?” she asked with worry in her voice. “You both look all rumpled and
Daddy, you winced when you sat down.”

Vincent blushed bright red. Gabriel laughed hysterically and Mudiwa attempted to answer his daughter. “You are a very perceptive young lady. We are fine, your Dad tripped and fell, and I got rumpled trying to help him up.”

“What does per-cetive mean?” Aubrey asked around a mouth full of noodles.

“Don’t talk with your mouth full. Perceptive means that you notice tiny little things,” Mudiwa answered calmly. “What do we have to eat? It smells really good.”

“The pad tai is yummy!” squealed Tatiana. Aubrey nodded his agreement but not talking as his mouth was full of noodles again.

“There is also coconut curry, and I’m happy to get you both something to drink,” Gabriel answered as he wiped the tears from his eyes and caught his breath.

“Iced tea, please,” Vincent said from behind his hands.

“I’d like one also, Cherub,” Mudiwa added. Gabriel smiled and went inside to get two iced teas. When he came out, his Dad was eating and no longer bright red.

“So what did you guys get?” Vincent asked as he took a bite of curry. “Oh, this is good.”

Tatiana launched into a full accounting of every step they took, allowing Aubrey to talk when it came to the kite he got. When they finished, their Dad and Baba turned to Gabriel.

Gabriel sighed and pulled the egg out of his bag. Mudiwa took it first, he could feel an energy to it, but nothing more. Passing it to his husband he wasn’t surprised to hear a gasp. “This is a living egg,” Vincent whispered.

“Yes,” Gabriel answered. Mudiwa lifted an eyebrow asking what kind. “I think that it’s a phoenix egg.”

“How do we take care of it?” Aubrey asked.

“It needs to be placed in a fire, and left alone for a few weeks,” Gabriel answered.

“We will be in Japan for six weeks, and at Soto’s village for most of that. Will that be enough time?” Vincent asked grabbing a bite of noodles.

“I think so; I’ll check my books when we get back to the bus.”

December 18th, 1995. Japan, Soto’s village

They had been in Japan for two weeks, and it had been wonderful. The troupe had done several shows, and had gotten such a good response that several other venues contacted them about performing while they were there. Soto had been very happy to see his village and family, and spent countless hours catching up. The village itself was an amazing place. The houses were centuries old and kept traditionally, with wood floors, shoji screen walls which slid, wells, fireplaces, and large wooden tubs which you got into after you had washed.
When they entered the village Soto had asked Gabriel for a favor. “Gabriel, many of my family are considered National Treasures because of the ancient knowledge they practice and keep alive. Please do not use touch to learn anything here without asking me first.”

Gabriel had agreed; the traditional crafts they kept alive were tempting, but he wouldn’t dishonor his family in that way. Gabriel did spend hours watching them practice their crafts. Sword makers pounded glowing red steel over and over, heating it in a wood furnace. Weavers sat in front of large looms, making the most intricate patterns one row at a time, as they easily handled many spindles of cotton thread. Dyers made up huge vats of dye, using ancient recipes and plants grown on the land around them. The painters seemed to be in meditation as their brushes danced over the delicate rice paper canvases. Gabriel was even allowed to help a bit and try different crafts.

Today Gabriel was spending time with Soto’s great uncle, the Grand Master or Soke of Ninjitsu. He didn’t seem like a powerful master of martial arts, but that is what made him so good. Most people knew him as a professor at the local art college teaching raku, a traditional ceramic technique. Gabriel found the man to be very funny. He loved to joke, and said he stayed in shape by digging all his clay by hand. The grand master had five cats, each one the very picture of self-indulgence.

Gabriel watched the unassuming man walk across the dojo floor. He was lecturing on how to keep ones hagari, their intention and energy from projecting out, and therefore making one invisible. As he paced the floor he held a sword over his shoulder turning the handle back and forth in what seemed to be a nervous gesture, as if walking wasn’t enough to keep him occupied.

“Now, one should only use this trick for good as my next story will demonstrate. My lovely wife Hina was making gyoza one day long ago in my foolish youth. She had set the far too tempting plate of shrimp and chicken gyoza on the counter to cool. I knew she would be in the kitchen all day as she was also making plum wine and plum paste. There I am, really wanting the gyoza, so I decide to use my ninja training. Silently I crept across the floor.”

Everyone laughed as Soke began acting out his story. “My lovely wife busy at the fire, I pulled my hagari in and I scooped up the plate like a shadow, slid from the room and scurried off to the back yard where I was supposed to be weeding. Well, I had just finished the gyoza when I heard my wife call to me. She has a voice like a songbird. Anyway I rushed in as I always do, so she wouldn’t notice anything was wrong. ‘Yes, my love, how can I help you?’ I asked as politely as always. She turned to me and said, ‘Your ninja tricks do no good if you have the evidence all over your face! Go and wash for supper.’ Now as I was leaving, my delicate flower says, barely loud enough for me to hear: ‘As if I didn’t know he would take those. And she opens up the cupboard where there are two more plates full of gyoza!’”

Everyone laughed, and Gabriel clutched his sides it was so funny when suddenly Soke swung the sword straight at him. Gabriel rolled to the left letting the sword hit the ground, and looked up at the old man. The Grand Master smiled warmly and simply said, “Godan,” before going back to his class.

Soto beamed and hugged Gabriel tightly. “I knew you could do it!”

Gabriel’s brow was wrinkled in confusion. “Was that a test?”

“Yes, he wanted to see how you reacted. You got out of the way, but didn’t get upset or overreact. You felt his hagari,” Soto answered with pride.

“Godan – that is fifth level black belt, correct?”

“Yes.”
“Brilliant!”

As Gabriel left the dojo he heard someone scream his name as he was pounced on. “Kamala, how are you? Happy late birthday!” Gabriel said as he hugged his sister close to him.

“I’m good! I missed you so much; what did you get me?” Kamala said without taking a breath.

Gabriel laughed and without setting her down walked over to their tents, listening to her tell all about her time in India and how Talha was doing and especially about the plane ride. When they got to his tent, Gabriel set Kamala on his bed and gathered the three bags of things for her. “Come on, let’s go and see your parents; you can open your gifts with them.” Kamala jumped off his bed and ran to the door.

Everyone was sitting was inside Soto’s parents home having tea and catching up. Before joining the group, Gabriel went over the fireplace and shifted the phoenix egg, which was now a deep red color. It looked like it would be hatching very soon.

“Gabriel,” Naveen called out, “come and hold your baby brother, he misses you.”

Gabriel grinned and kissed both Naveen and Ria on the cheek in greeting before sitting down. Gabriel held open his arms and smiled as Talha was placed into them. He was beautiful baby. Talha had Naveen’s light brown eyes and soft black curls and his mother’s pink full lips and large almond-shaped eyes lined with thick long lashes.

“Can I open my gifts now?” Kamala whined jokingly.

Ria laughed. “Of course dear.”

Kamala whooped with joy and began digging through the bags. Aubrey and Tatiana gave running descriptions of everything she pulled out, where they got it, and why they picked it out over other details. Soon clothes, jewelry, books and toys surrounded Kamala. Gleefully Kamala jumped up and gave everyone a hug, thanking everyone for the birthday presents.

“I want to hold Talha,” Tatiana said.

“Okay come here,” Gabriel answered. Once Tatiana was seated in his lap, Gabriel placed the baby in her arms. Tatiana smiled and cooed at Talha for five minutes before she grew bored and gave him back. “Aubrey, would you like to hold your brother?”

Aubrey’s purple eyes sparkled in happiness. Quickly he got up and settled himself on Gabriel’s lap. He cooed softly at his new brother as the adults talked. Gabriel smiled when twenty minutes later Aubrey was still happily holding Talha.

Talha is a type of tree.

*La-gon, khorb koon - Goodbye, thank you
2000 Baht is more than a professional would make in a month.

Gyoza - Japanese pot stickers
Chapter Sixty-one

December 21st, Japan

Gabriel woke slowly, a smile coming to his face as he realized today was the Winter Solstice. Getting up he popped in an X-Japan tape and began to sing along while getting ready for the day. As he pulled on a thin jumper Gabriel heard the soft sound of little feet sneaking into his room. Soon he was pounced on and being thrown to the ground.

“We’ve got him!” squealed Tatiana.

“Careful!” shouted Kamala, “pin his arms, he’s tricky.”

“I’m strong enough to hold him,” boasted Aubrey.

Gabriel laughed and managed to pull down his jumper, so he could see his attackers. “Oh, you think you can take me do you?” he growled playfully. Easily he flipped them all over, and managed to pin all three siblings to the ground. “Now what should I do with all of you?” With an evil smirk Gabriel whispered, “I know.” Soon the screams for mercy and laughter erupted from the three kids as Gabriel tickled them.

“This doesn’t look fair,” said their Baba’s deep voice.

“No it doesn’t, husband of mine,” said Vincent with a smirk.

“Daddy, Baba, help us,” shrieked Tatiana in the midst of laughing.

Aubrey managed to catch his breath long enough to shout. “Get Gabriel!”

Gabriel listened for his fathers’ response when suddenly two sets of hands began tickling him. Gabriel twisted trying to defend himself, or at least tickle back. Soon it was an all-out tickle war, everyone defending and attacking as best they could.

“Ohay, okay, enough!” called Mudiwa as he rolled to the side trying to catch his breath. “Let’s go and get some tea and then it’s time for yoga.”

Aubrey and Tatiana jumped up yelling, “Yoga!”

Kamala shook her head and sighed. “They’re so young.”

Gabriel chuckled along with his fathers, and went out to start the day. After yoga, Soto’s mum fixed them a breakfast of rice with steamed fish and vegetables, and then the fun began. They were having a big Winter Solstice party that evening and there was a lot of work to get done. Soto’s family didn’t celebrate the Solstice, but they got into the children’s excitement. For the past two days they had been baking, and today they would bake the last three batches of sweet biscuits making a total of thirteen different types of sweet biscuits, one for each of the full moons during the year.

Soto’s mum, Funiko Gifu was going to show them how to make persimmon cookies. Gabriel fed
some wood into the stove fire while the others mixed the dough.

“How is this, Obaasan?” Aubrey asked as he pulled the spoon from the batter letting it drip back into the bowl.

“A little more milk, and then it will be perfect,” Funiko answered in Japanese. Gabriel quickly translated, although the kids were picking up Japanese rather quickly.

“Obaasan, this tray is ready to go into the oven,” Kamala said. She and Tatiana had just spooned out the batter onto the baking tray.

“Good, good,” said Funiko kissing the top of their heads before putting the tray into the oven. While they baked Funiko told stories about her youth, when she met Tama her husband, and funny stories from Soto’s youth. Gabriel was having trouble focusing on translating the conversation, keeping the fire going and helping to bake cookies. He almost burnt the Spumoni Slices, an Italian cookie that Elena had helped them make. They had a lovely day baking and laughing together.

After lunch the children decorated a pine tree in the front yard of Soto’s parents' home. They hung strings of popcorn, dried fruits, and pinecones smeared with peanut butter and rolled in birdseed. The tree looked very festive and would provide food for the birds during the winter. Once that was done they began gathering firewood to make a bonfire, one that would light the longest night of the year until the sun rose in the morning.

At four-thirty as the sun began to set everyone gathered in the Gifu house to open presents. Winter is a time to go within, to hibernate and not be as physically active, so gifts for the Solstice usually focused on learning new things and expanding existing knowledge. Because they traveled around they simply could not have a lot of possessions and frequently they would give experiences as gifts. Tickets to lectures, concerts, museums and workshops were frequently given.

Gabriel smiled as he watched his family open their gifts, the firelight glinting off the simple earrings he’d given everyone earlier at tea. After everyone had opened their earrings, each with a different stone, Gabriel explained what they were for. “These are Portkeys. They are all linked together, so after saying the password you only have to call out the name of whom you wish to go to, and the Portkey will take you to them. They are strong enough to break through wards and have monitoring spells on them so if you are unable to speak because of an injury or unconsciousness, the Portkey will take you to the nearest safe person.”

Gabriel had waited for a moment before continuing. “I’m leaving soon, and I’m afraid once people find out where I have been they will come after you. I want to make sure you’re all safe. I can also pierce anyone’s ears who needs it.”

“Me first, me first!” Tatiana squealed holding out her white opal earrings. Gabriel looked to his fathers to make sure it was all right.

“Go ahead,” Vincent said with a smile.

As Gabriel preformed the painless spell and placed the earrings in Tatiana’s ears Naveen asked, “What is the password?”

“It’s on the inside of the box; I don’t want to say it, as I don’t want the Portkey activated,” Gabriel answered. Everyone turned over their boxes and saw the word ‘Abatu’.

“What does it mean?” Adonis asked.

“It’s Sumerian for ‘flee’. I thought it fitting, and wouldn’t be used in normal conversation,” Gabriel
The wood popping in the fire brought Gabriel’s attention back to the present. Looking down he began to unwrap the gifts in front of him. He had been given several books on philosophy from Naveen, Ria, and Talha. Kamala had painted a picture of the family for him; it was lovely – she had real talent. Adonis had given him a set of Celtic knot hair ties. From his fathers Gabriel received tickets to several museums including the Adachi gardens, and a note saying they would let him get a tattoo. Gabriel beamed as he tucked the note away, for his fourteenth birthday they had let him pierce his ears and swore that was all of the body art they would let him have. However Gabriel had been working on them for almost a year now, pointing out other people’s tattoos, drawing different designs for tattoos, and finally when he found the perfect design he posted it above his bed where his fathers had to see it every time they walked in his room. Soon he would have a light blue ice dragon and a red fire phoenix wrapped around each other tattooed over his right upper arm. As he tucked away the last of his gifts, a shadow fell over him.

Kneeling together Ojiisan and Hkufu held out a long thin bundle wrapped in beautiful indigo silk. Reverently Gabriel took the package. “This gift is from the Gifu family,” said his Ojiisan, smiling.

“I’m honored,” Gabriel said formally. Pulling on the silk cord holding the fabric in place Gabriel found a katana. Holding his breath he pulled it out of the simple wooden scabbard. The sword hummed as it was revealed; the steel gleamed in the firelight. It was one of the swords Soto’s father and brother had made. Gabriel looked at Soto’s family and bowed low from his seated position.

“Thank you so much, I’m not sure that I’m worthy of such a fine gift.”

Soto’s brother, Nobu, smiled at the young man. “You are a warrior and a warrior needs a weapon worthy of him.”


“Gabriel,” called the soft voice of Dobu’s wife Kiku.

“Yes, Hakubo?” Gabriel answered.

Kiku pointed to the phoenix egg in the fire. “Your egg moved.”

Quickly Gabriel moved next to the fire, and watched in awe as the phoenix inside broke through the thick shell. Soon a golden-white baby phoenix trilled softly. Carefully Gabriel reached down and picked up the newly hatched bird. As she stretched her wings highlights of blue and purple were seen on them.

“The colors belonging to the heart of the fire,” Ojiisan said.

At that moment in the Headmaster’s office at Hogwarts Severus Snape sat scowling while Albus rambled on in his painfully cheerful way, when suddenly Fawkes began to sing. It was a song full of joy, hope and longing. Severus felt Fawkes was calling out to his mate, as if she had finally been found after a long time apart.

Soto’s village, 9pm

Gabriel hummed softly as he sipped the clear liquid. The solstice celebrations had ended and he was sitting with the other teenage boys in the village. They had invited him to drink sake with them. The rice wine was warm, and had a slice of fresh ginger in it. Gabriel had drunk wine before so he didn’t
think the sake would be a problem. An hour later Mudiwa came to find him.

“Gabriel it’s time for bed,” Mudiwa said in his rich deep voice.

Gabriel swayed slightly, and grinned up at his Baba. “You have a loverly voice,” he slurred softly.

Mudiwa’s eyebrows rose in surprise. “What have you been doing out here?”

“My new friends and I have been drinking sake, it's really good. Do you want some?”

“You're drunk,” Mudiwa stated with a mix of humor and disappointment.

“Pish! I’ve had wine before, I’m fine.” To prove he wasn’t drunk Gabriel jumped to his feet and promptly stumbled right into his Baba’s chest.

Mudiwa rolled his eyes and scooped up his drunken son. “Let’s get you some water and then into bed.”

When they walked into the tent Vincent rushed over to them. “What's wrong? Gabriel, are you all right?”

“I’m fine, Daddy. I just stumbled a bit,” Gabriel slurred.

“He's just had too much sake,” Mudiwa offered as he walked into Gabriel’s room.

Vincent rolled his eyes as his son hung limply in Mudiwa’s arms humming softly to himself. After forcing him to drink a glass of water they tucked their drunken son into bed, hoping Gabriel wouldn’t feel too bad in the morning.

Gabriel panted; he didn’t know what was going on. His vision was different and it felt as if he was slithering on the ground. Down he went deeper into the lower levels of the Ministry of Magic. Master said to get into the Hall of Prophecy and retrieve the prophecy about him. Sitting by the door was Arthur Weasley. Something had alerted him and he stood with his wand at the ready. Gabriel slithered closer and then rearing up he struck, poisonous fangs sinking deeply into the man’s chest.

Gabriel woke to being shaken and yelled at by his fathers, his brother and sister standing at the foot of his bed crying and holding each other. Leaning over the side of the bed, Gabriel threw-up. A damp rag wiped his face, and a cool glass of water was pressed to his lips.

“What happened?” Vincent asked with fear in his voice.

“I had a vision, I couldn’t control it. Voldy’s snake Nagini was trying to get the prophecy and bit Arthur Weasley.” Gabriel’s eyes darted back and forth as he remembered his dream. Suddenly he threw back the covers. “I have to go, no one knows Mr. Weasley was attacked, he needs help!” He swayed slightly as he stood up, and then ran to his chest to get clean clothes.

“How will you get there it's too far to Apparate?” Vincent asked as he scooped up Tatiana and Aubrey.
“I’ll use the Portkey to the training room. Lysander said he set up the room to inform him if I Portkey in. Then I can get him to take me outside their anti-Apparition wards and Apparate to the Ministry of Magic from there.”

Before anyone could say anything else, Tatiana’s voice, strained and soft from crying, asked, “Are you okay?”

Realizing that his brother and sister were there and were upset, Gabriel stopped what he was doing and dropped to his knees in front of them. “I’m fine, don’t worry, it was just a dream. I need to go and help Mr. Weasley, but I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

With a quick hug to everyone Gabriel grabbed the teardrop of amber, which hung around his neck and Portkeyed to the Council Hall training room.

Nervously Gabriel paced in the empty ballroom waiting for Lysander to come. It didn’t take long before the door burst open and Lysander stormed into the room. Gabriel’s breath caught in his throat. Lysander’s blond hair was sexily mussed, his tight leather pants unbuttoned and threatening to fall off his hips, his chest bare and as beautiful as carved marble. Lysander’s lips were swollen, and a thin trickle of blood ran from the corner of his mouth to his chin.

“Gabriel, what’s wrong? Are you okay?” Lysander demanded as he visually checked Gabriel for injury.

Gabriel shook himself, trying to stop thinking about the sexy half-clothed man in front of him. “I had a dream, a vision and I need to get to the Ministry of Magic in London.”

“What do you need help with?”

“No, I should be fine. I’ll come back here to get home, so if it seems like I’m taking too long you can always come for me,” Gabriel said. Pointing to Lysander’s chin, he said, “You have some blood on you.”

Lysander used a finger to wipe the blood off, then licked it off his milky-white finger. Gabriel gasped softly at this gesture, causing Lysander to smirk. “I know I’m sexy, but I only do women.”

Gabriel blushed and rolled his eyes at the same time. “Whatever, I need to get past the anti-Apparition wards.”

“Come on then,” Lysander said walking out of the room.

Gabriel walked just behind him, enjoying the way his arse looked in the leather trousers.

Ministry of Magic, London

Arthur Weasley lay gasping on the floor as hot pain coursed through his body. Desperately he pulled himself across the floor. The bastard’s snake was gone, the prophecy was safe, but he needed help. Visions of his family fueled his determination as he forced his aching body to the stairs. Looking up the long flight of stairs, Arthur was surprised to see a black-clad figure. His face was even covered in black cloth; all that could be seen were piercing emerald-green eyes. “Help,” Arthur whispered before he passed out.

Gabriel cast a healing spell on Mr. Weasley and then a lightening charm. Picking him up, Gabriel ran up the stairs and to the Floo. Throwing in a handful of Floo powder, Gabriel yelled, “St. Mungo’s”
One crazy, bumpy ride later he was stumbling out of the Floo, barely keeping his balance. “Help!” he shouted gaining the attention of several staff.

“What happened?” demanded a mediwitch as she conjured a stretcher and began running scans on the injured man.

“He was bitten by Voldemort’s snake, maybe twenty, thirty minutes ago,” Gabriel answered as he backed towards the Floo.

Everyone gasped at the black-clad man’s use of Voldemort’s name. “Who are you?” a mediwizard demanded.

Gabriel turned and said, “Just a friend, please take good care of Mr. Weasley.” Then he Flooed back to the Ministry of Magic.

Undetected Gabriel made his way back to the Hall of Prophecy. Scanning the shelves he found an orb labeled ‘S.P.T to A.P.W.B.D Dark Lord and (?) Harry Potter’. Gabriel took the softly glowing orb and left a gift in its place. He wasn’t really interested in what the prophecy had to say but he was determined no one else would get hurt looking for it.


The return of our Savior and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named?

Early this morning a mysterious figure in black took a badly injured Arthur Weasley to St. Mungo’s hospital. When asked what happened, the mysterious green-eyed man said You-Know-Who’s snake had bitten Mr. Weasley - only he used You-Know-Who’s name! Mr. Weasley is in critical, but stable condition.

This morning a note was found on the statue of the brotherhood in the atrium of the Ministry of Magic. It read, ‘He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named (his real name!) I have the prophecy. Leave these people alone.’ The note was unsigned, but it has been confirmed that a prophecy is missing and oddly enough in its place there was a white glove with the letter ‘P’ embroidered on it.

Hall of Mystery staff have confirmed that only those about whom the prophecy was made can take it from their shelves. Does this mean Harry Potter is back? And what about You-Know-Who? Has Albus Dumbledore been right all along? Is the wizarding world’s greatest enemy back? Why has Minister Fudge been denying his return? And better yet, has the Ministry done anything to protect us?

For more turn to page 4.

Rita Skeeter

Severus set down the paper and sipped his tea. This was certainly interesting news, maybe now that odious toad of a woman would be leaving the school. Any doubt Severus had about Dumbledore’s loyalty to the children had completely vanished when he allowed the Ministry to step in and place that hideous woman in Hogwarts.

Severus had brewed several batches of healing potion to counteract the very illegal blood quill she used on the students during detentions. With the help of Draco, Pansy and Blaise each house had jars of the potion for anyone who needed it. When Dumbledore had done nothing about the blood quill, Severus knew that Dumbledore would risk the safety of the children in his care in order to create loyalty and soldiers. Well Severus certainly would not! He would help where he could. Oh, he
couldn’t be seen lest his cover was blown, but he was a Slytherin after all – he could be sneaky.

With a sigh Severus crossed the room and stroked the books on his desk. For Winter Solstice Adonis had given him a handsome leather-bound journal to record his potions research in. Adonis had also sent him a box of sinfully delectable chocolates. Very few people knew that Severus had a weakness for dark chocolate. Gabriel had given him a gift too, a potions journal he found in Italy, and it had turned out to be quite a find. The Potions master who kept it had been quite talented, and Severus was enjoying reading the old, stained journal. With a sigh Severus went to bed, alone again. Merlin, he missed Adonis!

A/N The Pink Panther left a white glove with a ‘P’ embroidered on it. By the time Gabriel left it, he was feeling playful

Obaasan- Grandmother
Ojiisan- Grandfather
Hkufu- Uncle
Hakubo- Aunt
Chapter Sixty-two

Parseltongue is in bold.

July 23rd, 1996 Oma’s farm Switzerland

Severus walked towards the house and stopped for a moment just watching everyone setting up for the party. They were there to celebrate Gabriel’s sixteenth birthday. It was a week early, but the gypsies were going to be performing at a large music festival in Germany on Gabriel’s birthday. Severus mused over the past year – it had been unusual to say the least. The Weasley twins had finally used their gift for practical jokes for good and had tormented Umbridge. They had ended their reign of torment by turning a corridor into a swamp and then dropping out of school. Fred and George had opened a joke shop in Diagon Alley; Severus shuddered as he thought of all the pranks he would have to deal with next year.

The Dark Lord had been furious when Umbridge had been unable to find out anything about Harry Potter. He carried the infamous glove around with him, often staring at the embroidered ‘P’ as if it would give him answers; no one knew how the Dark Lord had even gotten the stupid glove. Severus wrapped his arms around himself as he thought of the viciousness of the Dark Lord during that meeting. He had tortured everyone – for not getting the prophecy, for not knowing who had it, for not knowing what the glove meant, for breathing too loudly. Severus snorted, when the article had been published in the paper everyone had seemed puzzled about the glove except for a few Muggleborn boys who had laughed. Severus had wanted to ask them what the glove had meant, but it was far too out of character for him, and unfortunately the rumor mill never turned anything up.

Gabriel walked towards him, pulling Severus out of his thoughts. “I’m so glad you could come.”

“Thank you, I too am pleased I’m able to attend. I appear to be early.”

Gabriel ducked his head and his cheeks pinked in a blush. Nervously he cleared his throat. “Actually, we were hoping to speak with you before the party.”

Severus raised an eyebrow. “We?”

“Yeah, umm, there is something I need to tell you, and my family wanted to be there.”

“Very well.” Severus was puzzled, he had no idea what was going on, but Gabriel was certainly apprehensive.

Gabriel tried to stifle his nervousness. He had talked with his family and they had all decided that it would be best if Severus knew about him being Harry Potter, before everyone else found out. They felt that not only would he take it better, but Severus was a dear friend who deserved to hear the truth from them.

When they entered the tent, Gabriel went straight to the couch and sat between his fathers. Adonis sat on a love seat and gestured Severus forward to sit with him. As he walked Severus saw the tension on everyone’s faces. Soto, Elena, Ria and Naveen all shared a third couch, which didn’t
match the other two, so Severus assumed it had been brought in here just for this. Once he sat down, Adonis tentatively took his hand. Severus gave him a confused look and squeezed his hand.

“I have a secret that I want to tell you. Everyone will know it soon, but I wanted to tell you first,” Gabriel said, his green eyes looking weary. “However I need you to promise me that you will keep this a secret until it is revealed to you by someone else.”

Severus raised a black eyebrow in curiosity and suspicion. He normally didn’t promise anything, promises made between two wizards created a magical contract. The promise could be broken, but the effects weren’t pleasant and the other party would know. However, Gabriel was upset and he was not a wizard, so Severus decided to indulge the young man. “I promise, Gabriel,” Severus said and instantly felt magic swirl between them. Black eyes widened in shock as he felt the promise bind them, a gasp fell from his lips as he felt a spell break and memories flooded his mind.

Gabriel raised his emerald eyes and fearfully met Severus’. Taking a deep breath, Gabriel raised his hands and untied the black headscarf. As the material fell a lightning-bolt scar was left exposed to the Potions master's gaze.

“Bloody hell,” was all Severus said.

It was several minutes later before Severus spoke again. “Why?” he asked, his voice strained. He couldn’t decide if he should be pissed off or proud of the subtle magic used to suppress his recognition of Lily and James Potter’s son all these years.

“It isn’t safe for me in the wizarding world, and the Muggles I was left with were cruel.”

Severus snorted, the anger winning for the moment as he began to see James Potter in the boy he had befriended. Sneering he asked, “Would they not buy you a toy you wanted?”

Gabriel shrank back from the anger and venom directed towards him. He was too fearful to block other's emotions effectively; normally he could control his empathy better than this.

“Severus,” said Mudiwa, his voice deep and calm even as he wrapped an arm around Gabriel to ground him. “When Gabriel came to us he was painfully thin. It looked as if he’d been starved.”

“His clothes were rags which hung off him,” Vincent added trying to make the Potions master understand.

Adonis squeezed the long fingers still wrapped around his. “He didn’t even know his own name; they only called him ‘boy’ or ‘freak’.”

Severus pulled his hand from Adonis’ and stood up. As he paced Severus thought about all of this. It didn’t make any sense. Harry Potter was the Boy Who Lived, Dumbledore wouldn’t have left him with abusive relatives. Would he? Severus closed his eyes in anger, as he thought over all of the manipulations he had seen the headmaster use against the students of Hogwarts.

“Five-year-old children do not just run away from home because they didn’t get a toy,” Soto said after Severus had been quiet for a while.

“When did you leave your relative's house?”

“June of 1986.”

“But Dumbledore didn’t tell us you were gone until 1987, and then he said you had only been gone for three days! What the hell was he thinking lying to us like that?” Severus snarled as his robe
whipped around him in his fury. “When did you find out?” Severus demanded glaring at Gabriel, or was it Harry now?

“We found out not long after we had already decided to take him with us,” Ria offered.

“Mudiwa and I told him about a month before his eighth birthday,” Vincent said soothingly.

“Why didn’t you return him to the wizarding world?” Severus snapped.

Naveen huffed. “They left him there, with those cruel and abusive people. We didn’t trust them to take care of him.”

“We knew about the prophecy,” said a soft voice from behind him. Severus whipped around to see Freja standing just inside the tent. “We knew what the wizarding world expected of our Cherub, and we also knew that we had to keep him safe.” Freja kissed Gabriel on the head before sitting down next to Ria.

Severus snorted. “I’m surprised the mutt and the wolf have kept this a secret for so long.” Anger built up in him as Severus thought about these people he trusted laughing at his ignorance with Black and Lupin.

“They don’t know,” Gabriel said softly. “I don’t think they could keep it a secret, and I’m not sure they would pick me over Dumbledore. I’m telling you because I trust you and because I don’t want to lose you as a friend. None of us do.”

Severus stopped and looked at the young man sitting on the couch. His long black hair flowed over his back, soft curls making it look wild, emerald green eyes, so much like his mother’s, looked at him with fear and hope. Severus pinched the bridge of his nose in frustration. He could see James Potter in the boy, he could also see his friend Lily, and most importantly he could see Gabriel, the young man who got him potions ingredients, had saved his godchildren, and had become his friend. Severus could understand why the gypsies had kept their son from the wizarding world; it was clever, and rather Slytherin.

“How have you hidden all of this time in plain sight?”

Gabriel sighed softly, “At first it was just part of the magic of the circle. Whenever we would cast it I would always focus on being safe, not being found, and getting to stay. Even now I only use other magic to hide when I’m outside of the circle.”

“Part of what made it easy was because the wizards who knew about him had seen Cherub with us a year before it was discovered that Harry Potter was missing,” Vincent added.

Severus snorted at the simplicity of what they had done. It was certainly a plan worthy of a Slytherin. “What about your education? You’re far behind your classmates, and the Dark Lord is getting stronger by the day!”

“We have made sure he knows everything he needs,” Soto said firmly. “We were aware of what his future would hold, and we took the responsibility of raising Gabriel seriously.”

Naveen rolled his eyes. “I’m sure Severus didn’t mean anything by his question, Soto. How was he to know what we have done?”

“I don’t advertise what I know, and I don't really want to get into it right now. However I will tell you that I know a lot more than I have any intention of letting on.” Gabriel smirked softly. “I’m telling you a secret today, not all of my secrets.” The others looked nervously at Severus seeing how
he would take the confession and the teasing.

Severus smirked back. “Understandable, now what will you give me to not to rub into the mutt’s and the wolf’s faces that I knew before them?”

Gabriel beamed in happiness and laughed – Severus had forgiven him. Then he sobered as he thought about the question. “I would really rather they not know this, I really don’t want them to hate me. Sirius and Remus seem to be the only people who actually wanted to find Harry, the child they knew and loved, and not the Savior.” Gabriel wrinkled his nose at the title. With a sigh of resignation he turned to the Potions master. “Shall I tell you about my way with snakes?”

Severus cocked his head to one side, it wasn’t what he wanted to know right now, but it was something he’d wondered about for years. “Acceptable.”

Gabriel smiled. “I can speak to them.”

Aurora raised her head from Gabriel’s shoulder. “Can we speak in front of the Dark One now?”

“Yes, Aurora; I told Severus that I would tell him how I get such wonderful snake offerings,” Gabriel explained.

Aurora sniffed. “He has wanted to know that before, why is now special?”

“I just let him know my birth name.”

“Oh, well now that he can speak to me, what does the Dark One wish to know?” Gabriel stifled a laugh at Aurora’s haughtiness.

Severus watch Aurora leave, his eyes wide. “You’re a Parselmouth,” he said more to himself than anyone else.

“Yes,” Gabriel answered simply.

Severus took a deep breath and closed his eyes as he assimilated this new information. “Only those descended from Salazar Slytherin have been Parselmouths.” Severus opened his eyes and looked at Gabriel who was smirking softly.

“Yes, that is true.”

Severus’ eyes widened and his mouth opened to demand more information when Vincent’s mother called for them.

“You have guests arriving, birthday boy!”

Gabriel beamed and leapt up from the couch. “Coming, Oma!” Stopping quickly in front of Severus he hugged his friend tightly, and then ran outside.

Everyone slowly got up, at Gabriel’s antics. Vincent went over to Severus. “Gabriel was really afraid he would lose you as a friend. Thank you for understanding why we hid him.”

Severus nodded. “I can’t say that I’m happy about not being told, but I do understand. And I’m looking forward to being the only one not shocked at the Order meeting when Dumbledore tells everyone else.”

Vincent laughed softly, then added as he left, “You know he’s not the only one who was afraid of losing you today.” At Severus’ blank expression, Vincent grabbed his arm and pulled him outside.
“Come on everyone, let’s get to this party.”

Adonis sighed sadly as he plastered a smile on his face for Gabriel’s benefit. He knew his lover would need some time to figure everything out, but it had been torture having Severus here all afternoon and the sexy man ignoring him. Gabriel’s laughter brought him out of his thoughts. They were eating dinner and Lucas was keeping Gabriel entertained by telling him stories, which Freja, whom he had finally remarried, felt the need to correct. Adonis picked up his fork and absently stabbed at his food when Severus sat down next to him. Adonis’ eyes fluttered as the smell of sandalwood and clary sage filled his senses. He could feel Severus’ breath against his ear, as his lover leaned in whispering, “You will have to be punished for keeping secrets from me.”

Adonis smiled happily, “I’m looking forward to it.”

Severus smirked wickedly and focused on his meal.

Gabriel smiled as he saw Severus sit next to Adonis; he was glad that Adonis wasn’t going to lose Severus because of keeping his secret. Looking around Gabriel couldn’t help but feel happy; almost all of his family and friends were here. In one week Dumbledore would be coming for him and then he would be going to Hogwarts. The thought of being separated from his family filled him with sadness, he would miss everyone terribly.

“Is it time for cake?” Aubrey asked.

“And presents?” chimed in Tatiana.

Gabriel smiled. “I think we will have to ask Oma.”

“Oma!” they yelled, running to find her.

Gabriel laughed and was startled when a body dropped into his lap. Looking up into sparkling blue eyes he relaxed. “Hello, Lysander, what are you doing?”

“I’m giving the birthday boy a kiss,” Lysander grinned impishly. Gabriel rolled his eyes, ever since he had seen Lysander half naked the vampire had taken to teasing him.

“Yeah right,” was all Gabriel got out before cool lips were pressed to his. Gabriel gasped, allowing Lysander to slide his tongue into Gabriel’s warm mouth. Oh goddess, he can kiss, Gabriel thought as he grabbed Lysander’s shoulders pulling him closer.

Lysander smirked and kissed Gabriel deeper; someone had certainly been teaching the boy what to do. Teasingly he drew Gabriel’s tongue into his mouth groaning as the hot, agile muscle explored him.

Lysander tasted sweet and slightly metallic, the coolness of his mouth made Gabriel shudder. As Gabriel ran his tongue along Lysander’s teeth he cut himself on the vampire’s sharp fangs. With a gasp and then a groan of pleasure Lysander pulled Gabriel closer, sucking on his tongue.

Lysander had never tasted blood so rich, he could feel the magic and power filling him. Pulling back they both gasped for breath. Lysander ran his fingers longingly over Gabriel’s neck, when someone cleared their throat.

“Lysander, could you stop molesting my son,” Vincent said with humor in his voice.
Lysander smiled blindingly. “Sure.”

As he got up Gabriel asked, “I thought you didn’t do men?”

Lysander smirked, “Well I knew how much you wanted me, so I thought I would give you a little taste.”

Gabriel quirked his head to the side, he could feel the desire coming off his trainer. Evilly Gabriel ran his bleeding tongue over his upper lip leaving it red and shining. “I think you’re the one who got the taste.”

Blue eyes flashed. “You’re playing with fire.”

Gabriel sucked his lip into his mouth cleaning it of blood and stood up. “I’m not afraid.” Turning to Philip and Jaroslava, Gabriel greeted them.

Lysander gave a soft shudder and looked over to see Gabriel’s family glaring at him. Finally Adonis couldn’t contain himself, and began to laugh. “Aren’t you two hundred years old and supposedly straight? Gabriel so owns you right now.” As everyone else began to laugh, Lysander scowled.

“Well, that backfired on you,” Philip said casually to his son.

“Thank you for pointing that out,” Lysander sulked.

Before the conversation could continue Tatiana and Aubrey ran out of the house squealing. “Cake, it’s time for cake!” Both children quickly found their seats and looked towards the house waiting impatiently. A moment later, Becky, Ann, and Freja came out, each carrying a huge cake.

“Oi! he couldn’t have been that good,” Lucas yelled.

“Of course I was,” Gabriel countered. “I didn’t get caught once doing anything wrong.”

Mudiwa raised an eyebrow. “Maybe we will have to talk later.” Gabriel just smirked smugly and everyone chuckled.

“Okay, birthday boy, sit down so we can sing to you,” Becky said.

Gabriel kissed her cheek. “Thank you, Oma.” Sitting in front of a three-layer Black Forest cake Gabriel blushed as everyone sang Happy Birthday to him. Blowing out his candles, Gabriel wished the next few months would go easily.

Gabriel stood in the darkness watching everyone say goodbye. A tear rolled down his cheek; he didn’t want to leave, and he didn’t want to be alone. Suddenly he felt talons on his shoulders. Turning to his right he smiled as Hedwig rubbed against his cheek and hooted softly. “I know you’re coming with me girl, and I’m very grateful for that.”

“We would not leave you alone,” Aurora said from the ground and slowly slithered up his leg.

A happy trill came from his left shoulder, and Gabriel smiled. “I haven’t forgotten about you, Mbiriviri*. All of you are right. I won’t be alone; thank you.”

Mbiriviri ruffled her golden-white feathers, the blue and purple highlights glinting in the moonlight. With the support of his familiars Gabriel felt better; maybe Hogwarts wouldn’t be so bad after all.
Mbiriviri is Shona for 'the heart of a fire'. Shona is Mudiwa’s native language.
Gabriel woke just as dawn was breaking, his whole body ached and he groaned as he tried to stretch. Last night had been horrible as the magic was released from his core. All night he had been feverish, and his body tortured as it adjusted to the increase of magical energy flowing through him. His nervous system was completely overloaded; now his body trembled slightly as a result. Taking in a deep breath Gabriel choked. He stank, goddess, he needed a bath! Turning his head slowly Gabriel smiled at the sight of his Dad and Baba sleeping on the floor next to his bed. They had stayed with him all night offering comfort and reassurance.

Gabriel moaned as Mbiriviri landed on his chest. Gabriel felt his body relax as she began to sing softly then she angled her head over his mouth. Gabriel was puzzled until he saw a pearly gray tear gather at the corner of her eye, gratefully he opened his mouth. Three precious phoenix tears landed on his tongue, and instantly he felt their healing power. His muscles no longer ached, and his nervous system regenerated; no longer feeling raw and unprotected. “Thank you Mbiriviri,” Gabriel said softly stroking her warm, golden feathers.

Today he was sixteen, and his world was going to change. But first a bath, he thought.

Thirty minutes later Gabriel stood on the bank of the Rhine, the wide blue river winding between bright green fields. His white linen pants fluttered in the cool breeze, and the white tee shirt he had chosen clung to his damp skin, the sleeves short enough that one could see part of the intertwined ice dragon and phoenix wrapped around his right arm. Gabriel moved slowly doing some chi gong exercises, which Lucas and Philip had showed him. Feeling his magic flowing through him Gabriel controlled the power more and more with every breath. He was just about to start a new series of exercises when he felt a familiar presence coming towards him. Curiously, Gabriel looked out over the blue water of the Rhine and saw a ripple with a dark shape underneath it.

Gabriel watched happily as a seal swam onto the beach, and then Jaime slid out of his sealskin. Instantly Jaime’s black eyes met emerald and Gabriel was enraptured. Jaime’s power was a physical thing: his moon-pale skin was luminescent with it and his hair such a deep black it now had blue highlights. He was so beautiful Gabriel wanted to weep, and fall to his knees in worship of the Selkie. Jaime smirked and stalked forward; Gabriel’s breath came in soft pants as Jaime’s gaze kept him rooted in place.

Suddenly Jaime’s cool hands were framing his face. “Happy birthday,” he whispered and pressed their lips together.

The kiss went from sweet to passionate instantly. Gabriel moaned and wrapped his arms around Jaime’s naked body pulling him closer. Jaime’s power slowly filled him. It was cool and washed over him like a wave. Flashes of their time in June raced through Gabriel’s mind making his blood pound and his cock harden. Jaime had already come into his power then and Gabriel had been happily helpless against his friend’s seduction.

Gabriel whimpered as Jaime moved from his mouth to his neck, kissing and sucking the sensitive
flesh. Gabriel felt as if all of the water in his body now belonged to Jaime. He thrummed with the cool sensual power of the Selkie. Gabriel clung to Jaime and allowed him to take over his body as pleasure coursed through him, when unexpectedly his own power responded. Warm tendrils of heat flowed through Gabriel’s nervous system and infused his skin.

Gabriel’s mind became slightly clearer, and he wanted to meet Jaime as an equal this time. Winding one hand into Jaime’s curls Gabriel pulled him up for a kiss. Taking a deep breath Gabriel attacked the swollen pink lips and pushed his magic into Jaime. The Selkie gasped as he was infused with magic, it was hot and made his body thrum.

“Gabriel,” Jaime moaned, “we need a bed.”

“My room,” he gasped now grateful he had woken his fathers and sent them back to their room.

Soon golden limbs were intertwined with milky white as the two lovers explored each other. Frantically they rubbed their erections together, seeking friction and release. Gabriel sucked and nipped on Jaime’s soft pink nipples gaining delightful moans from his friend.

Jaime arched into Gabriel’s touch – this was a new experience for him. Since he had come into his power Jaime had been learning how to control it, and had not yet had sex with someone who wasn’t completely under his spell. Jaime shivered as Gabriel’s mouth began to work down his body, paying special attention to all of the sensitive spots, which made him desperate with lust.

Jaime was just about to begin begging when a hot mouth enveloped his aching cock. Jaime arched off the bed as wet heat and hot magic surrounded his flesh. Reaching down he buried his hands in Gabriel’s hair trying not to pull on the wild curls, but desperately needing to hang onto something. Gabriel hummed happily as he felt Jaime losing control, a response he hadn’t been able to get before from the Selkie. Jaime moaned and shivered under Gabriel’s ministrations.

Hoping he could multi-task, Gabriel summoned a jar of lubricant and, remembering what Jaime had done to him, liberally coated a finger before sliding it into Jaime’s opening. Feeling his lover shiver and then relax under his touch made Gabriel even harder. Gabriel continued to take Jaime into his mouth as he thoroughly prepared him.

Jaime trembled at the assault to his senses; it was quickly becoming too much as Gabriel slid a third slippery finger into him. Jaime was torn between wanting to come into Gabriel's hot mouth, and not wanting things to end just yet. The decision was taken from him as Gabriel twisted his fingers and rubbed against his prostate. Jaime screamed as his orgasm was torn from him. He lay panting; his body completely limp against the bed. Gabriel released Jaime’s spent cock, licking him a few times before sliding up his body.

Jaime smiled at the pleased looked on Gabriel’s face. “I have taught you well,” Jaime said softly.

Gabriel laughed and twisted his fingers still inside Jaime’s body. “Well, we will just have to see how much attention I was paying.” Leaning down he gently kissed Jaime who moaned at the taste of himself on Gabriel’s tongue.

It wasn’t long before they were kissing frantically, as Gabriel continued to prepare his lover by rubbing against the sensitive nub inside him. When Jaime was hard and panting again, Gabriel shifted between his legs, and slowly withdrew his fingers. Coating his aching cock in lube, Gabriel positioned himself against his lover’s entrance. Jaime smiled warmly and stretched his legs over Gabriel’s shoulders.

Taking a breath to calm his nervousness Gabriel slowly pushed into Jaime’s body. “Oh, goddess!”
Gabriel moaned as he was surrounded by tight heat. “You feel so good.”

Jaime tilted his hips, pulling Gabriel further into him. Gabriel gasped once he was fully immersed in his lover’s body. Slowly, Gabriel pulled back until only the head of his cock was inside Jaime, and then pushed back in. The feelings were intense for both lovers as their magic and bodies flowed together. After a few strokes Gabriel couldn’t hold back and began thrusting harder into Jaime’s willing body. Jaime gasped and dropped his legs, wrapping them around Gabriel’s waist. Now able to move Jaime met his lover thrust for thrust.

Gabriel shifted the angle of his thrusts until he was hitting Jaime’s prostate. Jaime cried out as intense waves of pleasure coursed through him. His last coherent thought was I’m a wonderful teacher.

Feeling his orgasm building Gabriel reached down. He wrapped his hand around Jaime’s cock and began to stroke. Running his finger over the leaking head, Gabriel used the precome as lubricant. “Jaime, I’m so close,” Gabriel groaned softly. “I want you to come with me, Jaime.”

“Yes!” Jaime gasped clawing at Gabriel’s shoulders trying to hold on.

Just as Gabriel felt his balls tighten in orgasm Jaime shuddered violently coating them in his seed. Gabriel arched back, shouting as he filled Jaime with come. Trembling, Gabriel collapsed on top of Jaime, who held him tightly.

“Thank you, that was brilliant,” Gabriel gasped between breaths.

Jaime smiled as he ran his hands up and down Gabriel’s sides. “Apparently I’m an exceptional teacher.”

Gabriel snorted in amusement and rolled to the side. “Sorry, but that was all natural talent.”

Jaime laughed; it was rich and melodious and always made Gabriel feel happy. “As it’s your birthday I will not crush your delusions.”

Gabriel bit Jaime’s shoulder playfully. “Prat.”

Both boys were just about to fall asleep, when Hedwig flew into the room, hooting. “Hey, girl,” Gabriel said as he took the paper in her beak. Jaime petted the lovely snowy owl while Gabriel read the short note. “Dad says we have to get up.”

Jaime blushed. “Did they hear us again?”

Gabriel blushed too. “No, my silencing and privacy charms held, but Tatiana and Aubrey want to wish me a happy birthday.”

“I guess we need to get up then,” Jaime said looking down at his messy stomach and wrinkling his nose.

Gabriel waved his hand and instantly both of them were clean and the room no longer smelled of sex. “All better, let’s get dressed.”

4pm.

Gabriel danced wildly in the crowd of strangers. HIM was currently on stage performing a mix of original music and cover songs. Jaime had left just an hour before. He had stayed long enough to
watch the gypsies perform, but he couldn’t stay any longer. So far it had been a wonderful birthday. His family had given him gifts to take to Hogwarts: robes, books, supplies and music. Naveen and Ria had done a lot of research and found a way to block the magic at Hogwarts to allow Muggle equipment to work, and so he now had a CD player and a Walkman covered in a netting of hematite and obsidian. Gabriel loved music and was thrilled that he wouldn’t have to give it up at school.

Ville Valo’s sultry voice commanded Gabriel’s attention once again. Raising his arms above his head, Gabriel danced to the deep voice as Ville sang Wicked Games. Gabriel was determined to enjoy the concert, despite the fact that he could feel the presence of four wizards who were using low-level charms to search the crowd. Thankfully there were at least ten other magical people at the concert.

It was after seven when Gabriel caught sight of Remus. The concert was obviously far too loud for the werewolf’s sensitive ears. Gabriel was angry that his friend had been sent to a place that would hurt him. Sighing, Gabriel turned back to the show. The 69 Eyes were performing and Gabriel loved their song Lost Boys.

The moon was high in the sky as Gabriel danced, bouncing up and down in time to the harsh beat of Rammstein. Gabriel was singing along with the crowd when he bumped into somebody. He went to shift away, when a hand caught his arm. “Hello, Sirius,” Gabriel said as he looked into shocked gray eyes.

“Gabriel, what are you doing here?” Sirius yelled above the music.

Gabriel smiled. “Dancing.” He managed to keep his hand from shaking as he ran it through his hair as if to pulling the black locks away from his sweaty face.

Sirius tightened his grip as the famous lightening bolt scar was exposed. “Oh my god, Harry?”

Gabriel looked at Sirius in confusion. “What are you talking about?”

“We need to talk, where is your family?”

“They’re over there,” Gabriel said pointing towards the river. “Can this wait until the concert is over?”

Sirius’ eyes widened and he became angry. “Bloody hell, no this cannot wait! I need to let someone know I have found you and then we can talk.”

“Fine,” Gabriel said petulantly, as he pulled his arm from Sirius’ grip. “Lead the way.”

Sirius was shocked for a moment and then began looking for Remus, Dumbledore or Shacklebolt. Checking every few feet to make sure Harry or Gabriel was behind him, Sirius searched the huge crowd. Seeing the tall black Auror in the distance, Sirius hurried hoping to catch Shacklebolt before he disappeared into the crowd.

Gabriel took a deep breath as he repeated Soto’s words from earlier, ‘There is great strength in weakness and great weakness in strength’. Quickly Gabriel did a check: his Occlumency shields were in place and mindless teenage thoughts flitted through the front of his mind. His magical strength was masked, and on the surface only wild, uncontrolled magic could be felt. He was wearing black Doc Martins, tight black denims with chains draped around his hips. His top was a black muscle shirt with HIM’s heartagram on the front in blood red. Gabriel fiddled with his family-bonding bracelet and straightened the cuff Severus had given him. His hair was loose and flowed around his body. In his ears Gabriel wore silver hoops with black pearls dangling from them, the pearls were a gift from Jaime and his family. Above those Gabriel had small emerald studs, which
were linked to the earrings his family wore. His eyes were lined with kohl and he’d added smokey gray and deep green eye shadow. He looked every inch the rebellious teenager; now if he could convince them he was ignorant and had normal magical levels everything would be perfect.

“Sirius, is this him?” Shacklebolt asked.

Gabriel smirked at the tall black Auror. His Baba wasn’t going to like another sexy black man around his dad.

“Yes, can you let the others know? We are headed to his family who are,” Sirius looked in the direction Gabriel had pointed earlier. “Where are they?” Sirius asked turning to Gabriel.

“On the other side of the hill, by the river. They let us camp over there.”

“I can do a Point Me spell once we're away from the crowd. I’ll get the others and meet you there.”

“Good,” Sirius said distractedly. “We’ll see you in a few minutes.”

The Auror nodded in agreement and went to find the other two. Sirius turned to Gabriel and gestured for him to go ahead.

When they came within sight of the tents, Vincent was the first one to see them. “Gabriel, is everything all right? Sirius, what brings you here?”

“Sirius said he needs to talk to us.” Gabriel said.

“What about?” Vincent asked turning to Sirius.

Sirius cleared his throat. “We really need to wait for the others I’m with.”

“I’ll get some tea then. Gabriel, please tidy the circle so it’s ready for guests,” Vincent said calmly despite his confusion, and went off to get tea. Stepping around the bus he saw Mudiwa waiting for him with his arms outstretched. Vincent walked right into them and held his husband tightly.

“Everything is under control. It will be fine you’ll see.” Mudiwa whispered as he held his husband.

Gabriel walked over to the circle, moving to the faint sounds of the concert. Taking a broom he swept the rugs and then began shaking out the pillows the whole time, Sirius watched him in silence.

“Sirius?” Remus’ voiced called out.

“Over here,” he answered.

“What are we doing here? Why would Dumbledore need to see the gypsies?” Remus demanded, as he got closer. “Hello, Gabriel, how are you?” He added politely upon seeing the teen.

Gabriel straightened up and turned to meet Remus’ gaze. “Hello, Remus. I’m confused; I have no idea what’s going on.”

Remus paled as he saw the teen before him, with Lily’s eyes and James’ hair and a mix of both of their features. “Harry,” he whispered hoarsely as tears filled his eyes.

Before anyone could say anything more, Shacklebolt was back bringing with him an odd-looking wizard with long white hair and beard. He wore a pointed hat and a flowing robe, both were a bright lime green with multi-colored pastel shooting stars.
“Hello, young man. I’m Albus Dumbledore, and we have been looking for you for a long time,” he greeted in his friendliest grandfatherly voice.

Gabriel felt the man’s gaze and knew he was being scanned for lack of a better word. Keeping his shields and illusions in place Gabriel folded his arms across his chest. “Gabriel Dragonheart, and I don’t know why you would be looking for me.”

Dumbledore smiled indulgently. “Maybe we could sit down, have some tea and talk?”

“My dad just went to get tea, he should be back soon. Please everyone make yourselves at home,” Gabriel said gesturing to the circle of cushions.

Sirius and Remus sat down next to each other. Dumbledore conjured a cushy chair, and Shacklebolt stood just behind him.

“Cherub, what’s going on?” Soto asked as he and Elena walked over hand in hand.

Gabriel rolled his eyes in a typically teenage fashion. “I have no idea. You already know Sirius and Remus; they have brought Albus Dumbledore with them, and another man who hasn’t been introduced yet.”

“Kingsley Shacklebolt,” said the black Auror.

“Hello, I’m Soto and this is my wife Elena. Sirius, Remus, it’s good to see you,” Soto greeted. Leering at Remus he asked. “Will you be staying for a while?”

Remus blushed softly. “I’m not sure yet.”

Elena just smiled at him as they sat down. Just then Vincent, Mudiwa and Adonis came over, each with a tray of tea things. “Gabriel, go and get Ria and Naveen please,” Mudiwa said, his deep voice calm and controlled.

Gabriel hopped up. “Okay, give me a ginger biscuit.”

Vincent smiled and got Gabriel’s tea ready. “Why don’t we hold off on introductions until everyone is here?”

“Wonderful,” Albus said cheerfully as he helped himself to several biscuits.

Once everyone was seated and introductions were given Dumbledore explained why they were there. “Early this morning we detected a magical burst which led us here. We have some very exciting news.” Dumbledore turned to Gabriel. “You, young man, are a wizard, and not only are you coming to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, but you are also a very important person.” Albus paused there to take a sip of tea. “You are Harry Potter, and we have been looking for you for many years.”

Gabriel jumped up. “I am not Harry Potter. I am Gabriel Alec Dragonheart and I’m not going anywhere!”

Albus smiled a sad, understanding smile. “I understand that this must be very confusing to you.”

“It’s not confusing at all!” Gabriel interrupted with a sneer. “I’m happy where I am. I choose to be with my family. I don’t want to be Harry Potter.”

“You knew,” Sirius whispered, his heart breaking.
Gabriel turned to Sirius and Remus, his eyes sad. “I never wanted to hurt you. I care about you both very much, but my family is here.”

Shacklebolt snarled. “You have no idea what you are saying. I don’t know what these people have told you, but they took you from your relatives’ house.”

Albus winced, he had wanted to avoid this topic; he didn’t want the time discrepancy to come to light.

“I ran away, my relatives are a bunch of bloody bastards!” yelled Gabriel.

“Gabriel!” snapped Mudiwa, “there is no call for that kind of language.” Gabriel sat back down petulantly and drank his tea avoiding everyone’s eyes. “We only told Gabriel his birth name a few years ago,” Mudiwa explained. “When he came to us he didn’t have a name at all.”

Desperate to protect his secrets Albus said, “Thank you for taking such good care of young Harry, however he needs to come with us now.”

Gabriel jumped up again throwing his cup to the ground letting it shatter. “I’m not going anywhere! I don’t want to, and you can’t make me!”

“Gabriel, stop this at once!” Vincent shouted harshly. “We need to hear what Dumbledore has to say.” Gabriel looked at his dad with betrayal in his eyes, and turned running into their tent.

Dumbledore smiled. “Young people are so full of passion, aren’t they?”

Vincent grabbed Mudiwa’s hand, “I’m sorry, he's normally more even tempered than this.”

“Quite all right, he is young still,” Dumbledore said. Secretly he was rather pleased with the boy’s temper; it allowed him to see the magic young Harry possessed. The boy wasn’t as powerful as Albus but could be a useful weapon all the same. Now, he just had to get him to Hogwarts.
Sixty-four

Chapter Sixty-four

Gabriel paced nervously inside the tent. He had taken off twenty minutes ago, and hated not knowing what was going on. Turning as he heard the tent flap pulled back, Gabriel breathed a sigh of relief when his Baba walked in. Waiting until Mudiwa nodded his head that yes he was alone, Gabriel threw himself into his Baba’s arms and clutched him tightly.

“Hush, Cherub, everything is going just as we expected. The Headmaster has convinced us that Hogwarts would be the best place for you right now. He seems indulgent and understanding of your teenage attitude,” Mudiwa offered, comforting his son.

“Remus and Sirius are hurt,” Gabriel whispered into Mudiwa’s neck.

“We knew they would be, but we have a plan for that too, remember?” Mudiwa said pulling back a bit. He sighed when Gabriel looked up at him. Gabriel was just under six feet tall and no longer their little boy.

Understanding his Baba’s expression he kissed him on the cheek. “I will always be your little boy. Now let’s finish this, I want to go to bed.”

Mudiwa snorted his amusement as they walked back to the others.

Gabriel’s petulant expression was back in place as he plopped down between his fathers and glared at the ground.

Vincent sighed. “Gabriel, we have been speaking to Professor Dumbledore and we think it’s best if you attend Hogwarts.”

“What! No, I don’t want to leave!” cried Gabriel.

“We don’t want you to leave either, but we think it’s for the best,” Vincent replied calmly.

“Maybe I can help,” offered Dumbledore magnanimously. “A wizard needs to know how to control their magic. If they can’t it can become out of control and hurt people. Your family are only squibs; they cannot protect themselves from your magic. Nor can they undo any damage you may cause.”

“I would never hurt anyone!” cried Gabriel, his face full of fear and pain. “Baba, Dad, you know I would never…”

“We know, Gabriel, we know you would never hurt us,” Mudiwa said holding his son close to him.

“That is why you must go to Hogwarts,” said Soto, who so far had been silent. “We trust you, but right now you aren’t in control of your magic.”

Gabriel looked at the ground guiltily. “I haven’t hurt anyone.”

“No, you haven’t, and we wish to keep it that way,” said Ria. “The headmaster was explaining that you went through a powerful magical increase last night.”

“Exactly, my dear,” offered Dumbledore. “In fact you should have felt awful this morning, young
Gabriel sighed dramatically. “I did feel awful this morning, but I assumed I had been up too late and drunk too much.”

Albus nodded his head sagely in understanding. Kingsley looked blank, but was filing information away for later. Sirius grinned before returning to the betrayed look he’d worn all night. And Remus was curious; this wasn’t the group he knew. Their behavior was normal enough for a family, but not for them. Their interaction wasn’t warm enough, Gabriel was acting like a snot, which he wasn’t. Something was going on and Remus was determined to figure out what. Golden amber eyes narrowed as he watched the gypsies even more closely.

“I don’t want to hurt anyone,” Gabriel whispered, looking forlornly at his family.

“It won’t be so bad,” Naveen said. “You still have a month before school.”

“Yes, and we will see you on holidays,” added Elena cheerfully.

“Actually, I was thinking it might be best if I took Gabriel with me now, for his own safety. If I could locate him, Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters might also.” Dumbledore was puzzled when no gasp came at the mention of Voldemort’s name.

“No,” Mudiwa said firmly. “We have kept Gabriel safe for many years; we can do so for another month.”

Not wanting to push his luck just yet, Albus nodded. “Then I would like to leave someone here to help just in case.”

“That would be fine,” said Vincent.

“Remus and Sirius are fine, but not Shacklebolt,” insisted Mudiwa, crossing his arms over his chest. Kingsley raised an eyebrow at this and before he could reply he saw Vincent pouting and looking him over with interest. Kingsley's eyes widened in surprise. Dumbledore, who hadn’t noticed, merely agreed.

Fifteen minutes later all of the arrangements had been made, and Dumbledore was rather pleased with how easily the squibs had trusted him. “Well, we shall take our leave now. I’ll send Remus back once he has gathered his effects. Do you have somewhere he can stay?”

“I’m sure we will find somewhere to put him,” Soto offered blandly, causing Remus to flush lightly.

“Oh, hush,” said Elena. “I’ll get a bed ready for him, Headmaster, don’t worry.”

“Thank you, my dear,” Dumbledore said. “Goodnight everyone, and Harry, I’ll see you soon.”

Gabriel scowled at the Headmaster as he left; he had no intention of ever answering to Harry Potter!

“I think that went rather well,” said Dumbledore thoughtfully. “It shouldn’t be hard to separate Harry from the squibs once he sees what wizards can do.” Before his shocked colleagues could comment or protest Dumbledore continued, “I want you to tell Harry all about the amazing things in the wizarding world, and maybe teach him some theory; he is behind his classmates and has a lot of catching up to do. Everyone will be relieved to have the Savior back where he belongs.”

Dumbledore hummed to himself forestalling any comments. Hiring Remus and Sirius to be the DADA teachers this year was perfect; they could bond with Harry and earn his loyalty. Harry Potter
would be firmly in his control by Halloween.

Remus packed methodically as he thought over everything that had happened. He’d had doubts about Dumbledore for a while now. The missions Albus sent him on, the way he looked when he talked about Dark creatures including werewolves, and now the way he was dealing with Gabriel and the gypsies. It just wasn’t right. Remus knew Albus fought for the side of the light, but the way he used people, and the sacrifices he was willing to force others to make, wasn’t settling well with Remus. He had talked to Sirius about it, and while his friend agreed with him he stayed loyal to Albus, thinking that in the end the headmaster would make everything all right.

Remus had no idea what to do about Gabriel and the gypsies. They were his friends, or at least they had been. The gypsies had purposely kept Harry from him; or had they? They had offered Remus their friendship and welcomed him whenever he showed up. Remus had a great relationship with Gabriel; they had spent many hours talking and hanging out. Never had they tried to keep Gabriel/Harry from him. All they had really done was keep others from knowing his birth name. Remus would have done whatever was necessary to protect Gabriel; if his family thought this was the safest thing for him, could Remus really be angry with them?

Remus needed to talk to the gypsies and find out more about what had happened and why they chose to hide Harry Potter from the wizarding world. Then he would need to talk with Sirius and try to calm him down. Remus sighed as he heard the liquor cabinet door slam. He had been living with Sirius for a year now at Grimmauld Place. They had fixed it up together and managed to get rid of most of the Dark artifacts. Hopefully Remus could calm Padfoot down quickly; he needed to go back to the camp. Grabbing his bag, he hurried downstairs.

Sirius turned when he heard Remus enter the room. “Why, Moony? They knew we were looking for him, why did they keep him from us?”

“Would you do anything to keep Harry safe?”

“Of course!” Sirius exclaimed slamming his glass down.

“So would they,” Sirius sighed and sat down on one of the maroon leather couches. “Whatever their reasoning they felt this was the best way to keep Gabriel safe. And while he wasn’t living with us, we did get to see him often. They never kept him from us, and in fact Gabriel would always seek us out when we were there,” Remus reminded him.

“I suppose so, but...” Sirius whined helplessly. Sirius looked around the room not really seeing anything. It was a grown-up Gryffindor's room, full of dark red furniture, small gold accents and rich walnut wood. Over the years Sirius and Remus had redone Grimmauld place. Sirius had secretly been making it a good place for Harry to live when they found him.

Remus sighed and sat down next to his friend pulling him into a hug. “I know, Sirius. I’ll find out as much as I can, and we’ll get to see him during the school year.”

Sirius sighed, knowing Remus was right; Remus was always right. Sirius leaned into his friend enjoying being wrapped in his strong arms and surrounded by his warmth and scent. Remus always smelled of pine, beeswax and something wild and powerful which Sirius could never define.

Before he could stop himself, Sirius blurted out: “Are you going to sleep with Soto and Elena?”

Remus blushed and pulled away. “I don’t think that is really your concern.” Getting up he grabbed his bag.
“What if I want it to be?” Sirius asked softly.

“Sirius?” Remus asked his brown eyes wrinkled in confusion. Since he had gotten out of Azkaban Sirius had fooled around with many people, never anything serious or long lasting, just fun. It was one of the reasons Remus had never approached Sirius. Sirius stood and walked over to his friend. Gently, he framed Remus’ face with his hands and leaned in, kissing him softly.

Remus was stunned; he had never expected this. In school he’d had a crush on the sexy man, but he’d never thought Sirius would return his feelings. Moaning, Remus leaned in, deepening the kiss. Sirius growled and pulled Remus tightly against him. Years of pent-up passions exploded as the two men kissed, tasting each other for the first time. Hands roamed over firm bodies, exploring as best as they could over clothes. The clock chimed in the hall, startling them. Quickly they jumped apart, their breath coming in harsh pants.

“I have to go,” whispered Remus.

‘I know. I’ll see you tomorrow?’ Sirius asked.

“Yes. And Pads… I’ll sleep alone tonight.”

Sirius grinned stupidly as he watched Remus walk away.

When Remus arrived back at the gypsies’ camp only Elena and Soto were sitting by the fire. They both smiled warmly at him as he sat down on the colorful pillows. “Why didn’t you tell us?” Remus asked.

Soto sighed softly. “When Gabriel came to us he was painfully thin, wearing huge, worn, dirty clothes. He flinched from touch or sudden movement and he didn’t even know his name; we chose to take him with us right then and there. When we found out he was Harry Potter we were shocked that he wasn’t being taken better care of; that the wizarding world, which loved and revered him, would leave him in such horrible conditions.”

“I wouldn’t have left him there, or let him go back to that,” Remus choked out once he found his voice. The thought of James’ and Lily’s son being so mistreated hurt him deeply. Knowing that his friend Gabriel had endured that made him feel even worse.

“Remus, we didn’t know that when we first met you. At that time you were firmly with Dumbledore. Even now we’re not sure if you will repeat everything you hear to him,” Soto said his voice calm and without judgment. Still, Remus was hurt by the comment.

“Remus,” Elena said, her accented voice melodious and soothing. “You have the power to help us, to help Gabriel as he enters the wizarding world. You also have the power to hurt us all terribly. You know so much about us, and about Gabriel. If we didn’t have hope and trust in you we wouldn’t have let you get so close to us.”

Remus looked down at his hands in thought. For several minutes they were quiet, each lost in their own thoughts. “How do you think I can help?” Remus finally asked.

Soto smiled. “We’re afraid the headmaster will try and keep Gabriel from us.”

Remus nodded his head in agreement. “He’s said as much. I don’t know what I can do, but I’ll try.”

“Thank you,” Soto replied sincerely. “Do you have other questions or would you like to go to bed
now?”

Remus chuckled. “I have many questions, but right now I want to sleep.” Taking a deep breath Remus continued, “Sirius and I have started…well, something… and I told him I would go to bed alone tonight.”

“We will miss you in our bed, but I’m glad you have someone of your own,” Elena said softly.

Soto got up and gave Remus a soft kiss. “It has been wonderful having you in our bed. I look forward to years of friendship.”

Remus smiled and accepted a soft kiss from Elena. “We set up a tent for you, the dark green one over there,” she said, pointing to a small tent between their own blue tent and Adonis’ orange one.

“I thought…” Remus began, surprised.

“Of course we want you in our tent, but we saw how Sirius was looking at you and figured he’d finally had enough of watching you go off with us,” Soto said with a chuckle.

Remus blushed softly and said goodnight.

August 1st, 1996

Gabriel awoke the next morning feeling rather disoriented. Blinking his eyes open slowly he blushed as he found himself in his father’s bed. He was between them with his brother and sister lying on top of all of them. Last night had been hard, despite all the training and knowledge he had, Gabriel was still nervous about leaving his family and going to Hogwarts. Ever since his first night he had never slept away from his family. They were always together. Gabriel was scared about being in a new place, surrounded by people who didn’t know him, and having to fight in a war, which he was expected to win.

Gabriel had felt very young and frightened last night. His Baba had simply scooped him up and put him in their bed. They always knew what he needed. Knowing there was no way he was going to sneak out of the crowded bed, Gabriel snuggled into his family and went back to sleep.

Sirius arrived at the camp early the next morning. He had the next two days off and even if Dumbledore hadn’t asked him to stay with the gypsies he would have been here. Sirius piled wood on the cold fire and cast Incendio.

“Sirius,” Remus said, his voice even more gravelly with sleep.

“Morning, Moony.”

“Are you all right? Has something happened?” Remus asked waking up more fully.

“What? No, I’m fine; I told you I would be here today,” Sirius replied.

“Sirius, it’s just six in the morning. You've never got up this early.”

“I just couldn’t sleep, not with everything that has happened. What have you found out? What should we do?” Sirius’ voice was sorrowful and anxious.
“Sit down and I’ll tell you what I’ve learned,” Remus said softly.

Twenty minutes later the animagus had tears running down his cheeks. “It’s all my fault, Moony. I should have done better. Not gone after Peter, escaped Azkaban sooner. He must hate me.” Sirius buried his face in his hand.

A rough hand caressed his hair. “It’s not your fault, and I don’t hate you.”

Sirius jerked up as he saw Gabriel kneeling in front of him. “Harry, I’m so sorry.”

“Sirius, please, I prefer Gabriel or even Cherub, I haven’t been Harry since I was a baby. I know my life would have been great with you. And yes, I would have preferred not to have been with the Dursleys, but I’m very happy. I like who I am, and I have a wonderful life.” Gabriel released a breath and took a chance. “I want you to be a part of my life. I hope not telling you my birth name hasn’t ruined that.”

Sirius blinked and took in everything Gabriel had just told him. Reaching out he pulled the young man into his arms. At first he just held James' and Lily’s son, and then he sobbed, “I love you. I have loved you since I first held you in my arms and I began to love you again when I met you years later.”

“I love you too, Godfather.” This caused a fresh wave of tears and Remus could no longer hold back and wrapped his arms around both of them.

“We will help you with Dumbledore, the wizarding world, everything… even Voldemort,” Sirius declared.

“I’m glad I know my son will be safe at Hogwarts, but the question is, can he breathe?” Vincent chuckled.

Sirius pulled back with a sheepish grin. “Sorry; it’s a lot to take in.”

Vincent smiled. “I understand, it’s been a jam-packed twelve hours, hasn’t it?”

“Looks like the excitement hasn’t ended just yet,” Remus said looking past them. Turning, they saw Severus Snape walking towards them.

“Gabriel, come here!” Sirius shouted and pulled the boy behind him, pointing his wand directly at the Potions master. “Here for your master, Snape?” Sirius sneered.

“You’re pathetic, Black!” Severus snorted. Turning to Vincent he asked, “Is Adonis up yet?”

“Unfortunately yes,” said Adonis as he yawned. The golden man was beautiful: his hair was tousled from sleep and his light blue sleep pants were low on his hips. His muscular chest was bare and tantalizing. “Did you need me for something?”

Severus leered at his lover. “Yes, how long do you have?”

Adonis blinked slowly at this, and then grinned. “Vincent, when are we leaving?”

“After breakfast, but you need to do yoga this morning,” Vincent said sternly.

Adonis sighed and rotated his shoulder, wincing slightly. “You’re right, sorry,” Adonis said looking sadly at Severus.

“What happened? Are you all right?” Severus asked quickly descending upon his lover and
examining his shoulders and back.

“I’m fine; I just pulled some muscles in my upper back last night. One of the new kids with us is still learning and I had to compensate for his mistake,” Adonis explained calmly.

“Have you used any potions yet?” Severus demanded.

“He’s taken mild healing and pain relieving potions.” Gabriel answered as he’d been the one to give them to Adonis.

Severus grunted. “Take it easy during yoga, and afterwards I will give you something.”

Adonis smiled brightly. “Thank you.” Leaning up he wrapped his arms around Severus’ neck and kissed him.

The gypsies simply rolled their eyes and looked away. Remus and Sirius were shocked. They had never imagined this side of Snape, let alone seen it!

When they parted, Severus turned to Gabriel. “I feel the need to inform you that Mrs. Weasley is none too happy with you right now.”

Gabriel looked puzzled. “Why?”

“There was a meeting last night; everyone was told how Harry Potter has been found,” Severus explained.

“How long have you known, Snape?” Sirius shouted.

Severus gave an evil grin, “None of your business, mutt. I’m going to help Adonis.”

Gabriel glared at the Potions master's back as he went after his lover. That man was truly evil! With a sheepish grin he turned to Remus and Sirius, hoping to soothe any ruffled feathers.

The next month was an interesting one. Dumbledore visited frequently and did his best to win over Gabriel. He even gave him James’ Invisibility Cloak. His fathers were livid and demanded that Gabriel use it only to keep himself safe.

Gabriel spent a lot of time with Remus and Sirius; they talked about Hogwarts and his birth parents. They also educated him on magical theory and different types of magic. Gabriel would just smile and look amazed or confused as appropriate; he wasn’t ready to let all his secrets be known. His relationship with Remus and Sirius became even stronger, and Gabriel felt confident when the time came they would support him.

Far too soon for his liking Gabriel was saying goodbye to his family. Currently he was wrapped in Ria’s and Naveen’s arms.

“We love you so much,” Ria said with a soft sob.

“We are here for you whenever you need us,” Naveen added.

“I know, and I love you both,” Gabriel said. Moving back a bit he kissed Talha's cheek; he hated that he would miss so much of his baby brother's growing up.

“Bye bye abe’rl,” Talha said in his soft, baby voice.

As he turned Gabriel was swept up in Adonis' arms and hugged tightly. “I’m going to miss you so
much! You take good care of yourself and write often, okay?”

“I promise, I’ll miss you too.”

As soon as he was set down Elena grabbed him and kissed him on both cheeks. “You take care and
try not to break too many hearts.”

Gabriel blushed. “Okay.”

“You are a fine warrior and an even better man,” Soto said looking straight into Gabriel’s green eyes.
“I’m so very proud of you.”

Gabriel’s eyes filled with tears and he through himself into Soto’s arms. It was several minutes before
they pulled apart.

Walking over to Kamala Gabriel held out his arms and with a sob she flew into them. “I love you,
Kamala. I want you to keep studying the books I got for you. In two years it will be you who is
leaving for school.”

“I love you too. Will you write to me?” Kamala said, her face buried in her brother's chest.

“All the time.” With a kiss to her forehead he pulled away.

Kneeling, Gabriel quickly found his arms full as Aubrey and Tatiana climbed into them. “I will miss
you both so much! Now I want you to take good care of each other and keep an eye on Baba and
Dad for me, all right?”

“Okay,” they sniffed sadly.

“When I see you next, Tatiana, you’ll have your pretty blonde hair again, right?” Gabriel playfully
demanded. They’d kept her hair dyed while there were so many wizards coming into their camp over
the past month.

Tatiana giggled through her tears. “Yes.”

“And Aubrey,” Gabriel said turning to his brother. “You will write back to me, won’t you?” Aubrey
nodded, not able to speak. “Good. I love you both so much! I have to go now, so be good.” Gabriel
kissed them both on their foreheads, and gently separated from them.

Wiping away tears from his cheeks, Gabriel walked over to his fathers where they stood by a taxi.
Gabriel waved one last time as they drove away.
Sixty-five

Chapter Sixty-five

A/N: Okay, the books stop here. My sixth year is nothing like canon, and I will not be adding things from the books anymore - at least not on purpose. My Sorting Hat song is rather awful, I did the best I could but it was really hard! So I moved onto other things. Also I know everyone has their own idea of what Hogwarts looks like - my descriptions reflect my own, and maybe a bit of artistic license to make it work with my story.
Rakina fiddled with the song - it is much better now.

September 1st, 1996. King's Cross Station, London

Gabriel clung tightly to Vincent as the Hogwarts Express hissed softly as steam was expelled. “I’m going to miss you so much,” he whispered against his Dad’s neck.

Vincent had to clear his throat in order to speak. “We’ll miss you too, but we'll write all the time, and we'll see you at winter break if not sooner.”

Gabriel nodded sadly, and slowly turned to Mudiwa. Quickly he was swept up in his Baba’s arms and held against his firm chest. Gabriel clung to him, not even noticing that his feet were off the ground. Mudiwa’s voice was rough as he held back tears, “You take good care of yourself and never forget how much we love you.”

“I will, Baba, I love you too,” Gabriel said as a tear fell down his cheek. More voices were heard as people began coming through the barrier. Gabriel wiped his eyes and straightened up.

“This is just a game; we know who you are,” Vincent reminded his son as he kissed his forehead; Gabriel nodded.

Mudiwa reached up and touched the emerald earring in his son’s ear. “Remember we aren’t that far away. Now go and kick some arse.”

Gabriel chuckled and kissed his Baba on the cheek. Taking a deep breath he wrapped his worry-free teenage persona around him, and strutted purposefully onto the bright red train.

Vincent grabbed his husband’s hand as they watched their son walk away. “Let’s go.”

Mudiwa pulled Vincent to him and kissed him softly, not caring who saw them. “He will be fine,” he assured Vincent when they came up for air.

Vincent smiled a bit sadly. “Of course he will; our son is amazing.”

Mudiwa chuckled and pulled his husband out of the station, “Come on, let’s go back to the others. I’m sure Tatiana and Aubrey are waiting for our return.”

Gabriel smiled as he saw his fathers kiss and then leave the platform. Randomly picking out an empty compartment, Gabriel stored his trunk and Hedwig’s cage, and looked out the window. It was
interesting watching the different families arrive: the Muggle-borns' looks of awe and shock made Gabriel grin, while the students who had seen the train before ignored its beauty and grandeur.

Fifteen minutes before the train was to depart Draco Malfoy arrived. Gabriel had wondered how he was doing and what he knew of his sister's supposed death. Gabriel knew Draco had no idea his sister was alive; Severus had told them he felt it was still too risky. Gabriel watched as Draco shook his father's hand looking the perfect, regal heir. When Draco turned to his mum his features softened somewhat. He gave her a hug and kiss then gently took the baby from her arms. The little boy looked to be about a year old. Gabriel smiled as he watched Draco say goodbye to his baby brother. The blond's face softened even more as he cooed to the little boy. As he handed the baby back Gabriel could see Draco’s mask fall back into place.

Gabriel watched the boisterous Weasleys entered the platform. This year it was just Ron and Ginny going to school. Warmth and love flowed around the Weasley family and Gabriel smiled. He was happily watching Neville, Luna, Hermione, Susan, Daphne, Terry and other people he knew arrive when the door to his compartment opened. Turning, Gabriel saw three nervous first years standing there.

“Sorry, we didn’t see anyone in here,” one of them said.

Gabriel smiled warmly. “Come on in, I’m not saving seats for anyone.”

The three entered cautiously, not sure about sitting with an older student. Soon four other first years had settled into the compartment with Gabriel. They had a great time; those who grew up in the wizarding world had fun teaching the others about the snacks on the cart. The Muggle-borns’ expressions once they saw the chocolate frogs were priceless. Gabriel had cast a low-level privacy charm on the door so they remained undisturbed during the trip to Hogwarts; he wasn’t ready just yet to deal with the consequences of being discovered as Harry Potter by those who knew him.

As they neared Hogsmeade station those that needed to changed into their school robes. The first year’s eyes bugged out at Gabriel’s robe. It was a deep black, with a mandarin collar, and was fitted over his chest and arms, flaring out just below his hips and falling in a flowing curtain of fabric around his legs.

“Those aren’t proper school robes,” said Adrian, whom Gabriel thought was going to be sorted into Ravenclaw.

“Actually the school rules, say a ‘simple black work robe’. Madam Malkin's offers ones which the school approves of. There is nothing in the rules that says you cannot wear any kind of black robe you want, so long as it doesn’t interfere with class work,” Gabriel explained.

“You look great.”

Gabriel smiled at the sweet little girl. “Thank you, Rose.” Just then the wheels screeched as the train pulled into Hogsmeade station.

Excitedly they exited the train, Gabriel following behind the first years, smiling indulgently at their exuberance. As he neared the exit Gabriel looked up and caught shocked gray eyes. Smirking softly he nodded hello as he passed the stunned Slytherin.

Stepping out into the cold rain, Gabriel shivered. A voice boomed over the crowd: “Firs' years over here! Firs' years!”

Making his way over to the huge man Gabriel made sure his new friends all kept up. “Hello sir, I
need to be Sorted, and I’m assuming I come with you?”

Hagrid looked down, his small beetle-black eyes looking into large emerald ones. His voice got gruff. “Blimey, it’s little Harry Potter! Look at you. I knew you when you were just a wee babe.” Hagrid wiped at his eyes with a huge handkerchief.

Gabriel smiled at the man before him. He was about ten feet tall and had a bushy black beard and wild black hair, “I hope you don’t mind, but I prefer to go by the name Gabriel. Am I to stay with you then?”

“Yeah, hop into a boat I’ll get you to the Sorting feast,” Hagrid said and returned to calling out for any stray first years that hadn’t heard him yet.

Gabriel turned when he felt a touch on his arm. “Gabriel, I’m so glad you’re finally here,” said Luna in her dreamy fashion. “I can’t wait for all the trouble you’re going to cause. It should be a fun year.”

“Thanks, Luna,” Gabriel said as he watched the odd girl walk away. As he looked at the horseless carriages, he caught sight of Ginny who was staring at him with open-mouthed shock. Gabriel simply waved cheerfully and turned back to Hagrid as he directed them into the boats.

Gabriel was seated with a different group of first years, for the boat ride. They chatted nervously, and Gabriel tried to keep them calm. Everyone gasped softly as the castle came into view. It loomed above them perched on top of a sheer cliff. The huge, gray stone walls, and small glowing windows promised warmth and protection from the cold rain. Large round towers kept watch above the main part of the castle. Hogwarts could easily have been a scary, dreary looking castle, and yet the gray stone felt inviting. Gabriel smiled as he felt the magic of the castle greeting her new students.

Soon they were standing, shivering and wet, in a room off the side of the Great Hall. A strict-looking, gray-haired witch walked in; she wore a black robe with green tartan trim, and a witch’s hat.

Speaking in a clipped Scottish accent she said, “Welcome to Hogwarts, I am Professor McGonagall, the Deputy Headmistress. All of you will follow me into the Great Hall where you will be Sorted into your houses.”

Turning, Professor McGonagall walked into the Great Hall with a line of wet first years trailing behind her. Gabriel stayed back just a bit, keeping to the shadows and watching carefully.

The hall was huge, and instantly Gabriel’s gaze was drawn upwards to the magical ceiling. Gray clouds rained down on the hall, the illusion disappearing before it touched anyone. Candles lit the stone room, floating above the tables in simple metal candelabras. There were five long tables in the hall, four of the tables where placed in rows side by side, one for each of the houses. The fifth table faced inwards, and all of the professors sat there speaking quietly and looking over their students making sure they were all behaving.

Professor McGonagall walked over to an old tattered hat that sat on a stool, and once they were all in the room, a tear just above the brim opened and the hat began to sing a jaunty little tune.

I have sat on the head
Of each of the founders
I know what they treasured most in this world
And I'll use that to judge where you belong

Those caring and loyal
Who look past the rough
To see into the hearts of those that they meet
Find their place with Hufflepuff.

Those who love books,
With a well-organized mind.
Learning and growing
In Ravenclaw, you'll find

The courageous and bold,
Who always lend a hand
I will place in Gryffindor
Won't that be grand?

Now do not fret, for I’m not done yet.
Slytherin made a home for the cunning and ambitious
Those often misunderstood traits
Can help win wars and change fates.

Four friends made this school
How sad they would be
To see their beloved houses
Bicker and fight.

For our founders knew
Great strength lay only
In the power of all four
Standing together, united and free.

Everyone was silent as the last notes of the hat's song echoed through the Great Hall. Finally McGonagall cleared her throat. “When I call your name, please step forward.”

Before she could say anything Gabriel stepped forward. “I’m sorry to interrupt, Professor McGonagall, but can something be done for the children? They’re freezing cold and wet,” Gabriel said pointing to the row of shivering eleven-year-olds.

“Quite right, my dear boy,” said Dumbledore sagely, and with two quick waves of his wand all of them were dry and warm.

“Thank you Headmaster,” said Gabriel politely, and stepped back just inside the shadows.

The students looked on in silent shock, not only was he so much older than the others waiting to be Sorted, but he had interrupted Professor McGonagall! Those who had seen Gabriel before at the Solstice celebration whispered to their friends in wonder; what was a gypsy squib doing at Hogwarts?

Professor McGonagall pursed her lips in annoyance and began to read out the names. One by one the first years were Sorted, and for each one Gabriel clapped as their house was called out. Soon all of the first years were clapping for each other, much to the shock and annoyance of the older students. When the last young first year had been Sorted all eyes turned at look at Gabriel.

Minerva McGonagall took a deep breath and then called out, “Harry Potter.”

Everyone began whispering frantically, while those who knew Gabriel just looked on in wonder.
Gabriel, however, stood there examining his nails and looking very bored.

This went on for a minute until Minerva snapped, “Young man, I have called your name, please step forward.”

“I do not go by the name Harry Potter,” Gabriel said simply.

Professor McGonagall was about to argue with him when the hat spoke up. “Gabriel Alec Dragonheart, get over here!”

Gabriel smiled brightly and quickly walked over to the stool. Sitting down, he placed the hat upon his head. All of the students whispered quietly trying to figure out what was going on, while waiting for the young man – who may or may not be Harry Potter – to be Sorted.

“Hello, Gabriel; that's rather a full mind you have there, don’t you think?” the hat chuckled into his head.

“Sorry, sir, shall I clear it for you?” Gabriel thought politely.

“No, I'm fine. Well, shall I Sort you?”

“Please.”

“You're intelligent, brave, very loyal, and rather cunning. You could easily be placed in any of the four houses. And seeing as you are the descendant of all four founders and you have read all of their texts and journals, indeed each house would be fine. And yet any of them is not enough to make you really happy.”

The hat was pensive for a moment then, with laughter in his voice, said, “You’re certainly going to shake things up, aren’t you? So where would you like to be placed, Little Angel?”

“Where I can do the most good,” Gabriel answered.

“Slytherin!” shouted the hat so everyone could hear.

Gabriel took off the hat and stood ignoring the gobsmacked faces around him. The first years all clapped for him and Gabriel grinned at them as he passed. Soon the older Slytherins woke up and clapped for their new housemate. Gabriel sat down in a space made by Dillon, one of the first years he’d met on the train.

Dumbledore stood up. “Welcome everyone. That was quite an exciting Sorting ceremony if I do say so myself. Well now, just a few announcements and we will eat. First, the Forbidden Forest is just that – it is forbidden for any student to enter and for good reason. Next, this year our Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher will be Professor Remus Lupin, and assisting him will be Auror Sirius Black.”

Dumbledore twinkled as the students politely clapped. “Mr. Filch, our caretaker, wishes me to remind everyone that there is to be no magic in the hallways, and he has a list of banned items pinned to his door which includes the full Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes catalog. Finally, as you all noticed, we have an older student joining us this year. Yes, he is Harry Potter, although obviously he prefers to go by Gabriel Dragonheart. And now… let’s eat!”

Severus rolled his eyes at the Headmaster’s announcement of the return of their savior; looking down at his snakes he caught Gabriel’s green eyes. The boy smiled brightly at him. Severus rolled his eyes again; Gabriel was not nearly discreet enough to be one of his snakes. This was going to be a very
Gabriel chatted with the first years surrounding him while listening carefully to the conversations of his other housemates. There was a rather interesting one happening between Draco and his friends.

“Blaise, your mother remarried over the summer?” a girl with black hair asked.

“Yes, she married an American named Hank Johnson,” Blaise said wrinkling his nose. “Finally! It took three years for the Ministry to declare Carlos dead.”

“That's a long time, especially as you remember hearing him scream so loudly. One would think that would have counted for something.” Draco smirked.

“My poor mum,” Blaise said with fake sincerity. “First my baby brother died and then Carlos went missing. It was really hard on her. But she’s living in New York now with Hank and is very happy.”

The three friends smiled secretively. Draco couldn’t get revenge for his sister yet so they had decided to go after Blaise’s step-dad, Carlos. They had found an obscure potion which would dissolve and then compost a body so that all that was left was dirt. It was intended for use on dead pets’ bodies, but the Slytherins were not above using it on a human, especially such a disgusting excuse for a man. Blaise’s mum had some wonderful irises that year.

Gabriel smiled as he saw vegetarian dishes laid on the table near him. He’d asked Remus to speak with the house elves about the meals and wondered if he should plan on preparing his own food. Apparently Remus was now afraid to go near the kitchens because the house elves had been so offended by the question. They always provided food each student would like; it was part of their magic.

Gabriel scooped a portion of the pasta in front of him; it was covered in fresh tomatoes, basil and small balls of mozzarella cheese. Carefully he placed a bit in his mouth and hummed in pleasure, the house elves had used lots of fresh garlic and the dish was delicious.

The students sitting around him didn’t know what to do with such an outward display of emotion. Gabriel ignored them and hummed more softly with his next bite. The first years giggled and went back to their own meals. Looking up, Gabriel saw Remus grinning at him and shaking his head. Gabriel beamed back.

Next to Remus, Sirius sat pouting and picking at his food. Gabriel looked at Remus with questioning eyes. Remus shrugged and mouthed ‘Slytherin’. Gabriel nodded; he knew his godfather wouldn’t be happy about where he’d been placed.

Remus’ eyes darted to the group of Gryffindors who were whispering and looking over at Gabriel. Gabriel just shrugged his shoulders and smiled at Ron as he turned to look at him again. Ron gave a pained smile and quickly turned back to his friends. Gabriel shook his head at all the fuss and went back to eating and listening to the conversations around him.

After dessert, which consisted of a chocolate cake which had Gabriel moaning and the first years giggling at him, Dumbledore bid them good night.

As Gabriel stood his name was frantically called. Turning, he saw Ginny, Neville, Ron and Hermione heading his way with others who knew him from Summer Solstice following behind. “Hello, how are you?” Gabriel asked cheerfully.

“What?” yelled Ron. “How can you be so calm after…”
“Ron!” Hermione snapped, “We agreed you wouldn’t talk until you’ve calmed down.

Ron folded his arms over his chest fuming silently, his face getting redder with each moment.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Hermione asked softly.

Gabriel’s brow wrinkled in confusion. “Why would I? I know all of you, and we’re friends, but really we only see each other once a year. I don’t know all about you, or any of your secrets that I’m aware of.”

“But you knew mum and dad were looking for you,” Ginny said, sounding hurt.

“My fathers and I talked about it once they told me my birth name and what people expected of me. We decided it would be best if I stayed lost.” Gabriel shrugged as if this would answer all their questions.

“That’s not good enough,” snarled Ron, no longer able to keep quiet. “You've lied to us for years and I want to know why!”

“I have never lied to you.” Ron scoffed at this, but Gabriel continued, “No, really; has anyone ever asked me if I was Harry Potter? By the time I knew my birth name I had already been adopted; legally my name is now Gabriel Alec Dragonheart, and that is who I am.”

Ron was gearing up for more when Remus came up to them. “You all need to head to your common rooms. Take some time to think about things and what you want from each other. You have known each other for many years, if you want to keep your friendship maybe each of you should try looking at things from the other person’s perspective.”

“There is no friendship to keep; he’s nothing but a lying, sneaky snake!” Ron said in a fit of temper and stormed off.

Ginny sighed. “Mum was really upset when she found out Harry Potter had been found. She wouldn’t tell us why, only that we knew him already. Obviously none of us were expecting you.”

Ginny paused, gathering her thoughts. “You helped me and I don’t want to lose my friend. I’m hurt that you didn’t tell us, but you’re right, we don’t share secrets. Maybe one day we will?”

Gabriel smiled and gave her hug. “That would be nice.”

“I haven’t known you nearly as long, but I think you should have told an adult wizard,” Hermione said firmly.

Gabriel smiled; she would be a stickler for the rules. “Well, maybe someday if you hear the whole story you’ll change your mind.”

Hermione’s eyes widened at the thought of finding out more information; nodding, she left with her friends.

“What do you think about all of this, Neville?” Gabriel asked. He really liked Neville, who had been coming to the Solstice party for the past three years.

“Can we still be friends now that you’re in Slytherin?” the shy boy asked.

“Of course we can,” Gabriel said firmly.

Neville smiled softly. “Good night then, I’ll see you tomorrow.”
Gabriel beamed. “Sleep well, Neville. When we get our timetables we should compare to see if we have classes together.”

Neville blushed and nodded as he walked off to Gryffindor tower.

“Let me show you where the Slytherin common room is,” Remus offered.

“I can do it,” Draco said, stepping from the shadows. “The other prefects took care of the first years.”

“Thank you, Mr. Malfoy. I’ll see you both tomorrow,” Remus said.

“Good night, Remus, and tell Sirius to stop pouting.” Gabriel walked over to Draco, with Remus’ laughter following him down the hall.

“Well, Dragonheart, this is quite a surprise,” Draco stated.

Gabriel’s brow wrinkled. “Do we really have to use surnames?”

“Seeing as I don’t know you, I think it’s appropriate,” said Draco stiffly. “No one knows I was there that summer,” Draco added in a whisper. “It would be dangerous for anyone to find out.”

“I understand, Malfoy.”

Draco’s mask stayed firm as he continued down the hallway, stopping in front of a nondescript patch of bare stone wall. “The password is ‘purity’.”

Gabriel rolled his eyes at the password and walked inside the transformed doorway to see where he would be living for the next year.
Sixty-six

Chapter Sixty-six

Just as Gabriel entered the Slytherin common room, Professor Snape snarked, “I’m so glad you could join us, Mr. Dragonheart.”

Gabriel smirked and walked over to stand with the rest of his house, while Draco stood off to Severus’ left.

“Now that we are all here…” Snape glared at Gabriel once again, “…I will explain things. Slytherin is a great house no matter what you have heard or what others might say. We are clever, cunning, and ambitious. While others might see these as negative traits, we know they are of great value. Slytherins stick together and support each other. There will be no fighting within my house, and certainly nothing in front of the rest of the school.”

While Severus was giving his welcoming speech, Gabriel looked around the cool, damp room. It was large, containing four fireplaces spaced far apart with mahogany chairs and couches upholstered in deep green placed around them. There were several desks, tables and smaller groupings of couches and chairs. It looked to Gabriel that the whole of Slytherin could comfortably make use of the common room without anyone feeling crowded. There were many tapestries on the walls, most showing noble ladies and gentlemen, fierce warriors posed after victory or magical beasts. Some of the tapestries swayed softly as if they covered entrances to hallways instead of solid walls. The room was comfortable and regal; not a place one could really let go, yet pleasant enough to hang out in. Gabriel smirked at the subtle touches of silver and the snake motifs decorating the room before turning his attention back to Severus.

Severus paused for a moment looking into each of his young snakes’ eyes. He cared deeply for those in his protection and he always did his best to make sure they had what they needed. “There are older housemates to help you, prefects to guide you, and myself. If you need me, my door is open. I cannot help you if I don’t know what is going on. I expect you all to act with pride and to uphold the greatness of Slytherin house,” Professor Snape said with conviction. “The prefects will show the first years to their dorms. Mr. Dragonheart, you will be rooming with the other sixth year boys. All new students have a code of conduct and a list of rules placed on their bed to read. I expect both to be followed exactly. If you have any questions that cannot be answered by these papers or by an older student, come and see me tomorrow. Good evening.” Severus swept out of the room, his robes snapping dramatically around him.

Draco stepped forward, the self-assurance and power of his position evident in every move. Unfortunately, most of the first years were looking to Gabriel for answers and assurance. Draco glared silently; Gabriel quirked an eyebrow at Draco and looked down. Dillon, Basil, Rowan, Kyle, Katelyn, Teresa, and Ivy were all looking up at him. Gabriel turned to Draco, “So, Malfoy, would you be willing to help us work things out?”

“I am a prefect; that is one of my duties.” Gesturing for a black-haired girl to come forward, Draco continued, “This is Pansy Parkinson, the other sixth year prefect. She will show the girls to their dorms. After you are settled and have had time to look over the rules and code of conduct, I am willing to take anyone who needs to post a letter to the Owlery before curfew.”

“Come along,” Pansy said coolly.
Katelyn and Teresa went right away, but Ivy held back. Gabriel knelt down and whispered into her ear. She smiled happily and took off after the others.

“If everyone is ready,” Draco sneered at Gabriel, and turned to the boy’s dorms. After dropping off the first year boys, Draco pulled back a tapestry of a blue-green sea dragon and walked behind it. There was a short hallway and then a large oak door. Draco opened it and went inside; Gabriel followed behind him calmly.

Inside there were six beds, with trunks at the foot and a small bedside table and an armoire for each boy. The four-poster beds were hung with dark green, velvet curtains, and had green blankets with silver snakes embroidered on them. Gabriel nodded politely to his roommates and went over to the bed which had his trunk in front of it.

“As everyone can see, we have a new roommate,” Draco said. “This is Gabriel Dragonheart. Let me introduce Blaise Zabini, Gregory Goyle, Vincent Crabbe, and Theodore Nott.”

Each boy nodded in greeting as he was introduced.

“Hello, nice to meet you all,” Gabriel said. Turning, he picked up the parchments and read them while observing his new roommates. Crabbe and Goyle looked rather troll-like. They were large and at first glance seemed rather slow, but there was a gleam in their eyes, something which let Gabriel know they chose to be underestimated. Nott was thin with stringy, dirty-blond hair. His eyes were sharp and clever, and though he talked easily enough with the other boys he wasn’t really friendly with them.

Zabini looked enough like Aubrey that Gabriel had to force himself not stare. He had deep brown eyes, mocha skin, high cheekbones, and small soft curls which fell to the top of his shoulders. He was friendly, yet his body language showed he was really only comfortable with Draco. Malfoy was the tallest boy in the room; Gabriel guessed he was about six foot two. His body was lean and graceful, and every movement had a purpose. His skin was alabaster white, with pink lips and high cheekbones tinted a soft pink. Draco’s gray eyes were sharp and very intelligent, and his silvery blond hair hung freely around his face, the ends about an inch lower than his jaw. The resemblance to Tatiana was there, however his features were sharper than hers. Gabriel sighed and went back to looking over the parchments.

Blaise sat down next to Draco as he saw his friend rub his temples. “Did you read his aura?” Blaise asked after casting a muffling charm to mask their voices.

“Several times. Unfortunately, I can’t get a good read. For a long time it looks like he has a very average power level and then there will be a wave of intense golden power, stronger than anything I’ve seen before. I don’t know what to make of it.”

“At least he's worth looking at,” Blaise smirked. Draco had whined many times about Blaise being the only attractive boy in their dorm.

Draco snorted. “You’re just tired of me looking at you.”

Blaise smirked back at him. “I know I’m gorgeous and you can’t help yourself, but I’m just not interested in you in that way.”

Draco was just about to make a scathing comment when he was interrupted.

“Malfoy, I have a few questions,” Gabriel said softly.

Blaise waved his wand and dropped the muffling charm.
“Okay.”

“There’s nothing on here about music,” Gabriel began.

“Well they don’t teach music here, but anyone with an instrument usually finds time alone in their dorm and puts up a silencing charm,” Draco answered before letting Gabriel finish.

“Well that’s good to know, but I was actually referring to Muggle music. Can I play it in the dorm or common room?”

Draco sneered at the boy’s stupidity. “No, Dragonheart, you can’t. There is too much magic at Hogwarts for electronics to work here.”

Gabriel blinked, “So the only thing stopping me from playing music is the assumption that I can’t, not an actual rule?”

Draco snorted, “If you can get music to play, go for it.”

“Brilliant! My other question is about a place to exercise. Is there a room in the castle?” Gabriel asked cheerfully.

Draco blinked slowly; he didn’t think he’d ever had someone ask for a place to exercise. He and his Uncle Severus used a room off Severus’ private quarters, but he wasn’t going to offer that to Gabriel. “I don’t know of any place, it depends on what you want to do. Simple exercises can be done in the dorm or the common room when it’s empty.”

“That will do for now. I’ll ask Professor Snape about space later. Thanks.” Gabriel went back to unpacking.

A few moments later, Crabbe screamed and pointed a trembling hand toward Gabriel. “D-d-dragonheart! You have a s-s-snake on you,” the frightened boy spluttered.

Gabriel lifted Aurora from around his neck. “Her name is Aurora; she’s my snake.” Crabbe cringed back in fear. “I’m sorry; I didn’t think she would be a problem. I’ll make sure she stays away from you.” Gabriel placed Aurora’s head on his shoulder and let her wind herself back around his neck.

“Is she poisonous?” asked Goyle.

“Only when she chooses to be.”

“What the bloody hell is that supposed to mean?” snapped Nott, who wasn’t thrilled about Dragonheart to begin with.

“It means,” said Blaise excitedly, “that Aurora is a magical snake.” Getting up, he walked over to Gabriel. “Can I pet her?”

Gabriel smiled. “Sure.”

Blaise reached out and carefully stroked the smooth, dry scales, their iridescent black being even more beautiful up close.

“This is nice,” hissed Aurora happily. “He may stay; the others will have to prove their worthiness.”

Gabriel tried to hold back his laughter, but Blaise caught it. “What?” he asked.

“Her hissing tickles my neck,” he lied smoothly.
The others watched Blaise and Gabriel warily. Gabriel realized he couldn’t live like this for long, and decided that a bit of Gryffindor bluntness was needed. “I get that I’m some big celebrity in your world, and that having a new guy in your dorm after five years must be odd. So how about this: I’ll answer one question from each of you, and you won’t have to answer any of mine.”

The Slytherins pondered the offer for a moment, looking for loopholes or how it could backfire on them, and then each consented.

“Okay,” said Gabriel, “who’s first?”

All the boys turned to look at Goyle. “Where have you been?” he asked.

“I have been living with a troupe of gypsy squibs traveling all over Europe and even into Asia.”

“Who adopted you?” Crabbe asked next.

“Vincent and Mudiwa Dragonheart.”

Nott thought about his question for a few minutes before asking, “How did you stay hidden from the wizarding world?”

Gabriel grinned. “Gypsy magic.” Nott began to get irritated when Gabriel didn’t offer more information, until he added, “Dumbledore thinks it was accidental magic.”

Draco’s brow furrowed. Accidental magic was strictly emotionally driven; what had hidden Gabriel was a long-term ward.

“Now a really important question,” Blaise said smugly. “Do you go for women or men?”

Gabriel blushed and laughed. “Men.”

Everyone turned to see what Draco was going to ask. Draco looked straight at Gabriel, his gaze piercing. “Does your family hate you now?”

Gabriel’s brow crinkled in confusion. “No, why would they?”

Draco sneered lightly and standing up he crossed his arms over his chest. “Well, you’re magical and they’re not. You’re becoming what they can’t: a wizard.”

Gabriel looked at Draco with a pitying glance. “There’s so much more to life than being a wizard. My family is happy for me and they’re content with their own lives. They don’t wish for more.”

“Yeah, right,” scoffed Nott.

Gabriel’s face became a cold mask. “I understand why you would say that. We have helped to heal your discarded, unwanted people over the years: children not accepted at Hogwarts and abandoned by their parents; babies having been measured and found wanting and in so much pain they couldn’t be consoled. Magic is merely one small part of a human being. At least, it should be.”

Gabriel turned and pulled a box out of his trunk. Closing the lid, he ran his finger swiftly over the lock. It was a feature the store had put on his trunk that enabled Gabriel to lock his trunk without letting on that he knew any magic. He scanned his dorm mates quickly. Crabbe, Goyle and Nott had turned back to their own unpacking; their bodies screaming their embarrassment. Draco’s and Blaise’s eyes were locked on him, their faces pale and uncertain. “If you’ll excuse me, I promised Ivy that I would meet her in the common room to write letters to our parents.”
The others watched their newest dorm mate leave. “Well, Draco, that question certainly provoked him,” said Nott sarcastically.

“Apparently,” said Draco, much more calmly than he felt. “He’ll have a hard time in Slytherin if he keeps being that open with his emotions.”

“I wonder who’s been left with his gypsies?” said Goyle unthinkingly.

Blaise, who had never got over his baby brother’s death, snapped: “He probably doesn’t even know! The children wouldn’t have a note with their names on it!”

“Let’s unpack,” Draco said, suddenly changing the topic. “I have to take the sniveling first years to the Owlery and I’m tired.” At that the boys all unpacked quietly and quickly.

After Gabriel had read the first years a story in a tucked-away corner of the common room and managed to get them to go to bed, he went to his dorm. It was empty, so he decided to do some yoga. His body was stiff and achy from sitting all day. After a quick change, Gabriel rolled out his yoga mat and was stepping onto it when Draco and Blaise walked into the dorm room. At their quizzical looks, Gabriel explained.

“I’m used to being more physically active and I’m really stiff and sore. I’m planning on doing some yoga. I don’t care if you’re in here.” He shrugged absently.

“Whatever,” said Draco, and he went over to his bed with Blaise following behind. Gabriel reached his arms up over his head and then bent forward, his forehead touching his knees and his arms wrapping around the backs of his legs.

“Dear Merlin!” shouted Blaise. “You don’t look very stiff to me.”

Gabriel snickered. “Normally I can put my head on my shins.” With a soft moan Gabriel placed his palms on the floor and stepped back into downward dog.

Draco had to bite back a moan as Gabriel’s perfect arse was pushed up into the air. Both boys were so intrigued they openly stared as Gabriel went through his routine. While they had each trained with Severus and were certainly more flexible and stronger than most, Gabriel was far beyond them.

Twenty minutes later, as Gabriel lay down in corpse pose to rest he grinned. “Normally people pay to see me perform.”

Blaise and Draco were instantly brought back to reality. Blaise laughed. “Sorry, I’ve never seen anyone do that before. It was amazing.”

“Thank you, it keeps me in shape for the hard stuff.” Slowly he got up and rolled up his mat. “I’m going to shower and head for bed. Would one of you cast a silencing charm on my bed? It doesn’t look like anyone else is going to bed soon.”

“It’s only 9:30,” scoffed Blaise. “I was surprised you got the first years to bed so early.”

Gabriel shrugged and grabbed what he needed from his armoire. “I get up early. Breakfast is at eight and classes at nine, right?”

“Correct,” said Draco, puzzled.
“Brilliant, that will give me time to work out in the morning,” Gabriel said absently as he walked off to the bathroom.

“That might be worth getting up early to watch,” said Blaise.

Draco merely hummed, and as he walked by Gabriel’s bed cast the requested silencing charm.

Thursday, September 2nd. 7 am

Draco groaned as he was forced into consciousness. He hated getting up early, but he hated rushing in the morning even more. Slowly, he pushed himself up and blinked at the sight before him. Gabriel’s bed was across the room from his and right now he had the perfect view. Gabriel’s long black hair was damp and wild. He had slipped on a robe similar in style to the one he wore yesterday, but this one was black, with a black, embroidered pattern of dragons decorating it. The top hung open as Gabriel slowly buttoned the row of tiny buttons going up the front of the robes. Draco swallowed thickly as he stared at the muscular tan chest. Every movement made Gabriel’s muscles shift under the silky looking skin.

“Good morning,” Gabriel whispered when he saw Draco was awake.

“Dragonheart,” he replied coolly trying to regain his composure.

Getting up, Draco headed to the bathroom. After taking care of his body’s needs he stepped under the hot spray of the shower. He was startled to hear someone walk into the room. Peeking out, he saw Gabriel at the mirror. He combed out his hair and began to plait it.

Turning away, Draco washed himself with his milk and honey bath set. His thoughts kept returning to Gabriel and soon his cock began to fill with blood. Hearing Gabriel leave and knowing no one else would be up for a bit, Draco wrapped his hand around his aching cock. Quickly he stroked himself as different images of Gabriel flashed through his mind. Imagining Gabriel on his knees sucking his cock, Draco felt his balls tighten. He imagined emerald green eyes looking into his and he came with a soft whimper. Draco leaned against the cool tiles for a moment until he heard Blaise moving about. Quickly he rinsed and went to get ready for the day.

Draco was surprised when he didn’t see Gabriel - no, Dragonheart, he reminded himself - in the common room or at breakfast. Looking around the Great Hall he wondered if Dragonheart was sitting at one of the other tables.

“Where’s Dragonheart?” Blaise whispered.

“I’m not his keeper, how should I know?” sneered Draco.

Blaise just rolled his eyes. It was obvious to him that Draco fancied the new boy. Oh well, Draco could play his games as long as he wanted to. Blaise went back to his breakfast.

No one noticed when Gabriel first entered the Great Hall as breakfast was rather casual and people came and went until the chime rang for classes. However, one by one everyone looked up as he danced his way towards the Slytherin table. His movements were small, a hop in his step, an occasional sway of hips, with a consistent bopping of his shoulders and head. There were whispers about the strange strings which hung down from his ears.

“But electronics don’t work in Hogwarts!” gasped Hermione. “It says so in Hogwarts, A History.”

Gabriel appeared oblivious to everyone watching him, but in fact he knew exactly the kind of
disruption he was causing. Humming, Gabriel helped himself to an odd-looking orange-colored juice, toast, yogurt and fresh fruit. His head and upper body continued swaying slightly to the music as he ate. Looking around, he almost laughed at the shocked faces staring at him curiously. He wondered how long it would take for someone to ask him what he was listening to.

Feeling someone sit next to him, Gabriel smiled down into Ivy’s hazel eyes. “Good morning, Ivy.”

“Hi, Gabriel. What are those things in your ears?” Ivy asked as she scooped up some scrambled eggs.

“They’re little speakers; they let me hear music.” Gabriel answered. Ivy’s brow wrinkled in puzzlement. Carefully, Gabriel took the ear buds out and placed them in Ivy’s little ears.

“Oh,” squeaked Ivy. Grinning, she bopped her head, much as she had seen Gabriel do a moment ago.

Gabriel laughed and went to take back his music as Dillon moved over to them and demanded, “Me next!”

Gabriel smiled at the round face and thin almond eyes, trying to look fierce. “Of course, my lord,” Gabriel said dramatically.

Dillon blushed lightly but didn’t back down. His brow wrinkled in confusion as he listened to the music, “What is this?”

Gabriel shrugged. “It’s Muggle music.”

“Is it all like this?” Ivy asked.

“No, I have Sisters of Mercy in there right now,” Gabriel answered taking a bite of yogurt. “I have lots of different kinds of music. Maybe we can listen to some later in the common room.”

The first years smiled and began to talk excitedly. Draco scowled. Not only was he being ignored even though he was just a few seats away, but he really wanted to hear the music, however he didn’t want to ask. As if he could hear his thoughts, Gabriel turned and handed Draco the little things they had placed in their ears. Draco took them without comment and handed one over to Blaise. The song started with just a woman’s voice, and then the music was added. The music was odd, a little harsh, but the singer had a deep, rich voice. Draco decided he liked the song; it made he want to move his body to the thrumming beat. Looking over, Draco saw Blaise’s eyes were lit with excitement at the Muggle music. Not wanting to seem like they were enjoying it, Draco handed the contraption back to Dragonheart. “Thanks,” he said softly.

Gabriel smiled and was about to say something when Professor Snape was suddenly looming above them.

“I have everyone’s class schedules,” Snape said. “Make sure you get to class on time.” After passing them out, Professor Snape strode out of the Great Hall in a dramatic flourish.

Gabriel snickered and looked at his schedule, his eyes widened at what he saw. “How is this possible?” he asked mostly to himself.

Draco looked over his shoulder and his eyebrows arched in surprise. Dragonheart was in sixth year Transfigurations, Charms, Defense Against the Dark Arts, Potions, Care of Magical Creatures and Herbology.
“Already using your fame to get your way I see,” Draco drawled superiorly. “Didn’t you get everything you wanted?”

“Oh yes, Malfoy, of course I want to be in classes I don’t deserve to be in. It will be so much fun to be horribly behind everyone else and have no idea of what is going on,” Gabriel snapped and yanked his tape player out of his bag. Turning it off, he slid the small silver machine out of its black netting glinting with obsidian beads. Angrily, he yanked out the tape and muttered to himself as he searched his bag for a new one. “Metallica, perfect,” he muttered under his breath. Replacing the machine, he slid the ear buds into place and managed to smile encouragingly to the first years. “Have fun. I’ll see you at lunch.”

Draco watched as Gabriel stormed out of the hall, his anger evident with every step. “This is going to be interesting,” commented Blaise softly in his ear.

“It does seem that way,” said Draco casually as he returned his focus to his breakfast.
Chapter Sixty-seven

Parseltongue is in bold

Thoughts are in italics.

Sunday, September 19th

Gabriel looked again at the invitation he’d received, the color-changing neon green, pink, and orange ink hurting his eyes.

Dearest Silent Investor,
You are most graciously invited to a private tour of the soon to be opened Weasley's Wizard Wheezes joke shop, located in the now prestigious Diagon Alley! If you’re clever enough to sneak out of school, please arrive at our shop at half past two for your tour. We would be honored if you joined us for tea and cakes afterwards, and we promise not to make them ourselves! To Floo, just call out- ‘The twins’ backroom.’
Please RSVP with your acceptance, because otherwise we will come to the school to see you and our mum will find out that you gave us money. Truthfully, you’re in enough trouble as it is.
Sincerely and most graciously,
Fred and George Weasley

Gabriel laughed at the mixture of formality and silliness in the invitation. He was looking forward to getting out of the school. After three weeks of exploring and watching everyone, he was now very bored and restless. Sneaking out of the school would at least be fun, but unfortunately not very challenging. The Founders’ journals had left him with detailed maps and instructions, so Gabriel had already discovered the secret passages. Lately, to keep entertained Gabriel had taken to making sure the others would see him still in the classroom as they left and he would then use the passages to hurry and get to the next classroom before anyone else. It was driving several people insane.

So now he had a plan for the day: after exercising, cleaning up and breakfast, he would finally go to the Founders’ personal quarters, which he’d been putting off until last. And then after lunch he’d change into something appropriate for tea with the twins. It should be a fun day. With a jump Gabriel bounced out of bed and changed into his yoga pants.

Dobby, Draco's personal house elf – the one who’d helped Aubrey and Tatiana – had taken a liking to him, and always left fruit juice waiting for him in the common room. Sipping juice, Gabriel finished the last of his homework, sneering at the stupid drivel as he wrote it. He really disliked playing dumb in classes. Once finished with his Charms paper and his juice, Gabriel rolled out his yoga mat and set up his tape player. He kept the volume low and lost himself in movement and Vivaldi.

“He’s watching you again,” Aurora hissed from the hearth where she was warming herself.

Gabriel smirked; frequently Draco would watch him doing yoga in the mornings before taking a shower. One time he’d wondered to Aurora what Draco got up to in the shower. She had offered to spy on him and let him know, but Gabriel had declined. If Draco was wanking, he didn’t want to hear it from Aurora; that would just be weird.

“He smells nice, I think you should hang out with him more,” Aurora hissed absently. “Are we
finally going to the Founders’ Quarters today? Mbiriviri is tired of living in the forest.”

Hearing Draco go back to their dorm, Gabriel hissed back, “Yes, we are going today. I know a lot of work needs to be done there, and all of those books are going to be a distraction. I needed to find all of the secret passages and hidden rooms first. Also the Headmaster is a powerful wizard; I had to be able to get past his spell work without him detecting me. Otherwise their secret rooms wouldn’t be a secret any longer.”

“Yes, well the important thing is we are finally going,” stated Aurora. Gabriel rolled his eyes, and relaxed into pigeon.

Gabriel walked into the common room, his hair still damp from his shower and pulled into a tight plait; his outfit consisted of comfortable blue denims with a green and white rugby shirt. Pansy and Draco were sitting together chatting close to a warm fire. “Good morning,” Gabriel greeted cheerfully sitting down next to them. He wasn’t friends with them yet, but they were friendly with each other.

“Good morning, Gabriel,” Pansy replied. “Nice shirt.”

“Thanks,” Gabriel blushed. His shirt was skintight and his muscles clearly visible. “What are you two up to today?”

"Studying mostly, I can't believe how much homework they've given us," whined Pansy.

Draco rolled his eyes. "It's the same amount as last year, and don't you have most of it done already?"

"Well, it would still be nice to just relax this weekend," Pansy replied looking at her nails. "I could use a manicure."

"You would be bored to tears," Blaise said sliding onto the couch. "It takes you only a few minutes to do your nails. What would you do with the rest of the weekend?"

"I don't know. I'm sure I would think of something."

Gabriel grinned at his friends’ bickering; the other Slytherins were beginning to get more comfortable around him. They would play exploding snap and chess in the evenings. He planned on introducing them to other games soon; he thought Draco would enjoy Go and Poker.

Looking around the common room, Gabriel sighed. Most of the students were acclimatizing to being away from their families, even the first years were settling in. Unfortunately, he was feeling worse. Being used to new places and people, Gabriel went with the flow of things for the first two weeks, but now he really missed his family and his life. He wanted to see new places, eat different exotic foods, and play with his siblings. Gabriel wrote to at least one family member everyday, and with each letter he read he got more and more homesick.

They were planning on going to Oma's farm for Samhain, and Philip said he would be there. Gabriel hadn't been able to sneak away and train with Lysander; he hadn't realized how much stress he dealt with while training. Kamala had a little crush on one of the new transient gypsies that had joined the troupe after Gabriel had left, some teenager whom Gabriel didn't know and couldn't protect his sister from. He had of course written to everyone else and told them to keep an eye out for this unknown teenage boy. Gabriel growled low in his throat; he hated that he couldn't protect his siblings. Talha was now rolling over and sitting on his own. Aubrey and Tatiana had memorized the routines well enough that they were now in the tumbling act and doing one of the clown performances. Gabriel
wouldn’t get to see their first show. Turning, he looked out into the fire and felt a tear fall from his eye; he missed everyone so much.

"Gabriel," Pansy said softly. "We're leaving for breakfast; do you want to join us?"

"Sure," he said wiping his eyes. Even though the others were looking at him curiously he didn't explain his sudden mood change. By the time he reached the Great Hall, he had his happy, carefree, teenage mask back on.

Breakfast consisted of eggs benedict, some of which had been made with steamed asparagus instead of ham for him, and fruit salad. Gabriel hummed happily as he ate, something he noticed caused Draco’s cheeks to flush lightly every time he did it, which just made Gabriel want to do it more. He was slowly getting to know the sexy blond better, but he could tell it would take patience and time.

Just before breakfast was over, Seamus cautiously approached the Slytherin table. "Oi, Dragonheart! I'm trying to get a few real men together to donate some blood."

Gabriel grinned wickedly. "Rugby, when?"

"I was thinking this afternoon or after dinner, most of us are going to try and get some work done first," Seamus answered innocently.

"You broke a finger the last time you played, didn't you?" Gabriel snickered.

Seamus pouted. "Are you in or not?"

"Yeah, all right, but I can only play after dinner."

"No worries, we'll see you then," Seamus said. Gazing down the table at the haughty, proper-looking Slytherins he added, "Bring anyone else who wants to come."

"Sure," Gabriel said as Seamus walked off.

"As if anyone would want to play some stupid Muggle game," Nott sneered. Several of the others laughed softly.

Gabriel turned and glared; he was sick of the constant slurs against Muggle-borns, half-bloods and squibs. "Nott, we all know you're afraid; hiding behind your pompous bigotry doesn't fool anyone."

The students around them went deathly silent. "How dare you," screeched Nott. "Just because I don't want to play some barbaric Muggle game doesn't mean I'm afraid."

"Tell yourself whatever you like, the rest of us know the truth," Gabriel stated coldly as he stood up. "I have better things to do than try to convince a coward he's a coward. If you'll excuse me." Bowing lightly, Gabriel walked away.

Those left turned to Nott, whose face was flushed with rage. No one said anything for a bit, and then Pansy smirked and turned to Millicent and Tracy. "Well ladies, I think we should go and watch this game. It's always good to see some else’s definition of a real man." All three girls shared a secret look, which had the other girls giggling and the boys mystified.

Gabriel sneaked away after breakfast and was now walking lightly down a dark, gray corridor. In his back pocket was a small notebook with the location and passwords he needed to gain access to the
Founders’ quarters. As he got closer to the gargoyle guarding the Headmaster’s office, Gabriel
placed a soft mirroring shield around him so the Headmaster’s wards wouldn’t be able to detect him.

Walking to the right side of the gargoyle, Gabriel looked behind its wing and carefully ran a finger
over the stone shoulder until he felt the small impression of the Hogwarts crest. Gabriel circled the
crest five times deiseil*; the gargoyle seemed to shiver and then curled the wing around its body,
revealing a long hidden passageway. The stairs were dusty, proof that the protection spells were still
in place. Slytherin hadn’t trusted house elves and insisted they ask permission before entering his
chambers.

Excitedly, Gabriel climbed down the tight corkscrew of steps, going about half a floor down. In front
of him was a parlor, the furniture covered in gray sheets, or perhaps they were white sheets stained
by centuries of dust, he couldn’t really tell. There looked to be three chairs and two small couches
with a coffee table in the center of them. The room was round and directly across from him was a
large wooden door. Gabriel smiled; it looked like just the place for a proper lady or gentleman to
meet with guests. A few quick spells and most of the dust was gone. Hopefully he could gain the
trust of a few house elves so he could get everything properly cleaned without them telling the
Headmaster about the hidden chambers.

Gabriel crossed the room and grabbed the door handle firmly saying: “Implicit trust.” The door
glowed for a moment and then opened. Gabriel gasped at the room before him, it was a huge library.
The room was an octagon and the walls were lined with books and tomes that were last touched by
the four founders themselves. There were several large plush chairs, four large tables with several
chairs around them, and smaller tables scattered about for convenience. As before, everything was
covered in the now-gray sheets to protect them.

In the center of the room was the heart of Hogwarts. The founders’ quarters were placed in the center
of the castle, and at the very central point of this room stood its heart; a four-foot high pillar of
stacked quartz crystals supporting a large, purplish amethyst crystal point. Through the dust Gabriel
could see the faint colors in each of the clear crystals as the spells encased in them thrummed with
energy. The crystals kept the spells focused and provided the required magical power to maintain
them. All of the school’s wards originated from here, as well as the life in the suits of armor, the
movement of the gargoyle, and the trickery of the staircases. The amethyst at the top channeled all
the individual spells into one cohesive pulse, which flowed through the school and surrounded the
grounds.

Hanging above the crystal pillar, a thin stalactite was growing off the end of a slender copper pipe.
Gabriel smiled in understanding; the water had left mineral deposits and, with the help of the magic,
the minerals had quickly formed into a stalactite. Breathing a sigh of relief, Gabriel began casting
gentle cleaning spells on the crystal pillar. When Gabriel had arrived at Hogwarts, he’d been
surprised at the amount of emotions left behind by centuries of people. At this time it was almost
impossible for the students in each House to be more than their stereotype; they were so influenced
by the emotions and energy left behind. The founders had created a system to cleanse the castle of so
much emotion; unfortunately, it wasn’t working.

Once he had got rid of all the dust, Gabriel worked on the pipe. First he cleared away the stalactite
and then sent a spell through the pipe to clear away all mineral deposits left inside. Kneeling down,
he sent the same spell through the drains in the floor below the pillar. Stepping back, he waited; a
flash of purple-blue flame announced Mbiriviri’s arrival.

“Finally,” she said telepathically.

Gabriel smirked. “I’m sorry, it couldn’t be helped.”
Mbiriviri sniffed, the sound tickling inside Gabriel's head. “Who knows how much trouble you could have got into without me?” Landing on his shoulder she ruffled her wings, effectively smacking Gabriel on the back of the head.

Gabriel rolled his eyes and was about to reply when clear water began to flow out of the copper pipe. The crystals, which had looked better after Gabriel’s dusting, now hummed in happiness as the cool water flowed over them. The water made a lovely trickling sound and Gabriel beamed with happiness.

Mbiriviri trilled happily, “The castle is already healing.”

“Yes,” hissed Aurora. “It won't be long before others begin to notice changes.”

“I know. I’m hoping the changes will happen slowly enough that no one will get scared or suspicious,” Gabriel answered, watching the water slide down the drains in the floor where it would flow through the castle cleansing and purifying the very stones he stood on.

“That will work,” trilled Mbiriviri superiorly, “until the stone is clean enough that everyone can tell it’s gray granite and not the dull, lifeless solid gray it is now.”

Gabriel rolled his eyes both at Mbiriviri’s attitude and the idea that most people never questioned the dull stone they saw at Hogwarts. The Founders had used gray granite because the crystals within it were able to hold their spell work far better than other stones.

Gabriel spent the rest of the morning exploring. Each of the personal rooms had a sitting room, bedroom, bathroom, and a door leading off to a workroom or laboratory. Gabriel used charms to clean the rooms, while he looked over the paintings, books, and personal items which filled each room. It was hard to tell what colors the individual founders used to decorate their rooms as everything was so faded. Centuries of sunlight streaming through the large windows had robbed the fabrics of their color.

A chime sounded and Gabriel cursed as he realized it was time for lunch. “Make yourself at home Mbiriviri, I have to go. I’ll come back as soon as I can,” Gabriel said reaching down to gather Aurora to him.

“I’m sure I’ll find something to keep myself occupied,” she sent to him telepathically.

Gabriel grinned wryly, wondering how he got three familiars who didn’t seem inclined to believe he was equal to them. Carefully, he slunk through the corridors. As he neared the Great Hall, Gabriel placed his earphones in and began moving slightly to the music while Aurora hissed her laughter at his behavior.

Gabriel thought about the Founders’ rooms as he ate the creamy potato and leek soup and crusty bread the house elves had set out. Because of his treatment at the hands his relatives and seeing how easily a family one is born to could turn on a previously beloved child, Gabriel had never placed that much stock in ‘blood family’. True, he had seen wonderful families who supported one another, but family didn’t have to. Because of this detachment from blood families, Gabriel didn’t feel connected to his ancestry. He knew some things about Lily and James Potter. He was sad they were gone and enjoyed hearing stories about them, but he’d never felt a deep connection to them or any desire to research his family tree. Yet today when he stood in the rooms his ancestors had built he felt connected to a history, a past, and a lineage.

Gabriel wasn’t sure what it all meant, or what he was going to do; he wanted to talk to his Baba and Dad. Gabriel started as the tape he was listening to shut off. Reaching into his bag, he debated what
to play. His mood called for Beethoven, but he needed to be prepared for the twins. Okay, Beethoven until he was finished with lunch and then something to get his blood pumping while getting ready for tea.

Feeling eyes on him, Gabriel looked up. Remus was staring at him with worried amber eyes. Gabriel smiled softly in reassurance. Sirius, who was sitting next to his lover, stopped eating long enough to give a small wave. Gabriel’s grin brightened. Sirius had pouted for several days about him getting into Slytherin. However, once the animagus had realized Slytherin wasn’t going to change who his godson was, he’d stopped pouting. Several times Gabriel had been invited to their quarters for tea; he always enjoyed hanging out with the two men.

After lunch, Gabriel hung out with Ivy, Teresa, and Rowan, helping them with homework and just talking, until one o’clock; then it was time to get ready. The dorm was empty, so he set up his music so he could hear it in the shower. Turning on the water, Gabriel stripped down and stepped under the hot spray, shutting the shower door behind him. Zazie, a French singer, filled the room with a happy beat and her soft voice. Choosing products with little scent so as not to set off any of the twins’ inventions, Gabriel washed. Despite the music he was singing along with, Gabriel’s mind was full of images of Draco. Knowing he didn’t have a lot of time, Gabriel reached down and began stroking his hardening cock, as he imagined touching, licking, sucking and fucking the Slytherin Ice Prince. Draco’s body was lean and muscular, covered in perfect creamy white skin. His silver-blond hair looked so soft, and Gabriel moaned low as he thought of gripping the silken hair and pulling him in for a kiss. It didn’t take long before Gabriel was spilling himself onto the shower floor, Draco’s name on his lips.

Once he recovered his breath, Gabriel rinsed off and stepped out of the shower. As he dried, ‘Un Point C’est Toi’ was playing. Wrapping a towel around his slim waist and one around his hair, Gabriel went to his wardrobe to get clothes and was surprised to see Draco alone and sitting on his bed reading. Blushing, Gabriel dug through his clothes and settled on a Chinese styled outfit of loose cotton pants and a long-sleeved top. It was a rich indigo blue with small white lotus flowers decorating it. Looking in the mirror, Gabriel saw Draco who seemed completely focused on his book. Thinking the other boy had used a silencing spell, Gabriel began to sing along with the song. Pulling out a pair of light blue boxer briefs Gabriel dropped the towel around his waist and began to get dressed.

Draco had retreated to the dorm room so he could think about his father’s newest letter. The bastard wanted Draco to get close to Gabriel; he didn’t explain why, but Draco wasn’t stupid. Bloody hell, he wasn’t ready for this! He knew someday he would have to challenge his father, but he hadn’t planned on doing it yet. At the most, he could hold his father off until the winter holidays and then Lucius would either want to bring Gabriel to their side or Draco would have to deliver him to the Dark Lord. Draco had stormed into the dorm room, and was instantly annoyed at the music he heard. Of course this meant Gabriel was here somewhere. Looking around, he discovered steam coming out of the bathroom. Draco grabbed a book and pretended to read it while he tried to figure out what to do.

His thoughts had been interrupted when Gabriel had walked out of the bathroom. He was naked except for a green towel wrapped around his trim waist. Merlin, the boy is beautiful, Draco thought. And unfortunately he’s also funny, thoughtful, and sweet. Truly, Draco didn’t need the distraction of fancying someone, or worse. The gypsy was certainly a mystery: not wanting to be called by a name their world worshiped, having hidden all this time, and most confusing of all were the classes. Gabriel pretended he didn’t know anything, but Draco was sure he did. Not only would his family have been able to get wizarding books, but sometimes in class Gabriel’s green eyes would flash from bored to interested. Then he would listen carefully to what the Professor was saying, and furiously write down whatever he was thinking on a piece of paper.
Draco was pulled from his thoughts as Gabriel began to sing, dropped the towel around his waist, and bent over to put on his shorts. Draco gasped. Gabriel had a wonderful arse; it was firm, round and a soft golden color. Draco sat back and just stared at Gabriel, enjoying the play of muscles across his back and legs. Piece by piece, Gabriel covered up and then reaching up, he pulled the towel down and let his damp black hair fall down his back. Even wet it looks silky, Draco thought.

“Enjoying the show?” Gabriel asked, his voice tinted with amusement.

Draco blinked slowly to hide his shock and tried to think of what to say. Sitting up, he laid his book down. Normally he would deny fancying a boy, but his father had said to do whatever it takes to get close to Gabriel, and he should get something good out of the mess his life currently was. Looking into the mirror, he met emerald green eyes. “Yes.”

Gabriel’s eyes widened. He wasn’t expecting that. “Really?”

Draco smirked, “You are quite fit.”

“Most straight boys don’t admit things like that,” Gabriel answered as he combed out his hair.

“I never said I was straight,” Draco said his stomach clenching. Until now only Pansy, Blaise and his godfather had known he was gay.

Gabriel turned slowly to face the Slytherin Prince. “What are you saying?” He could feel the lust in the air, but there was also nervousness, fear, and a bit of anger.

Draco stood up and walked closer to the gorgeous gypsy. “I’m saying that I enjoyed watching you.”

Gabriel smiled softly. “And?”

“Are you sure there’s more?” Draco teased.

“No, but it certainly could be fun,” Gabriel tilted his head to the side and looked Draco over. There was a piece of parchment sticking out of his pocket. His father’s eagle owl came today, he thought. So that’s what this is all about.

Draco took a shaking breath and reached up, stroking Gabriel’s smooth cheek. “It certainly could be.” Somehow he held his hand steady; he’d never had sex, having no interest in girls and being unwilling to risk his father finding out his preferences.

Gabriel’s eyes closed at the simple touch. His family was always touching and hugging, and he missed the simple contact so much. Feeling Draco’s nervousness he asked, “What do you want Draco? What are you willing to risk? My family knows about me being gay, does yours?”

Draco pulled away. “No, they don’t know.”

Gabriel opened his eyes and sighed. “I don’t want a casual relationship, and I don’t want to be a dirty little secret you keep hidden away.” Noticing the time, he added, “I have to go. I’m meeting someone soon. Draco, I like you and I would enjoy getting to know you better, but I need to know where you stand first.” Leaning in, he pressed a soft kiss to Draco’s cheek and left to meet with the Weasley twins.

Draco touched his face where Gabriel had kissed him, and then sat down to write his father a letter detailing his plan to get closer to the Boy-Who-Lived.
Deiseil- sunwise, or clockwise.
Sixty-eight

Chapter Sixty Eight

Saturday, September 18th, 2:30 pm

Gabriel smiled as Fred and George gleefully showed him around their shop. The colors were bright and Gabriel was sure they had used every color available. There were pranks, toys, sweets and even some cosmetics in cheerful packages lining the walls. Gabriel had been especially interested in the twelve-hour hair dye. The twins had explained that it was a paste, so you could color parts of your hair or you could thin the paste with water and color all of your hair quite easily. It wouldn’t stain skin and washed away completely after twelve hours.

After Gabriel had seen the shop, the twins had shown him around the backroom, which had many stains on the floor, walls and ceiling, some of which looked to be scorch marks. Currently, they were in the small flat above the store having tea. It was a mismatch of furniture, mostly in neutral colors, but the bright purple walls let you know who lived here.

“So, man of mystery,” Fred began. “How is old Hogwarts treating you?”

“The first two weeks were interesting, but now I’m just bored,” Gabriel answered wrinkling his nose.

“Ronnikins says you’re in sixth year classes,” George said as he poured tea.

Gabriel rolled his eyes. “Yes, and everyone hates it. I never even signed up for classes; I was just given a timetable. The teachers and students both resent me being in classes I didn’t take tests for, but honestly we have done a lot of revision and bookwork so far. I think they’re doing that for me hoping I’ll be able to keep up!”

“Mum was worried about that too,” George said. “Apparently she told Ron off in a letter about being nicer to you.”

Fred snickered, “Oi, mate, it’s a funny thing to watch our mum talk about you. One minute she’s angry and ranting and the next it’s ‘that poor little boy, he must feel so lost,’” Fred cooed in a high voice batting his eyelashes.


Gabriel laughed at their antics, and took a cream cake from the plate on the table – the twins had each eaten one so he was hoping they were safe. “I haven’t done much yet.”

“Oh, he’s so modest our Gabriel is,” cooed Fred placing a hand over his heart.

“That he is, brother mine,” George added. “Our sister tells stories of his greatness. How he fought to protect the ickle firsties.” George flung a hand across his forehead, causing Gabriel to break out into more laughter.

“And don’t forget how he clapped for each child, no matter what house they went into,” Fred added with wide eyes.

“And the best, most amazing thing of all: he’s still friends with everyone,” George said, one hand on
his heart and the other high in the air. “Our Gabriel sits with Neville in Herbology and Luna in charms.”

“And don’t forget Susan and Hermione in DADA.” Fred nodded solemnly.

At this point Gabriel had fallen off his chair he was laughing so hard. The twins looked at each other and cooed, batting their ginger eyelashes. “And he’s so dreeeeaaammmyyy!”

It took a few minutes before Gabriel stopped laughing long enough to get back on his chair. Wiping his eyes he gasped, “You two are too much! It hasn’t been that exciting.”

Fred grinned wickedly. “But you’re bored now.”

“Yes, and we know what happens when good, innocent boys get bored,” George added with a dramatic sigh.

Gabriel grinned. “Well, I’m sure you two will be more than happy to help me with that.”

“Of course we will. You’re our silent partner, we would do anything for you,” they said together with fake sincerity. Gabriel rolled his eyes.

“On a serious note, how are things going?” Fred asked.

“Yeah, mate, we’ve seen the Prophet,” George explained.

Gabriel snarled, “That Skeeter woman is a bitch! Every other day something different is printed about me, and people treat me differently based on what she’s written!” The woman has gone from one extreme to the other – at first it was ‘poor little Harry Potter’, and now it’s ‘what if he was raised by Death Eaters?’ Seriously, I’m worried she will track down my family and get them into trouble.”

“Oh, they’re a sly bunch. They’ll be fine,” Fred said firmly.

“They hid you, didn’t they?” George grinned. Gabriel nodded glumly. “Are you at least having fun doing magic?”

Gabriel snorted. “I haven’t even used my wand yet! Seriously, everything is revision! Even Professor Snape has been assigning potions he knows I have made before! And when I ask questions, the professors either look at me like I’m crazy or tell me to ask one of the other students because they’ve covered that already.”

“We’re happy to help,” exclaimed George.

“Ask away, mate,” Fred added.

Chuckling, Gabriel said, “The only thing I really want to know is can you create spider webs that will shoot from your hands?” The twins looked puzzled. “I asked Professor Flitwick and he looked into it, but he couldn’t find anything. Honestly, I can’t believe he’s never been asked before.”

“Why would you want to shoot spider webs from your hands?” Fred asked.

“Spiderman is a Muggle superhero who shoots webs from his palms, and they’re strong enough that he can swing from them and capture bad guys.”

Thirty minutes later Gabriel had to leave and the twins’ heads were full of ideas for making spider webs.
“If you need anything, let us know,” George said giving Gabriel a hug goodbye.

“Indeed, but here are some items to start with,” Fred said handing Gabriel a box. “Some of these are experimental so do let us know how they work out,” he added hugging Gabriel and grabbing his bum.

“Thanks, I’ll see you both soon,” Gabriel said, and with a flick of his finger he removed the neon yellow handprint Fred had left on his arse.

5pm.

Gabriel approached the gates of Hogwarts and saw Professor Snape coming towards him. “Good evening, Professor.”

“Mr. Dragonheart, where have you been?” Severus asked, surprised to see a student out of bounds.

Gabriel frowned. “Did anyone notice me missing?”

“Not that I’m aware of,” Severus said.

“Oh, good. Well, have a lovely evening and tell everyone I said hello,” Gabriel said heading to the castle.

“Gabriel, you haven’t told me where you were,” Severus reminded him.

“Oh, no place of consequence. Now off with you, I’m sure Adonis is waiting,” Gabriel chirped and skipped away, hearing Severus mutter about needing to see Adonis to complain about the impertinent brat he’d helped to raise!

7pm.

Draco was surprised how large a group had shown up for the rugby game. Most of the players had Muggle backgrounds; however there were a few brave purebloods in the mix, including Weasley. Seeing others sitting on the ground to watch the game, Draco sneered at them and transfigured a rock into a large, plush couch. Sitting down he watched Pansy transfigure two tables for them to use. Blaise plopped down on the other end leaving Pansy to sit in the middle. Looking around, Draco saw the Slytherin first years who always hung out with Gabriel standing off to the side. They looked like they wanted to approach Draco and his friends, but were unsure without Gabriel there. Draco was a prefect; the younger students should feel safe with him and able to ask for his help. Looking over at the shy group Draco caught Ivy's eye, and with a smile he transfigured some pebbles into poufs. Ivy beamed and grabbed Amber, Rowan and Basil.

"Thanks, Malfoy," Ivy said in her soft voice.

"You're welcome. Would you all like something to drink?" Draco offered as if he was hosting a party.

"Yes, please," said Basil and the others nodded in agreement.

Draco snapped his fingers twice and a house elf popped in front of him. "Yes, master Malfoy, sir. How can Dobby be helping?"
"We would like some refreshments while we watch the game," Draco stated regally.

"Oh yes, master Malfoy, right away. Will you be wanting treats for everyone?" Dobby asked, his large eyes curious.

Before he could answer, Amber came over. "Malfoy, would you please make some more poufs for our friends?" Joining the Slytherin first years were two Ravenclaws, three Hufflepuffs and two Gryffindors. Coolly, Draco raised an eyebrow and then with a flick of his wrist created more poufs, all in Slytherin green. "Thank you," the new first years chimed, sitting down and excitedly chatting with their friends.

"Yes," Draco said softly to Dobby, "everyone will want something. Have the other house elves help you."

"Master Malfoy is such a kind master, yes he is. Dobby is so lucky," squealed Dobby as he vanished with a 'pop'.

"Are you feeling all right, Draco?" Pansy teased.

Draco sneered at his friend in answer and then turned to watch the players. They had gathered into two groups and looked to be getting ready to play. The team Gabriel was on was all dressed in purple and the other in gray. The players spread themselves out in what Draco guessed was an orderly pattern, then a player from the gray team kicked the ball and all hell broke loose. The crowd gasped and the girls squealed and hid behind their hands as the players slammed into each other. Draco was shocked at the viciousness of the game, and a few times he flinched as Gabriel was hit and bounced off the ground. Draco found he enjoyed the barbaric game and was soon cheering Gabriel’s team on; he was the only Slytherin playing after all.

Draco held his breath when Gabriel got the ball. Seamus had kicked it and Gabriel was hoisted into the air by his teammates in order to catch it. Now he was running, strong legs pounding into the earth so fast he looked as if he was flying. Without missing a step, Gabriel darted between the other team’s players, barely managing to avoid getting tackled. Draco’s heart was beating wildly in his chest! The game was so barbaric and plebian, yet he felt his cock twitch as he watched Gabriel display such physical power and strength. Gabriel flung himself to the goal line, sliding across the grass in order to avoid Terry Boot catching him. The crowd cheered as Gabriel smacked the ball onto the ground and scored. Draco crossed his legs as he clapped, hoping to hide exactly how excited he was about the game.

Ron Weasley had the ball and was running toward the end of the field when a rather vicious Hufflepuff charged towards the redhead, leaning down and obviously intent on shouldering Weasley in the ribs. Out of nowhere, Gabriel caught the boy seconds before he hit, allowing Weasley to make the winning goal. Everyone cheered; Weasley jumped around and scooped Gabriel up into his arms. Draco glared and then relaxed when all of the boys began jumping about and hugging each other.

"What is going on here?" Madam Pomfrey screeched, her hands on her hips as she glared at the players. They had all sustained some kind of injury, most were just scrapes and bruises, but others had cuts that were bleeding and injured wrists and ankles.

Gabriel limped out of the crowd and smiled warmly at the angry mediwitch. "Madam Pomfrey, you're an angel! We're in need of your assistance."

"And why exactly should I help you when it looks like you did this to yourselves?" she demanded.

"Madam Pomfrey, you know how it is. We were going to play a simple, fun game and then all of
these lovely people showed up," Gabriel explained dramatically. "We just couldn't help showing off. We tried, but alas we were ruled by our hormones and helpless to resist." Gabriel batted his eyelashes playfully.

Madam Pomfrey’s lips twitched as she tried not to smile. "I will only heal serious injuries; everything else will have to heal on its own."

Gabriel leaned in flirtatiously. "You're a true gem. What would we poor, foolish boys do without you?"

Blushing she said, "Hush, young man, and let me by."

Gabriel grinned as he watched the mediwitch heal the other players.

"Mr. Dragonheart," Severus said his voice deep and silky.

"Hello, Professor Snape; how was your evening?"

"Very enjoyable, thank you," Snape replied politely. "Would you be so kind as to explain what is going on here?"

"Oh, we were just playing a game," Gabriel said dismissively.

Severus raised an eyebrow in disbelief as he looked over his student. Gabriel had a gash on his cheek that had grass and dirt stuck to it, he was holding his ribs protectively and keeping his weight off of his right foot. "You are seriously injured."

"It's not so bad. I’ll be fine," he assured. At Severus' incredulous look, Gabriel grinned. "It was really fun!"

Severus rolled his eyes, "You are a very odd child." This simply made Gabriel grin more. Severus began casting diagnostic and healing charms on his snake. "You have three cracked ribs and a sprained ankle, along with numerous contusions and abrasions." Gabriel sighed with relief as his ribs were healed. "I, like Madame Pomfrey, am not going to heal the minor injuries. You will have to live with your foolishness."

"Thank you, Professor Snape," Gabriel said sweetly.

"Were any of my other snakes foolish enough to involve themselves in this?" Severus demanded as he scanned the crowd.

"No, Professor, the rest of your snakes are far wiser than I."

Severus looked down at Gabriel, his whole face softening. "Yes, well, I blame your uncle for the grief you're causing me."

Gabriel smirked and whispered, "I hope he made it up to you tonight."

Severus raised an eyebrow, "I was feeling rather relaxed until I saw you. Go back to the dorms and clean up. I'll give Draco a salve to put on your scrapes so they don't get infected."

Gabriel nodded and limped back to the castle chatting happily with a bunch of first years from many houses. Severus shook his head and saw his godson walking towards him. "Mr. Malfoy, I do hope you weren't part of this craziness."

"Of course not, Professor Snape. I was merely here for the entertainment value."
Severus walked towards the castle with Draco at his side. "How is your father?"

Draco knew Severus had seen his father's owl at breakfast and wanted to make sure he was alright. "Father is well, and interested in our newest student. He's told me he hopes the two of us will be close."

Severus was quiet for a moment. They weren't alone and he needed to be careful with how he worded things. "How will that work for you?"

Draco held his head high, "Being close to him will help me achieve my future goals, and I've told father that there is a way to become very close with him."

Severus raised an eyebrow, "Do you think your father will approve of this plan?"

Draco shrugged, "I'm not sure, but I expect a reply from father tomorrow morning."

"Are you alright with the plan?" Severus questioned. Draco was a very private person. Gabriel wouldn't want to keep a relationship secret; he wouldn't see any reason to.

"Yes, the potential benefits are well worth the risks."

"Let me know if I can assist you in any way," Severus said as they reached his chambers. Going inside, he brought out several vials and two squat jars of salve.

Draco smiled brightly, "You always do." Looking around and seeing no one Draco whispered, "Goodnight, Uncle Severus."

Gabriel limped out of the shower with only a towel wrapped around his waist and collapsed on his bed. His body ached, but he felt so good. Hogwarts required a lot of sitting around and he missed being physically active. The dorm door opened and Gabriel heard soft, measured footsteps - Draco.

"Okay Dragonheart, I have some potions from Professor Snape, so you need to sit up."

Gabriel groaned as he sat up, "Could you call me Gabriel now?"

Draco narrowed his eyes, "Why?"

Gabriel shrugged, "Well, you did flirt with me."

"Hmm, true, I did," Draco said holding out a green potion. "Drink this." His gray eyes widened in surprise when Gabriel didn’t even ask what the potion was. Next he handed him a light blue potion, which again Gabriel drank without question. When he held out a darker blue potion, Gabriel shook his head.

"No thanks, I don't need that one," Gabriel said as he lay back down with a sigh and closed his eyes. When Draco didn't do or say anything, Gabriel opened tired green eyes again. "What?"

"How do you know what the potions are for?" Draco asked curiously.

Gabriel smirked softly. "I collected potions ingredients, made some potions and studied potions so that I could supply better ingredients. I have been doing so for ten years."

Draco nodded in understanding. "I have a salve for your cuts and one for your sprained ankle."
"Thank you," Gabriel sighed, then held up his injured foot, closing his eyes again.

Draco snorted, his eyes wide. Did this boy really expect him to apply the salves himself? Glaring at the proffered foot, he saw it wiggle and realized Gabriel did expect him to. Grabbing the foot, Draco sat down on the bed ignoring Gabriel’s hiss of pain. He scooped out some of the comfrey salve and with gentle, firm strokes rubbed it into the sprained ankle. Gabriel moaned softly as his foot began to feel better. Draco blushed lightly and gently placed the foot back on the bed. Looking Gabriel over, Draco moved to the head of the bed to tend to the cut on his cheek. Gabriel sighed and moved into the gentle touch, making Draco grin at the brunet.

"Are there any other cuts?" Draco asked softly.

Sleepy green eyes fluttered open and looked confused for a moment. Draco was about to ask again when Gabriel rolled onto his stomach, the towel sliding to the side revealing a golden, muscular thigh. Draco swallowed hard and forced himself to look away from the tempting skin. Draco flinched as he took in the sculpted back. The golden skin was covered in thin, red scrapes. Obviously Gabriel had hit his back more than once during the game. Taking a generous amount of the healing salve, Draco began to massage it onto Gabriel’s back.

Gabriel moaned softly in bliss, his whole body relaxing at the firm touch. Draco’s hands were large and strong. The long fingers caressed his skin leaving trails of warm pleasure in their wake. “Umm, feels so nice,” Gabriel said in a breathy whisper. Draco’s fingers paused for a moment, but a whimper of protest got him moving again.

“You’re a hedonist,” the blond chuckled.

“M’kay. Don’t stop,”

Draco shook his head and continued until every inch of Gabriel’s back was liberally coated in healing salve. No longer having a reason to keep touching the beautiful boy beneath him, Draco moved to the side. “Feeling better?”

“Lots better, thank you,” Gabriel answered rolling onto his left side so he could see the sexy boy. Draco tilted his head, his eyes narrowed in focus.

“What?” Gabriel asked softly.

Slowly, Draco reached out and touched Gabriel’s tattoo. The colors were vibrant and Draco had always admired the artwork gracing Gabriel’s upper arm, but now it looked different. The dragon was made of icy blues, grays and whites with swirls of snow coming off its scales. The phoenix’s plumage was done in fiery reds, oranges, and yellows. Not only did they circle Gabriel’s arm and each other, but also, for the first time Draco could see that the two powerful magical creatures embraced. They were not fighting, nor angry. In fact, they looked at each other with love. Draco was stunned, his fingers continuing to run over the artwork as if that would help him understand it better.

“Do you like it?” Gabriel asked his voice husky and soft.

“They’re opposites. How can they be together?” Draco whispered.

Gabriel smiled and reaching up caressed Draco’s soft cheek. “The world would be exceedingly boring if opposites didn’t come together. Opposite and incompatible are two different things.”

Draco’s eyes fluttered at the touch, taking a deep breath he whispered, “I wrote to my father this morning.”
Gabriel traced Draco’s high cheekbones and proud jaw. “Do you think he will like your plan?”

“He’s far too Slytherin not to,” Draco answered smugly.

Gabriel leaned up on one elbow, the other hand bringing Draco down to him. Just before their lips met Gabriel asked, “And if he doesn’t like your plan?”

“I don’t care,” Draco answered as he pressed his lips to Gabriel’s.

Gabriel moaned. Draco’s lips were soft and firm. Chills went through his body as their lips moved against one another. Draco shifted so he was lying next to the brunet. He shuddered as Gabriel’s tongue reached out and traced his bottom lip. Both boys moaned and pressed closer when Draco opened his mouth and their tongues met. Gabriel’s hand tightened in Draco’s hair as they explored each other for the first time. Desperate for air, the two boys pulled apart, their breath coming in harsh pants.

“You taste divine,” Gabriel whispered as he pressed his forehead to Draco’s.

Draco blushed furiously, but gathered his wits before answering. “Of course I do, I’m a Malfoy.”

Gabriel grinned happily. “While I would like nothing more than to keep you in my bed all night learning everything about you, I’m exhausted.”

Draco smirked and kissed Gabriel’s forehead, pushing him down and covering him up with the duvet. “I can only imagine how overwhelming kissing me for the first time must be; of course you need your rest.”

“Good night,” Gabriel said with a yawn, his eyes twinkling with laughter.

“Sleep well,” Draco said as he got up and went down to the common room.

It wasn’t until much later that night that Draco realized two very important things. Gabriel had referred to what he’d written to Lucius as his ‘plan’, and Gabriel was completely naked under the duvet.
Gabriel woke the next morning feeling a little sore, but rather happy. Grinning, he went through his morning routine, trying to keep his mind on what he was doing and not on the feeling of Draco’s hands on his body. Gabriel was looking forward to some time alone in the shower, but he’d slept in and most of the other boys were up and using the bathroom. Feeling good, and maybe a bit flirty, Gabriel dressed up a bit. The other boys had left for breakfast, so he took his time getting ready.

Gabriel strutted into the Great Hall, dancing slightly to music as always, his green and purple plaid kilt swaying around his thighs. His tight black tee-shirt clung to his chest and black Doc Martins completed the outfit. Gabriel smirked across the hall at Draco's shocked look and swayed his hips a little more with each step. "Good morning," he greeted, sitting down between Draco and Ivy and pouring himself a cup of tea.

"Good morning." Ivy giggled. "You look very nice this morning."

"Thank you, Ivy, and may I say that shade of blue looks ravishing on you," Gabriel replied making Ivy blush.

"Good morning, interesting choice of outfit." Draco took a sip of tea and kept his eyes on his paper.

"Do you think so?" Gabriel said innocently as he spread his legs so his half-bare thigh was pressed against Draco's. Smirking, he took a sip of tea and hummed softly. "I love jasmine tea."

Draco swallowed and forced himself to focus on his paper and breakfast. "You made the paper again," he said casually, knowing Gabriel didn’t read the Prophet. "Apparently you were kidnapped and raised by Death Eaters. Rita Skeeter cautions us that at any minute you could go crazy and start killing everyone."

Gabriel snorted as he dished himself some bagel and lox. "Well, I was debating between going on a killing spree or going to the library to study this afternoon."

Blaise laughed, choking on his coffee. "Can we join you?"

"For which?" Gabriel asked spreading cream cheese on his bagel.

"Unfortunately, Mr. Dragonheart will be otherwise occupied this afternoon," Professor Snape said handing Gabriel a lavender-colored note. "The headmaster wants to see you; the time and password are in here."

Gabriel sneered at the note. "What does he want?"

"I don't know, but I will be there," Severus said placing a hand on Gabriel’s shoulder and giving it a gentle squeeze.

"Thank you, Professor Snape."
Severus inclined his head and swept out of the room.

"I wonder what the old man wants," Pansy whispered.

"I have no idea, maybe he's going to take me out of sixth year classes," offered Gabriel turning back to his breakfast.

Draco, Blaise and Pansy shared a knowing look. So far the Headmaster had left the Boy-Who-Lived alone, but they had been waiting for him to come and talk to Gabriel. For several minutes everyone quietly enjoyed their breakfast, then Lucius Malfoy's owl landed before Draco. The owl was regal – a beautiful eagle owl, its feathers a tawny gold and its gaze fierce. Calmly Draco took the scroll and offered the owl a bit of bacon. She snatched it up and flew off. "I guess he doesn’t require a reply," Draco muttered under his breath.

Taking a deep breath, he unrolled the scroll.

Dearest son,

Your dedication to your future makes me proud. I will do anything I can to support you; you only have to let me know. Please remember that a Malfoy never submits to anyone.

Father

Draco rolled his eyes. So he can be with Gabriel as long as he doesn't take it up the arse. As if his father didn't bow and submit to a snake-faced madman. He jumped slightly when Gabriel put a reassuring hand on his leg. Rolling up the scroll, Draco carefully tucked it into an inner pocket of his robes. Looking around the Great Hall he noticed the others all busy with whatever they were doing and unaware that his life had just changed phenomenally. Taking a deep breath, Draco leaned over and placed his lips against Gabriel's ear.

"My father is fine with me starting a relationship with you." Smirking at Gabriel's shudder, he continued, "I guess the Slytherin in him likes the idea of his son being with the Savior of the Wizarding world."

Gabriel snorted at the title and turned his head, placing his lips a breath away from Draco's. "And do you like the idea of being with the Savior?"

"I like the idea of being with you," Draco whispered. "Kiss me. I want everyone to know you're mine." Gabriel obediently closed the distance between them and pressed his lips to Draco's. The kiss was soft and chaste; lasting only a moment, but it was long enough for most of the Great Hall to turn towards them in shock.

"Happy?" Gabriel asked as they turned back to their breakfasts.

"Rather," Draco said smugly.

Deciding to spend the morning alone, Gabriel and Draco hid among some trees on the shore of the lake. It was a lovely day out. The sun shone brightly, and the breeze was cool, letting them know it wouldn't be long until winter moved in.

"Tell me about yourself," demanded Draco, as he sat down on the grass.
Gabriel chuckled. "Ask me a question and I'll answer it, but I'm not just going to rattle on about myself."

Draco huffed, but lay back and asked, "What is your favorite place to visit?"

Gabriel groaned. "That's a really hard question. Every place has something unique about it. However, I like going to Switzerland and India to visit family." Propping himself up on an elbow, Gabriel looked down at Draco.

Reaching out, Draco took hold of the necklace Gabriel wore, "What does this mean? Where did you get it?"

Gabriel's face closed off a bit as he answered. "It means I will always be protected and I have help if I need it."

Draco sat up, looking carefully at the necklace. Quickly he realized the platinum and gold was an amulet, he could feel the subtle ancient power running through it. Etched into the metal was a dragon and unicorn curled into a yin yang symbol, with a phoenix wrapped around the outside framing them. "I've seen this somewhere before," he said absent. "Where is it from?"

"Sorry, that's a secret," Gabriel replied softly. Draco scowled, his gray eyes narrowing in irritation. "What does your father's letter say?"

"Fine, we will agree to have secrets." Draco pouted as he lay back down.

"If no one could tell you what to do, what would you choose to do with your life?" Gabriel asked changing the topic and hoping to get Draco back into a good mood.

Draco looked into the emerald green eyes suspiciously, but then let it go and settled back closing his eyes. "I want to become a Potions Master, which I can do, but if it is up to me then I'd focus on healing potions and medical research." Draco paused for a moment and then continued. "I also want a family, kids and stuff, maybe a couple of pets." He shrugged, keeping the rest of his dreams to himself.

"That sounds brilliant. I hope you get to make your dream come true," Gabriel said softly.

"What about you, what do you want?" Draco asked.

"I want to be with my family. I want a husband and children. Right now I don't know what I want to do professionally, but there are so many options, so who knows what I'll wind up doing," Gabriel grinned in a self-deprecating way. "Knowing me, I'll do a bunch of different things over my lifetime."

Draco chuckled and asked another question. For a while they asked simple questions: favorites – colors, flavors of ice cream, animals and such. Then Draco asked, "What is your best childhood memory?"

Gabriel wrinkled his brow in concentration. "That's hard; some of them are simple things. I wasn't treated well at my relatives' house, so when I went with my family I had a lot of firsts which stand out in my memory. However, I think my best moment was when my Dad and Baba asked me to be their son. We were in India visiting Ria's family. Vincent and Mudiwa had gone away for the weekend and when they came back I was crying because I wasn't sure that they would return." Gabriel blushed. "We sat under a large mango tree and they held me and told me they would never leave and asked if they could adopt me. I think it is the first time I felt completely loved and safe."
"Wow, I was going to tell you about riding a broom for the first time. It doesn't seem as special now," Draco said shyly.

"I've never ridden a broom, is it fun?"

"It's brilliant," Draco said, his eyes lighting up. "When I fly, I feel free and able to do anything. I was five the first time. It was a child's broom, but my dad ran next to me the whole time, making sure I was safe. He used to be really great." Draco closed his eyes as his face filled with sadness.

"I'm sorry that he's changed." Gabriel reached out and linked his fingers through Draco's, offering support and comfort. They lay there for a long time, quietly enjoying each other's company.

At one o'clock, Gabriel stood in front of the gargoyle that guarded the Headmaster's office. Sighing he said, "Treacle toffee," and stepped on the revealed staircase.

"Welcome, Gabriel. Please come in and sit down. Would you like some tea or a sherbet lemon?" Dumbledore greeted jovially.

Gabriel looked around the room. Remus and Sirius were there, along with Severus; the handsome black Auror who'd come to camp on his birthday; Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and the twins. "Good afternoon," Gabriel said politely as he walked towards where the twins were sitting. "I'm fine, no tea for me." Settling himself between the twins on a bright, flowered couch, he said hello to those he knew and waited. Only a few moments later, Professor McGonagall entered the Headmaster's office.

"Well, now that we are here we can get started. Gabriel, the people you see before you are members of the Order of the Phoenix, a group dedicated to stopping Voldemort and his Death Eaters," Dumbledore said with pride, his eyes twinkling madly. "Now I know there are bound to be some questions for you and as Arthur and Molly have been so patient, I would like them to go first."

"Why didn't you tell us?" accused Mrs. Weasley. "You knew we had been looking for you."

"I didn't know I had been born Harry Potter until I was eight, and by then my legal name was Gabriel. As for why no one else told you, it was to protect me," Gabriel answered, his voice without emotion.

"Why did they need to protect you from us?" Mr. Weasley asked placing a comforting arm around his wife.

"You saw me that first year; don't you remember what I looked like? How thin I was? How shy I was around people and about them touching me? Anyway, that was a whole year before you were even looking for me." Gabriel crossed his arms over his chest defensively, preparing to defend his family. All of the Weasleys gasped at this bit of information. Frantically they looked at each other, silently trying to figure out if this was true.

"What's important right now is that we have Harry Potter back with us where he should be," Dumbledore said sagely, trying to refocus the conversation.

"Why did it take you a year to tell us, Albus?" Mrs. Weasley asked, hurt in her voice.

Dumbledore sighed, putting on a mask of sorrow and regret. "I didn't know, Molly. The wards only fell after he'd been gone a year."

"We all thought you were checking on him," snarled Remus.
"It's something I have regretted every day since I found out he was missing."

"Knowing the truth would have changed the entire investigation," Kinsley said, shocked that Dumbledore had lied to them all.

"Why did you leave?" asked George.

"The Dursleys hated me and were cruel. My aunt was complaining to my uncle about the gypsies, calling them freaks – which is what she used to call me – so I decided to see if they would want me," Gabriel answered calmly.

Even knowing about Gabriel’s past, Sirius and Remus both snarled at Gabriel’s answer. The others gasped in shock, some even glaring at the Headmaster.

Albus cleared his throat; he needed to change the topic of conversation. "We cannot change the past, and the future is coming upon us quickly. Gabriel needs training to meet his destiny. Now, his professors tell me that he is doing quite well in his classes, despite not having started at eleven," Dumbledore began, effectively changing the topic. The adults completely ignored Gabriel as they heatedly discussed his future and education.

Gabriel snorted and leaned back on the couch. The twins settled in beside him and began whispering.

"You know far more than..." Fred began.

"...they think you do," George finished. Gabriel smiled; the twins always talked together when they were really excited about something.

"Don't try..."

"...and deny it..."

"...we won’t tell."

"We want to offer..."

"...our assistance."

"With what?" Gabriel asked curiously.

"Well, we think pranks..." George started gleefully.

"...can be more than just fun," Fred finished with an evil chuckle.

Gabriel smirked. "That's brilliant, tell me more."

"We have these firecrackers..."

The three boys talked during the rest of the meeting completely ignored by the adults, with the exception of Remus and Sirius, who grinned at the three boys curled towards each other in heated conversation, and Severus, who glanced at them suspiciously from time to time.

An hour later the adults finally stopped talking, satisfied with their plans. "How does that sound to you?" asked Dumbledore eagerly.

Gabriel looked up from what he and the twins were doing. "I don’t know. It's rude to eavesdrop on
someone else's conversation, so I wasn't listening."

Blushes and nervous laughter followed this statement as they realized they had completely left Gabriel out of their plans. "Sorry about that, my boy; we are going to begin training you more extensively after the winter break. This gives you time to learn more of the basics before getting into more complicated magic."

Gabriel raised an eyebrow. "I'll need a list of what you want to teach, who will be teaching me, and at what times. I'll send it to my fathers for their approval and let you know."

"Excuse me, young man, but who says you have any say in this?" Kingsley demanded.

"Is the Auror department in the habit of forcing training on minors without parental consent?" Gabriel asked.

Most of the adults looked at him in shock; Severus, however, was looking at him with pride. Gabriel had to stop himself from grinning.

"But… but you're different," stuttered Kingsley.

"Does that mean I am not given the same consideration or protection as the other students of this school?"

"We didn't mean to imply anything of the sort," Dumbledore insisted. "The training we want you to do is for your safety."

Gabriel snorted. "Please, I'm not stupid. You want to train me to destroy Voldemort for you. Well, my parents should have a say in what you're teaching me and how much time you expect me to spend training, especially if I'm supposed to continue with my regular class load."

No one could respond to that and just looked at each other helplessly.

"Give me a timetable and I'll be happy to send it on to my fathers for them to look over. Until then, I think we're done." Gabriel stood gracefully and walked to the door. "Have a good afternoon."

"Bye, Gabriel," chimed the twins together.

"Bye, Fred, 'bye, George, I'll owl you."

Gabriel wanted to go to the Room of Requirement, but he knew people would be looking for him, especially Severus and Draco. Thirty minutes ago he'd left the Headmaster's office and stormed into the Slytherin common room. He went to his dorm, changed into black cotton exercise pants and a black tee shirt with a picture of Kali on the front, grabbed his weapons bag and stereo, and stormed back out again. Despite the fact that the common room was mostly empty, Gabriel was sure Draco and Severus knew about his odd behavior. He'd found an empty classroom, and after turning his stereo up so it was blasting the music, he began to work off his temper. Thankfully he had enough training to force himself to stop and stretch properly before beginning, because he was planning on pushing himself. Afro Brazilian rhythms echoed through the room, the wild drums helping him push his body and flow through the movements.

Draco had left the library as soon as the third year told him about Gabriel's behavior. He wasn't sure where to start looking, but remembering Gabriel had asked about space to work out, he planned on checking empty rooms in the dungeons. As he searched the lower dungeon, Draco saw Severus
standing in the hallway seemingly staring at a door.

“Professor Snape, is everything all right?”

"Hello, Draco. I think we are fools."

Draco’s eyebrows rose in surprise, he’d never seen his godfather so distracted. Walking closer, he turned and looked at the door. "Oh Merlin, he's amazing!" Severus had charmed the door so he could see through it, and there was Gabriel in all his glory. He was a blur of motion. Draco guessed he held two swords, but Gabriel's movements were so fast Draco couldn't get a good look at them. Sweat glistened on his face, his chest heaving as he kept up with the movements. He appeared to float across the floor as he attacked invisible targets. Lights flashed from the weapons in his hands. Draco tried to figure out what the colors meant, or if there was a pattern.

As if sensing his godson’s confusion Severus said, "I think they are spells, not full spells, but as if he normally casts through the swords and is thinking of what he would cast, but he isn't really intending to."

"Are those swords made like wands?" Draco asked in amazement.

"No, I’ve held them; they're just oak," Severus replied, his voice a hoarse whisper.

"Do you know how powerful he is?"

"I've never thought to look, have you?"

Draco paused while he watched Gabriel cartwheel three times and bounce up, blades ready. "Yeah. I’ve looked at his aura. Most of the time it doesn't look powerful at all, but every now and then it will pulse with a bright golden light."

"Well, shall we?" invited Severus as he turned his focus to be able to see the magical energy. Neither man could speak, as Gabriel's aura was revealed to them. The sixteen-year-old boy was surrounded by bright, clear, golden light, which sparkled with rainbows like sunlight on freshly fallen snow. It was so awesome, neither one could do anything but watch. Slowly they saw Gabriel’s aura glow and begin to spike with wild, bright flashes of color.

"He's losing control of his magic," said Severus as he changed his focus. Gabriel was still training, his movements clean but tainted with anger.

"We have to get to him," Draco exclaimed as he reached for the door handle. The door was locked, and as if he could sense their presence Gabriel turned towards the door. His green eyes glowed with power and the air shimmered around his body. Violently, he gathered up his things, grabbed onto the teardrop of amber that hung around his neck, and vanished.

"Bloody hell!" Draco yelled as the door opened and he fell into the room. The air was alive with magic, and Draco could feel Gabriel’s presence in the room. It made him giddy and comfortable at the same time. “Where did he go? Is he okay?"

Severus rubbed his temples. "He's fine and he went to train with an old friend. Come along, you can help me with some potions for Madam Pomfrey."

Draco snarled in frustration as he followed his godfather back to his room; he hated not knowing what was going on. Gabriel had better have a good explanation, he thought, and then realized that to ask he would have to explain how come he and Severus were spying on him. Draco's scowl deepened. Merlin's scrote!* He wouldn't be getting any answers anytime soon.
Gabriel landed with a thud, his anger and frustrations making him lose focus. Normally he never got this angry, but the past three weeks and been more difficult than he'd thought they would be and the meeting today simply pushed him over the edge. Twirling, he heard the door open as Lysander rushed into the room.

“Gabriel...” Lysander began, trailing off as he felt the power and agitation coming off his friend.

Stalking towards the vampire Gabriel snarled, "I need you to fuck me or fight me. I don’t care which but it needs to be hard and fast and now!"

Lysander started to smirk and then the scent of Gabriel hit him making his eyes flutter. Power, life, and magic mixed with the fragrance of hot, rich blood. Lysander's teeth lengthened; he hadn't eaten yet today and the smell was making him hungry. Pulling in all of his self-control, he opened his blue eyes. "I'm more than happy to fight you, Gabriel, but I need to feed first."

Gabriel brought up his hand, his fingers glowing softly. “Too bad. If you can pin me down, then you can eat.” Throwing a spell, Gabriel followed quickly behind it kicking Lysander in the stomach.

Lysander growled, fangs glinting in the light. "You asked for it, little boy."

Punches, kicks, and spells began to fly. Gabriel put all of his anger and frustration into each strike. Since his birthday, he'd been pretending to be something he wasn't. Sirius and Remus had kept close watch over him and 'taught' him about the benefits of being a wizard. Now, at school it was a constant put-down to squibs, Muggles and Muggle-borns – to the extent that they hid, trying to act and be just like the magically-raised. Seamus said last week was the first time they had ever played a Muggle game at Hogwarts. This afternoon had just pushed him too far, and the anger and frustration he'd kept stuffed inside of him couldn't be held in for one more minute. He was jerked out of his thoughts as Lysander hit his jaw and sent him across the floor. Rolling over his back, he jumped onto his feet and flinched at the feral look on Lysander's face; maybe he had pushed the vampire a bit too far. Oh well, it was too late now.

Running, Gabriel leapt, his shoulder hitting Lysander just under his ribs and sending them both to the ground. Before they even stopped moving, the two men were locked in a wrestling match.

"I will have your neck, Little Angel," hissed Lysander.

Gabriel shuddered, not sure if it was more excitement or fear, and focused on getting away. Twisting, Gabriel got his hands under him and managed to push up enough to scramble out from under the strong blond. He was almost free when an iron hand gripped his ankle and pulled him back. Gabriel kicked out, making contact with a firm chest and managed to get away. Back and forth they fought each other, until thirty minutes later Gabriel felt exhaustion seep into his body. He had managed to purge his anger, and now he was emotionally and physically drained. Lysander seemed to sense this and with a wicked smirk he pounced on the raven-haired boy and effortlessly pinned him to the floor. Their eyes locked; slowly, Lysander reached his hand across Gabriel’s chest and gripped his chin, turning it to the side exposing the vulnerable neck.

Gabriel stiffened, but then relaxed. After all, it was his fault they were in this position. Lysander growled low in his throat as the boy beneath him became compliant. Slowly he lowered his mouth and lapped at the salty skin, his eyes fluttering closed at the feeling of Gabriel's heartbeat under his tongue. Lysander pulled back just enough to fully extend his fangs and to give Gabriel time to protest. He wasn't completely lost, he was two hundred years old after all, but he remembered the taste of Gabriel's blood and wasn't going to pass up an opportunity for more. When Gabriel didn't protest, Lysander struck, sinking his fangs into the warm, supple flesh beneath him. Moaning, he gripped Gabriel tighter as the powerful, delicious fluid coated his tongue and ran down his throat,
energizing his entire body. Gabriel had gasped in pain at the strike, but was now moaning and writhing in pleasure. Lysander moved his leg so Gabriel could rut his hard cock against his thigh. Few knew of the pleasure a vampire’s bite could bring.

Drinking deeply, Lysander lost himself to the pleasure and vitality of Gabriel’s blood. Gabriel clutched at him, rolling his pelvis, seeking friction. Lysander could feel and taste how close he was to coming. Giving a few hard sucks made Gabriel scream out his pleasure as his body convulsed, coming hotly between them. Lysander licked the wound closed, his body feeling thick and languid with contentment. Shifting to the side, Lysander lay down draped across Gabriel’s sated body; both fell asleep on the hard floor.

Gabriel moaned. His body hurt, he desperately needed a loo, and something was pinning him to the ground. Slowly he opened his eyes, trying to get his bearings. Seeing Lysander sleeping on his shoulder brought everything back in a rush and he flushed hotly in embarrassment.

"There is nothing to be embarrassed about," Lysander drawled, his voice heavy with sleep.

"I should have been in better control," Gabriel argued. "I have been training for Hogwarts. I knew what I'd have to do."

Lysander sat up a bit so he could see Gabriel. "Despite all your training you are only sixteen. You're allowed to get angsty."

Gabriel rolled his eyes and sat up, groaning as his body protested the movement. He grimaced as his clothes pulled on his bits, his come having dried and stuck them there. "Gross! I need a shower."

Lysander wrinkled his nose. "Seriously, you reek something awful."

"Thank you for that," Gabriel snarked. "Can I take a shower before I go?"

"'Course you can. Come on, I have some clothes you can wear, too," Lysander said standing up. "I want you to know that you can come here any time you need to. I can always use a snack as delicious as you." Lysander laughed as Gabriel blushed again.
Chapter Seventy

Gabriel Apparated just outside of the wards in front of Hogwarts’ main gate. He thought he could have gone through the wards, but he was pretty sure the Headmaster would’ve been able to feel him break them. Stiffly he walked up the path, there was no one outside and Gabriel remained hidden in the dark night. Normally he would have Portkeyed right into his room, but the necklace hadn’t been changed to take him inside the castle. Gabriel had thought about staying with Lysander, but he’d already missed dinner and curfew was soon. He managed to get all the way to Professor Snape’s office without being seen, as it was late Sunday night and most people were getting ready for bed or desperately trying to finish their weekend assignments. Wincing, Gabriel raised his arm and knocked on the door, his hand protesting the abuse. A few moments later the door opened. Severus took one look at him and led him through his office, pulling him into his private rooms.

"What happened?" Severus asked as he began to hunt for the right salves and potions to help heal the obvious wounds.

"Nothing. I was just training with Lysander," Gabriel answered as he took his shirt and trousers off.

"Why didn’t you heal them already?"

"Lysander only does the big stuff, like broken bones. I always take care of the little stuff afterwards."

"What the bloody hell is on your neck?"

Gabriel turned his head in shock, his hand flying to his neck. Draco stood in front of a high backed chair, which he’d been sitting in, hidden from Gabriel’s view. Draco’s eyes narrowed in anger as he stalked towards Gabriel hissing, "Move your hand."

Gabriel dropped his hand and sighed. "It's really not a big deal."

Before Draco could reach him, Severus grabbed Gabriel’s chin and turned his head so he could get a look at the mark. "He bit you?"

"Never tease a hungry vampire," Gabriel answered wryly.

"Are you all right? Why were you near a vampire? Are you hurt badly?" Draco asked all at once.

"I'm all right, just a bit banged up. Lysander is a friend of mine who I train with sometimes."

Severus snorted and handed out several potions vials. "I can't believe I'm patching you up again already. How in Morgana's name did you survive your childhood? More importantly, how did your parents?" Severus said with great exasperation.

Gabriel grinned and then began to sway slightly, his eyes fluttering.

"Severus!" Draco shouted as he darted to support Gabriel's body.

"Give him this." Severus handed Draco a blood-replenishing potion. Draco took the vial and held it up to Gabriel’s pale lips. As soon as he’d swallowed it, Gabriel mumbled something that resembled 'thank you' and promptly passed out. Draco scooped up the unconscious man, placing him on the couch across from the fire. Severus followed behind and covered the teen with a soft, warm blanket.
"Go ahead and sit down, Draco. We can finish our conversation."

Draco sat down gracefully in the deep green chair and picked up his tea. "Who is Lysander?"

Severus mentally rolled his eyes at his godson’s poorly concealed jealousy. "I don’t know him very well. I only saw him at Gabriel's sixteenth birthday party. They flirted a bit, but I got the impression that he's straight. Other than that, I don't know anything about him."

"Obviously, he's a vampire," Draco sneered. "I have read the bites are very pleasurable."

"As have I. Does this bother you?" Draco's cheeks flushed at the question, but he didn't answer. "I know you said your father approved of the plan to seduce Gabriel, but is that all there is to it?"

"No," Draco whispered. "I fancy him. Not only is he sexy, but he's also funny, smart and mysterious."

"Ah, yes. Mystery, the great downfall of Slytherins," quipped Severus with a smirk.

Draco grinned at the joke. It was true; a Slytherin could not leave a mystery alone. "He listens to me. He treats me like you do, Uncle Severus, and like Pansy and Blaise. He doesn't care that I'm a Malfoy or that I'm rich, he actually seems to like me. We talk and he asks me questions, silly things like my favorite color or sweet." Draco ran a hand through his silky hair and gazed imploringly at Severus to understand.

Severus set his teacup down, and thought of how Adonis looked at him, not as a Death Eater or Dark wizard, but just a man. "I understand, Draco, and I'm happy you have found someone worth getting to know."

"Do you think he will have to fight the Dark Lord?" Draco whispered.

"Yes," Severus answered his obsidian eyes confident.

"Do you think he will win?"

Severus paused to think about the question. "I know his family, and they would do anything for Gabriel. They knew who he was and what his future would hold, so I'm confident they made sure he learned everything they could teach him in order to survive what lay ahead. Gabriel is a determined young man and as we saw earlier, very powerful. I'm hopeful it is enough."

Draco sat back in the chair and stared into the fire, trying to deal with everything he'd learned tonight.

Monday, Sept 21st. 6am

Gabriel groaned; everything ached and he was sleeping somewhere unfamiliar. Slowly he sat up and looked around the room, remembering what had happened last night. "I must have passed out," he groaned.

"Correct," said Severus. He stood in the doorway, his hair mussed from sleep, and an indigo blue dressing gown wrapped around him.

"Isn't that the robe Adonis bought you?" Gabriel asked cheekily as he slowly stood up.

Severus just glared at him and pointed to the coffee table. "Take all of those potions; you should feel
an improvement within an hour. Eat a large breakfast and drink plenty of fluids. You need to rebuild your strength after losing so much blood."

"Thanks," Gabriel said as he downed the potions.

"Oh, by the way," Severus said teasingly as Gabriel reached the door. "Draco isn't happy about the vampire bite, and he has read about the pleasure they cause."

Gabriel groaned as he shut the door, certain he heard Severus laughing at him.

Silently, Gabriel entered the boys’ dorm, and gathered his things. He planned on taking a shower to ease the ache in his muscles and to wash off the dried sweat and dirt on his skin.

"Morning," Draco said somewhat coolly.

"Good morning, Draco."

"There is a prefects’ bathroom with large tubs you could soak in."

Gabriel arched an eyebrow. "I'm not a prefect so I don’t know the password."

"I know the password."

"And what would I have to do for this bit of information?" Gabriel asked, a wicked smirk on his face.

"You have to answer my questions truthfully while you’re in there." Crossing his arms, Draco looked ready to barter and fight for what he wanted.

Gabriel simply shrugged his shoulders. "Sure."

Draco was shocked for a moment, but quickly recovered and walked out of the dorm with Gabriel following behind at a slightly slower pace.

With a sigh a pleasure, Gabriel slipped into the hot water. Turquoise bubbles covered the surface and hid him from view. "So what did you want to ask me, Draco?"

"Tell me about Lysander."

Gabriel shrugged his shoulders and slid deeper into the water. "He's blond, blue eyed, and a two hundred year old vampire."

Draco glared at the back of Gabriel's head. "Why did you go to him?"

"I have trained with Lysander before, and I was really pissed off, so I went to vent." Gabriel rubbed his neck and chuckled. "Obviously I wasn't thinking straight when I goaded him into fighting with me."

"I have heard that vampire bites are very pleasurable," Draco said his voice cold.

"Bloody hell, if people knew they would be lining up to be bitten," Gabriel exclaimed, secretly eyeing Draco’s expression in the mirror on the other side of the room. He bit his lip to keep himself from laughing at Draco’s fury.
"Really?" Draco asked every letter coated in ice.

"Just think about intense orgasms without any kind of intimacy," Gabriel said wistfully. However, seeing Draco losing the fight to control his temper he quickly added. "I can see how some people would be really grateful for that opportunity. I, however, prefer to be intimate with my partners. I want to have a connection with them: to touch them, kiss them, and hold them afterwards."

"Oh," Draco exhaled, a bit confused and blushing slightly.

Gabriel ducked under the water, coming up and brushing his wet hair away from his face. "Any more questions?"

"How magically powerful are you?"

Gabriel turned so he could face Draco and leaned against the edge of the large tub. "How does one measure magical strength?"

Draco tilted his head to the side. "There are tests you can do, but I don’t know anything about them. Did you set the wards which kept you hidden and prevented you from being found while you were with your family?"

"The Headmaster says it was accidental magic," Gabriel answered.

"Yes, well I’m not that stupid," snarked Draco.

Gabriel chuckled. "No, I suppose you’re not. I'm the only one powerful enough to have done it."

Draco smirked, "That was a very Slytherin answer."

"You say the sweetest things to me," Gabriel said batting his eyelashes.

Draco snorted indelicately. "How much magic do you know?"

"I'm not going to answer that question," Gabriel said softly.

"You promised to answer all my questions truthfully," Draco reminded him smugly.

"Yes, and I have answered it truthfully," Gabriel replied.

Draco's eyes narrowed, steel gray glinting from behind white blond lashes. "That’s cheating."

"What are you, a Hufflepuff?"

Draco glared, but conceded. "How about: do you feel like your family made sure you’re well prepared for dealing with the wizarding world?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to fight the Dark Lord?"

"Yes, I'm going to fight Voldemort."

Draco flinched at the name. "Are you worried that I'm a Death Eater?"

"No." Emerald eyes met silver as Draco looked for the truth in Gabriel’s answer. Seeing only sincerity, Draco smiled softly.
"I have a question," Gabriel said. Draco quirked an eyebrow in interest. "Next weekend is a Hogsmeade weekend, would you go with me?"

Draco’s cheeks tinted pink, which made Gabriel's grin even brighter. "Well, as I was going anyway, I suppose I could allow you to accompany me."

"Brilliant, how much time do we have before breakfast?"

Draco looked at the clock above the door. "Thirty minutes. There are showers along the walls if you need one. I need to get ready for the day too."

"I'm happy to share my bath or a shower, if you want."

"I don't think so, you could still have vampire germs on you," Draco said huffily and opened a door into a shower cubical, shutting it firmly behind him.

Gabriel looked at the door like a predator stalking his prey; Draco was miffed at him all right. Plans for wooing Draco back into his arms began to form in Gabriel’s head. With a groan, he pulled himself out of the bath and got ready for yet another day at Hogwarts.

Gabriel fidgeted again in the hard wooden seat. The first class was double Transfiguration, and he was bored. Horribly, achingly bored. It helped him look as if he didn’t know anything, but Professor McGonagall refused to even let him try any wand work. She was a strict teacher and seemed to not like him one bit. Gabriel wondered what he had done to offend her as he shifted yet again, trying to get comfortable.

“Mr. Dragonheart, would you please sit still,” she snapped.

Gabriel sighed. “I’m sorry, Professor, I’m still not used to having to sit on a hard chair for so long.”

Minerva pursed her lips in displeasure. “Whilst your childhood was obviously lacking, I expect you to overcome it and sit properly.”

Gabriel calmly turned, packed his bag and stood up.

“Just what do you think you’re doing, young man?”

Gabriel turned and looked coldly at Professor McGonagall. “I will not sit here and listen to you insult my family. You haven’t seen them and you know nothing about them.” Gabriel turned and headed for the door.

The students looked to their professor. Her face was flushed red with anger and her mouth tight. Quickly she followed Gabriel out into the hall. “How dare you leave my classroom without permission!” she snapped once the door was closed. “James and Lily would be so disappointed in you.”

Gabriel looked at her with sad eyes. “I don’t know what I did to make you hate me so much, but it is not my desire or my destiny to live up to your expectations of me.”

“You will never be able to defeat You-Know-Who if you can’t even sit through a class.”

“Professor, only politicians kill people while sitting on their arse at a desk. I’m expected to stand up and use my hands.”
Minerva gasped and brought up a hand to cover her mouth. Gabriel just walked away.

Draco watched Professor McGonagall carefully as she came back into the classroom without Gabriel. She seemed shaken and maybe even a bit chagrined. He wondered what they had talked about. Professor McGonagall was usually a fair teacher and didn’t treat her students as harshly. He hoped Gabriel was all right.

“Are you okay?” Draco asked as he sat down in Charms.

“Yes, Professor McGonagall’s just disappointed to have such a useless savior.”

Draco frowned at Gabriel’s mood. “I’m sure I could find a use for you.”

Gabriel’s eyes twinkled, his mood shifting quickly. “Oh really, like what?”

Draco was just about to answer when the Professor came in.

“Hello, class,” said Flitwick as he climbed onto his stack of books. “We’re going to learn household charms today. They aren’t very complicated, but very good to know, seeing as many of you will be able to do magic at home when the school year ends. I’m sure your parents will be grateful for some help around the house. Mr. Dragonheart, I think you’ll be able to do these also.”

Gabriel smiled and took his wand out of his bag. He hadn’t actually used it yet and was interested to see how it would work. The first charm they were shown was one to clean and polish hard surfaces. Professor Flitwick had them practice on their desks. Gabriel watched the others, noting their pronunciation and hand movements. Hermione really exaggerated the pronunciation, but got a good result. Draco said the charm in his normal drawl, the look on his face one of disdain, as if he would never use a cleaning spell.

Gabriel looked suspiciously at the holly and phoenix feather wand – his wand – and twisting his wrist as instructed he said the charm. His magic flew out of him and crackled as it left his wand. Gabriel yelped and jumped up from his desk, which was now not only clean, but also stripped of all varnish.

“Oh my, oh my!” squeaked Professor Flitwick excitedly. “Well, I knew to expect good things from you, but really this is rather a nice surprise. You just need to learn a bit of control, that’s all.”

Gabriel resisted the urge to roll his eyes at the gross understatement. “How do I do that?”

“Oh, well…” Flitwick tugged on his beard as he thought. “It’s not a very common problem. For now, read the chapter I’ve set for homework, it’s on the board. When you try your next charm, do everything gently. Say the incantation softly, make your wand movements a bit smaller, and be relaxed about the spell happening.”

“Okay, thanks Professor,” Gabriel said and sighed as he sat back down in another hard chair.

“That was rather impressive,” Malfoy drawled lazily.

“Thanks, I think. It’s not like I had control over what was happening.” Gabriel shifted in his seat to see Draco. “You seem to be doing well.”

“Of course, not that I will ever use any of these spells,” Draco sneered.

“Oh, you never know when something might be useful,” Gabriel said cryptically. Reaching into his bag he pulled out his book and tape player. His fingers tapped quietly to a beat no one else could
Professor McGonagall sighed wearily. She was currently sitting in the staff room during her free period sipping a cup of tea and trying to figure out Harry Potter. She had been so happy when Albus had first told them about Harry being found. Albus had called a special meeting of the Order of the Phoenix, everyone had been there. Minerva could still remember the looks of happiness and hope on everyone’s face, and then Albus had explained where Gabriel had been all this time. Traveling around with squib gypsies! Merlin only knew what they had let the boy do under their care! Minerva huffed as she remembered Molly Weasley bursting into tears and Arthur’s look of betrayal as they found out people they had trusted and counted as friends had kept Harry from them.

Albus, of course, had calmed them and told them the boy’s fathers had only done what they had felt was best. He had assured them Harry was coming to school, and told them about sending Remus and Sirius to watch over him and begin training the young boy. There had been plenty of yelling and arguing about how to handle the situation. Many felt Potter should be removed from the squibs’ care as soon as possible.

Severus had snorted at this, and said simply, “I have known this child for years, as have the Weasleys. The boy won’t willingly part from his family.”

“How should he have a choice?” Kingsley demanded.

“They have cared for and protected the brat for years, successfully hiding him from us right under our noses,” Severus pointed out. “I have no doubt they have told Potter their reasons for this, as he went along with them. Do you really think he will trust you and fight a powerful Dark Lord for you if you separate him from his family?”

Everyone had been quiet for a while thinking about what the Potions master had just said.

“Quite right, Severus,” Albus had agreed. “I have asked Remus and Sirius to help us draw Harry to our side, and to find out more about his family.”

By the end of the meeting everyone had calmed down, but Molly Weasley looked determined to have a word or two with the young man when she got a chance.

Minerva was startled out of her thoughts by a raspy voice. “Knut for your thoughts,” Remus said as he sat across the table from her.

Minerva sighed again. “I was just thinking about Harry Potter.”

“What about him?” Remus asked puzzled.

“He isn’t what I expected.”

“Or what you wanted him to be.”

Minerva blushed lightly. “No. I was expecting a young James with Lily’s eyes. I don’t know what to do with this wild, unconventional boy.”

Remus chuckled and shook his head. “Lily and James would have loved him. He is happy, healthy and a really great young man.”

“I was rather harsh with him earlier,” Minerva confessed.
“Gabriel doesn’t hold onto grudges. Try understanding where he’s coming from. Not only is he away from his family for the first time, he's in a world they felt Gabriel needed to be hidden from all these years. He's surrounded by people and a society which shuns squibs, and those he loves most in the world are squibs.” Remus shrugged. “I don’t think he feels safe or even welcome here. He knows that people in this world expect him to save them from Voldemort. That is a lot of a teenager to handle, on top of a new school.”

“Remus, why is he in sixth year classes?” Minerva had assumed Gabriel had insisted on it, but was quickly realizing that assuming things about him was not the way to go.

“Albus wanted Gabriel to make close friends and felt the younger years weren’t a strong choice for that,” Remus replied taking a sip of his tea.

Both professors finished their break in silence, lost in their own thoughts.

1 pm.
Draco had gone with Blaise and Pansy after lunch, planning on joining Gabriel in Herbology. Gabriel walked on his own until he spied Neville.

“Neville!” Gabriel called, rushing towards the shy boy. Gabriel smiled at the brown-eyed boy. “Want to walk to Herbology with me?”

Neville looked puzzled and ran a hand through his short, dark-blond hair. “Yeah, sure,” he said softly with a smile and together they walked out onto the lawn towards the greenhouses. “How do you like things so far?”

“It’s a lot different from what I’m used to, but so far things are good. It will be a while before the Slytherins trust me, and I don’t think most of the teachers are happy about me being in the sixth year classes.”

“I didn’t think about how different this would be for you,” Neville sympathized. “I’m only really good in Herbology, but I’m happy to help where I can.”

“I’m sure you’re much better than you think,” Gabriel replied. Neville just blushed a soft pink.

When they got to the greenhouse Neville and Gabriel looked around as they still had several minutes before class started. They were seated at the long potting table when Professor Sprout came in and began calling the roll. Draco sat down just in the nick of time.

“Right then, as this is a NEWT-level class we will have a long term project for the first term. You will need to get yourselves into groups of three, then I will pass out different plants which you'll have to keep alive, and hopefully thriving, until the last day of class in December,” Professor Sprout announced.

Everyone started shifting to form groups. “Draco, Neville, can the three of us be a group?” Both Neville and Draco stared at Gabriel in shock. “What?”

“Malfoy and I don’t exactly get along,” Neville managed to stutter.

Draco merely sneered.

Gabriel’s brow wrinkled in confusion. “Why not? And who cares? This is a class project and you’re both good students.”
Draco did a quick scan of the room, there were a few other groups he could join, but Longbottom was the best Herbology student. “All right,” he drawled casually.

Neville’s brown eyes widened in shock. “O-Okay,” he stuttered in response.

“Great!” Gabriel exclaimed. He knew the two boys didn’t get along and that Draco had picked on Neville a lot when they were younger, but Gabriel needed to start bringing the students together and he might as well start here. “I wonder what we’ll get.”

“It looks like everyone has a group, so let’s get started,” Professor Sprout said gleefully. With a flourish she pulled a cloth off a tray. Growing inside the long flat tray was a thick moss so green it seemed to glow, with small clear flowers that made it look as if there was a thin layer of fog on top of the moss. “Does anyone know what this is?”

Gabriel’s hand shot into the air, along with Neville's who'd moved a bit slower. Professor Sprout quirked an eyebrow at her new student; it was a very rare plant she had brought out and she really only expected Neville to know what it was. “Yes, Mr. Dragonheart.”

Gabriel beamed. People who knew of him from the Summer Solstice would know he could actually do well in this class. “It’s unicorn’s breath.”

“Correct, five points to Slytherin,” Sprout said, pleased. “Now can anyone tell me how it’s used in potions?” Neville didn’t raise his hand for this question, but Draco and Gabriel did. “Mr. Malfoy.”

“It’s used in healing potions,” he drawled.

“Correct, another five points to Slytherin, but can you be more specific?” When Draco shook his head no, Gabriel raised his hand. “Mr. Dragonheart.”

“Unicorn's breath is used to heal emotional and mental trauma.”

“Excellent, ten points. Two of the groups will be getting one of these.” Professor Sprout set one tray in front of Gabriel's group, and the other in front of a Ravenclaw group. The rest of class was spent passing out the other rare plants, and setting up their space in the greenhouse.

“When do you want to meet to work on our project?” Gabriel asked as they were cleaning up.

“Pull out your timetables, maybe we have a free period together,” Draco suggested. Looking over the three timetables he found they all had Tuesday mornings free for an hour before lunch. “I’ll go and ask Professor Sprout if the greenhouse will be free on Tuesdays before lunch, and then I suppose we’ll have to meet at the weekends. How much care does it need?”

Neville chewed on his bottom lip while he thought about it. “I think at first it will take a fair bit of time, but once we have the plant stable we should only need to check on it every few days.”

“And on the full moon,” Gabriel added.

Draco looked at Gabriel, his eyes narrowed in suspicion. “How do you know so much about this plant?”

Gabriel just laughed and slung his bag over his shoulder. “I collect plants and sell them to Potions masters. I know a lot about them.”

Draco sat in his Arithmancy class and stared out the window. Gabriel didn’t have any more classes today and Draco was pouting about how unfair that was. Sitting up, he watched the object of his
thoughts walk across the grounds. Gabriel was dressed in charcoal gray cotton exercise pants, which clung to his arse and legs like a second skin. The deep red t-shirt was tight enough that you could watch the muscles move as he walked.

Draco was mesmerized, happily ignoring Professor Vector while Gabriel began to stretch. Draco recognized some of the movements from watching Gabriel do yoga the other night. After several minutes of stretching, Gabriel began to do a tumbling routine. Draco held his breath as Gabriel back-flipped towards the lake. Just at the edge Gabriel stopped and stood for a moment, staring out at the calm blue water. Then he turned and began again, but this time Gabriel seemed to be adding martial arts moves into what he was doing. When the bell rang Draco cursed, not only would he be unable to watch Gabriel from the Ancient Runes room, but now he had to walk carefully so no one would see his erection.

Gabriel breathed slowly as he went through his routine. He was so happy to be doing something physical and to be outside. The grounds were lovely with rich green grass and a clear blue lake, and he could even see the greenhouses and Quidditch pitch from where he was. Gabriel’s body flowed from one exercise to another; he was going to need to get out of the castle as often as possible. While he had good shields and control over his empathy, Hogwarts was still imbued with an energy that was oppressive. Cleaning the crystals and getting the water flowing through the castle was helping, but it wasn’t enough yet.

Gabriel sighed and began a series of cool-down exercises. Today was the Autumn Equinox, and it was the first time he would celebrate a holiday without his family. A tear slowly slid down his cheek as he walked back to the castle.
Monday, September 21st, evening. The autumn equinox.

Gabriel plopped down onto a faded couch in the Founders’ rooms. Everyone had been busy in the common room, so he’d easily snuck out. Now he wasn’t sure what to do; normally he’d be with family. They would have a party with food and music, and then a ritual to focus on creating more balance in their lives. Looking around the room, he focused on balance. The crystals glowed, humming with magic and power as they sent their spells through the castle. The stones surrounding him were about halfway to their original coloring, soft pale gray with mica and crystal sparkling throughout. The room was clean enough for Gabriel to relax his shields a bit and not have his empathy overwhelmed.

“Okay,” Gabriel said to himself. “What do I need to get rid of, or bring into my life, to have more balance?”

“I don’t think talking to yourself is a good start.”

“Good evening, Mbiriviri, how are you?” Gabriel smiled softly at the beautiful phoenix.

“I’m good, a little lonely, but Aurora and Hedwig visit me frequently.”

“I’m sorry it has been a while since I’ve come.”

“You have been busy. Tell me what’s going on.”

Gabriel chewed on his bottom lip, and twisted the fabric of his robe. “I’m having trouble staying in control. I feel like my emotions are all over the place. I knew that I would have to pretend, to hide who I am and what I know, but it is so much harder than I thought it would be.”

“Is the water helping?” Mbiriviri asked, her head tilting towards the crystal pillar.

“Yes, the intensity is less, but I can’t get clean and I have no peace. I can’t even sleep deeply or the emotions crash into me.” Gabriel looked to the beautiful phoenix, his green eyes desperate.

“I can help.” Stretching her fire blue, purple and green wings she glided over to Gabriel and came to rest on his lap. Softly she began to sing, a sweet, clear tune, which cleansed Gabriel and created a protective bubble. Mbiriviri sang for an hour, during which Gabriel meditated and let down all of his shields, feeling safe and free.

Mbiriviri stopped singing and snuggled into Gabriel’s chest. With a peaceful sigh, he stroked her plumage. “Thank you, that was the most wonderful gift anyone has ever given me.”

“You are welcome, Cherub.”

Gabriel smiled; it had been so long since anyone had called him by his nickname. “I hate to spoil the mood, but one thing I need to do in order to create balance is to defeat Voldemort. Do you have any ideas?”
“Do you know how he managed to stay alive?”

“No.”

“Then that would be the first step. I’m sure there are books on Dark magic in here somewhere. Fawkes has returned,” Mbiriviri said, her eyes focused on the ceiling.

“Have you two met yet?”

“No, now is not the time, we each have our own duties right now.”

“I don’t want to keep you from your mate.”

“Hush, you aren’t. Now go and look for a book on immortality, and then go to bed,” Mbiriviri trilled in a motherly tone and flew away.

“Goodnight,” Gabriel called out, and went to hunt through the Founders’ library.

Tuesday, September 22nd.

Draco smiled in his sleep, the scent of night-blooming jasmine filling his senses. His mother loved jasmine and it grew up the outside walls of Malfoy Manor. Stretching, he woke slowly, blinking in confusion. He was at school, but the jasmine... Turning he saw a single perfect stalk of jasmine lying on his pillow. Sitting up, he carefully picked up the flowers and breathed in their scent. He never thought of himself as a romantic, and yet he was carefully placing the stalk into a transfigured vase next to his bed. He knew he would treasure them when he lay down for bed tonight.

Draco was unable to find Gabriel until he was waiting outside Defense Against the Dark Arts.

“Thank you. Where were you this morning?”

Gabriel beamed. “You’re welcome. I went out to check on our plant for Herbology; unicorn’s breath doesn’t like being transplanted and I wanted to make sure it was doing well, which it is.”

“Good morning, is the castle lighter? I feel so much better lately.”

“Good morning Luna; and I do believe you’re correct, the castle is lighter,” Gabriel answered.

“You know,” she whispered mysteriously, “some of the Professors have finally noticed the castle getting better. They don’t know what to make of it, but they’re keeping it quiet.”

Draco normally ignored Luna’s crazy ramblings but Gabriel seemed to take her rather seriously.

“Lighter how?”

“Oh, the stones aren’t full of rubbish any more, and the spells are happy,” explained Luna. Draco frowned at the explanation. Thankfully the Professors opened the door, and Luna hurried off to her own class.

“Well class, we have done a lot of revision, and both Professor Black and I feel like you’re ready to show us what practical skills you have,” Professor Lupin began. “This is not a test; we just want to get a feel for where you are in your spell casting.”

“Before we begin, I would like to go over a few of the finer points of casting defensive spells,” Professor Black exclaimed as he popped up from his seat. Draco had wondered when and what Professor Black was going to teach them. Animatedly the Professor explained about how to hold a
wand, staying focused and not projecting what you’re going to cast. After the fourth time Professor
Black cautioned them not to lose their wand because then they would be as helpless as a Muggle,
Draco heard Gabriel snort. Turning, he saw Gabriel staring at their professor, his eyes cold and
calculating and his hand squeezing a blue sphere which he said was good for stress. Draco didn’t
understand how it helped.

Draco tore off a piece of parchment and wrote, "What's wrong?"

"I have been listening to Sirius and Remus tout the power of wizards and put down non-magical
people for the past month. At Hogwarts everyone seems to feel sorry for poor defenseless non-
magical people. When really they're not as weak and pathetic as everyone assumes."

Draco arched an eyebrow at Gabriel's little tirade. "Prove it," he challenged.

"Now?"

"Now."

"Here?"

"What, scared, Dragonheart?"

"Only if you being so turned on by my manly display that you tear off all my clothes in class."

"You wish."

"Now remember, expose your wand as little as possible so it doesn't get taken away. When you lose
your wand, the fight is over," Professor Black preached yet again.

Gabriel stood up. "I disagree." The class went silent, looking between Gabriel and their professors.
"I'll bet you I can take your wand from you without using any magic."

Without thinking Sirius shouted, "You're on! And when I win I get to call you Harry for two
weeks."

Remus groaned softly at his friend’s foolishness.

"Agreed, and you will eat this sweet if I win."

"Whatever you like, but it's not going to happen. Now, let’s go over to the dueling area so everyone
can see." Sirius bounced lightly on the balls of his feet. Teaching so far had been boring, and he was
looking forward to some action.

Gabriel nodded and walked over to the newly added dueling area. Draco took the opportunity to
admire him. He was wearing fitted black robes made of raw silk, which flowed around him with
every step. His hair was pulled back into a bun and held in place with two bright red lacquered
chopsticks.

The two men stood at opposite ends of the platform facing each other.

"I'll try and go easy on you; I don’t want you to get hurt," Sirius said.

Gabriel just smirked and then his face went blank as he got ready to fight. Draco felt his prick twitch.
Gabriel looked so dangerous and powerful!

With a slow, exaggerated movement Professor Black brought his wand up and cast Expelliarmus.
Gabriel stepped to the side letting the spell fly by him. Sirius grinned and raised his wand again, this time a bit faster; Gabriel shifted and then rolled, now several feet closer to Black. After that it was a flurry of movement as Gabriel spun, flipped and rolled each time getting closer and closer to the professor who was looking more nervous with every second. When Gabriel was mere feet away, he reached into his pocket, pulled out the blue ball and threw it towards the floor. It bounced up and into Sirius' face. Sirius jumped and brought his hands up reflexively. Gabriel leapt at Sirius knocking him to the floor, and rolled over him leaping to his feet gleefully.

"Okay, you knocked me down," Sirius admitted. "But I still have my wand!" he declared, holding up a red lacquered chopstick triumphantly. His expression was one of shock as soon as he saw what he held.

Gabriel reached a hand behind his head and pulled Sirius' wand and the other chopstick out of his bun. His hair fell around him in a black wave. Draco decided that Gabriel’s clothes might be in more danger than first anticipated.

Professor Black grinned, "There is definitely Marauder blood in you. All right, give me the sweets."

Gabriel held out Sirius' wand and an innocent green sweet. Sirius snatched them both up and quickly popped the sweet into his mouth. "This tastes good," Sirius said, a bit worried.

"Well, the twins will be glad to know that."

Sirius choked. "What twins?"

"The Weasley twins."

Loud barking laughter echoed through the room. "He might be part Marauder, but that was all Lily! She always could get the best of us." Sirius pouted and grumbled to himself while Professor Lupin tried to regain his composure. "Okay everyone, pair off and we’ll see what you can cast."

Draco smirked as Gabriel walked back to the desk. "Nicely done."

"Thanks, are my robes safe?" He teased while getting his wand out of his bag.

"Of course," Draco said with a haughty sniff. "A Malfoy doesn’t share."

Gabriel laughed as Draco went to work with Blaise. Looking around he saw that Hermione didn't have a partner yet. "Hermione, would you like to partner up?"

She looked a bit nervous, but nodded her head and together they walked over to the dueling area with everyone else. "If you can show me how to do a shield charm then you can cast spells at me," Gabriel offered, settling in next to Ron and Seamus.

Hermione carefully and repeatedly told Gabriel how to cast Protego, then once he convinced her he could handle it she brought up her wand and cast Expelliarmus, at the same time Gabriel cast Protego. Hermione’s spell bounced off his shield and flew across the room hitting Ernie McMillan and knocking him down.

"Well done," congratulated Professor Lupin as he helped Ernie off the floor. "Both of you cast strong spells. Please continue."

Hermione beamed with pride at her professor’s words, and turned towards Gabriel. "Do you want to cast a spell at me? I could teach you some."
Ron and Seamus chuckled; Hermione was always trying to teach someone something.

"Not today, you go ahead and show them what you know."

Hermione smiled gratefully and began casting spells at Gabriel again. While everyone cast spells at each other, they kept an eye on Professor Black waiting to see what would happen to him. Ever so slowly his skin began to get a green tint, and his hair sparkled brightly under the lights.

As they left class Draco took one last look at their Professor and muttered, "I hope something more happens to him."

"Oh, don't worry, it will," Gabriel answered cheerfully. "I'll see you all at lunch."

Gabriel took a deep breath as he walked out onto the grounds. He had Care of Magical Creatures next and was happy to be outside. Hagrid was a fun teacher and they were doing the last day of building a habitat for the fire crabs, which were arriving tomorrow. At first Hagrid had tried to keep everyone separate, but Gabriel had quickly got them all working together.

Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle were in the class and seemed to have a sixth sense with animals. Su Li, a Ravenclaw, hoped to be a magical veterinarian, along with Wayne Hopkins, a Hufflepuff. There was another Hufflepuff, Megan Jones, who simply liked Hagrid and didn't want him to feel bad by not taking his class again. Seamus Finnegan, the only Gryffindor in the group, was thinking about collecting materials for wand cores as a profession.

"Hurry up, Gabriel," shouted Vincent.

"Coming! Did Su bring the glass balls?" Gabriel called back.

"She's not here yet, mate," answered Seamus, as he crawled out of the sand tunnel they were finishing up.

“Hello, Gabriel,” called out Hagrid cheerfully. “We have a lot of work to get done; the crabs should be here tomorrow. Lovely creatures, they are.”

The area would hold twenty fire crabs, which they had to take care of for the next six months. Today they were going to cast all the charms to protect the crabs and keep them warm, as they usually lived in tropical environments. The shells of fire crabs were used in potions and polished to make jewelry and trinkets. The class flew by, everyone forgetting about their houses and working together. They were becoming friends, and Gabriel had noticed that they would nod to each other as they passed in the halls. He had plans for uniting the entire school; he was just waiting for the right time. Plotting happily, Gabriel returned his focus to the work at hand.

Gabriel skipped into the Great Hall, anxious to see how Sirius looked. Sitting down next to Draco, he began serving himself lunch. "Any sign of Professor Black yet?"

"Not yet, but I hear that Professor Lupin taught the last class alone," Blaise answered.

Ivy pointed to the High Table and the door behind it. "Is that Professor Black?"

Sirius Black strode in. His skin was a perfect Slytherin green and his hair, including his eyebrows and eyelashes, a sparkling silver. With grace and dignity that bespoke his pureblood upbringing, Sirius sat and began to serve himself lunch. Several flashes of light came from the Gryffindor table as Colin Creevey took pictures of their colorful teacher.

"Professor Black, I didn't realize how committed you are to inter-house unity," Professor
Dumbledore said joyfully, breaking the silence.

Sirius sniffed disdainfully, as the entire room broke into laughter. Some tried to be subtle, but others gave it up as a lost cause and were clutching their sides they were laughing so hard. Several of the teachers chuckled quietly.

Sirius looked up and caught Gabriel's eyes. "This means war," he mouthed.

Gabriel grinned. "Bring it on, old man."

Sirius' face lit up with happiness, until Professor Snape entered the Great Hall. He happened to enter through the main doors, and therefore was shocked to find himself walking through hysterical students. Looking to the Head Table for answers, his eyes fell upon Black, his childhood bully, turned green and silver. A joyous smirked graced his thin lips, and Severus seemed to float to his seat.

"Professor Black," the Head of Slytherin said softly as he passed by, his voice full of mirth.

Sirius gritted his teeth, but kept quiet. He was determined to accept the consequences of the prank with his head held high. Anyway, he had plotting to focus on.

"I will have to owl the twins and let them know how well their prank works," Gabriel said taking a bite of his sandwich.

"How long will it last?" giggled Pansy.

"I don't know, the twins said a few days," Gabriel answered.

"Too bad it wasn't closer to the first Slytherin Quidditch match," mused Draco.

"Oh, it's really great," Gregory said.

"How many different color combinations do they have?" Theo asked.

Gabriel shrugged. "They gave me several for each House's colors." Gabriel looked up, his eyes sparkling with mischief as he met the black eyes of his Head of House. Oh yes, he had plans for all of the goodies the twins had given him.

Severus was extraordinarily happy for the rest of the day; he even left the Gryffindors alone.

Saturday, September 26th.

Gabriel was bouncing. He was so happy; today was a Hogsmeade day and he was going on his first date with Draco. He'd chosen a simple outfit, consisting of black denims and a dark blue-green cashmere jumper. He'd left his hair down, as Draco seemed to like it that way. Bouncing upstairs, he trailed his fingers along the lighter stone. The water had been doing its job and the castle stones were not only a lighter gray, but in some places glints of crystal and mica were showing through. The energy of the castle was so much better, and Gabriel had found his temper greatly improved.

Opening the main doors, Gabriel looked outside and was pleased to see clear skies. The day promised to be a lovely cool autumn day, perfect for a first date. Gabriel skipped into the Great Hall and sat down to breakfast. Piling his plate high with blueberry pancakes and breakfast potatoes, Gabriel began to eat, humming in delight. He pretended to ignore Draco as he sat down next to him.
and began serving himself pancakes, bacon, and eggs.

Gabriel felt Draco lean over as he whispered, "I love your little food hum, and I wonder if other things make you hum?" Gabriel hummed again as he took another bite. Draco shook his head and turned to the post owl, which had just landed in front of him.

"Hello, girl," Gabriel cooed as Hedwig landed in front of him. He took the package and letter from her. Setting them down, he waited as the box resized itself, then he nicked a piece of bacon from Draco's plate and offered it to Hedwig. Draco's protest seemed to fall on deaf ears as Gabriel petted and cooed at his owl. It was several minutes before she flew away.

"Thanks for the bacon," Gabriel teased as he opened the letter.

Draco rolled his eyes, not bothering to answer. When Gabriel was reading a letter from his family nothing else seemed to exist for him.

"They have been in Belgium visiting Mercury and Athena; they were left with us years ago when they didn't get their Hogwarts letters," Gabriel explained absently as he read the letter.

Pansy, who had just sat down, paled and her hands began to shake. "What do they look like?" she asked softly.

Gabriel looked up at her with serious eyes, and handed over the picture that had been included in the letter. Pansy gasped, her eyes filling with tears, as she stared at the photograph. There, side by side, were her cousins Mercury and Athena, their brown eyes crinkled happily, looking much they same as the last time she had seen them eight years ago.

"Tell me about them," she whispered unable to take her eyes off the photo.

"They're happy," Gabriel began. "They were adopted by a couple in Belgium, who are also Squibs. They live in a Squib village where they make fabric and craft metal for sale in the Muggle and magical worlds. There is a Potions Master there who makes potions to enhance their crafts making them very desirable in the wizarding world. Mercury crafts knives, swords and athames. Athena designs and makes fabrics. In fact, they sent me a set of dress robes made from her newest design." Gabriel opened the box and pulled out a set of cream dress robes. Almost hidden in the fabric were lilies; they looked to be made from mother of pearl, but were part of the cloth. The robes were elegant, and would look lovely on Gabriel.

"They're lovely," Pansy said wistfully wishing she too could have a set of robes made by her beloved cousin.

"Thank you. You know your pale mint-green robes with the dark purple and yellow pansies on the hem?" At Pansy's nod, Gabriel continued, "She designed them."

Pansy's lips formed a soft sad smile. "Do you think I could write to them?"

"I'm sure they would love to hear from you."

Gabriel and Draco walked quietly to Hogsmeade each lost in their own thoughts. The sky was clear blue, which set off the autumn colors perfectly, and the breeze was gentle and crisp.

"Why didn’t you tell Pansy about her cousins before?" Draco asked softly.
“I didn’t know if she would care. Many people in the magical world shun those who are different from them,” Gabriel answered, his voice calm and not accusing.

Draco nodded in reply. It was true; many beings were shunned in the wizarding world. He wanted to ask about his sister, but didn’t. He didn’t want to spoil their first date, and he wasn’t sure he could bear it if he found out how painfully she had died or was forced to imagine her dying all alone. They walked side by side in comfortable silence.

As they entered the town, Gabriel turned to Draco with an impish look on his face. "I know I invited you out, but I was hoping maybe you would show me around the town?"

Draco shook his head and smirked. Looking down he saw pleading green eyes. Laughingly he said, "All right, come along."

They spent the morning exploring the wizarding village. Gabriel enjoyed himself immensely, liking most of the stories Draco would tell about each place they visited. At one in the afternoon they decided to eat, but this time it was Gabriel who led the way. Turning down an alley next to Zonko’s, they arrived at a quiet street away from the main shops. A pale yellow restaurant was hidden behind a large oak tree, and this was where Gabriel led them. Sitting down outside, Gabriel smiled shyly. "I hope you like seafood."

"Yes, very much." A waitress came out handing them both menus and taking their drinks order.

Draco ordered paella, a Spanish seafood and rice dish, which was perfectly seasoned and full of shellfish. Gabriel chose clam chowder in a sourdough bread bowl. The thick soup was creamy and full of celery, onion, and tender clams. The bread bowl was just that a hollowed out round loaf of bread, which was soft and tangy inside, with a thick chewy crust. Gabriel was surprised the chowder stayed in the bowl!

"Why aren’t there any clubs at Hogwarts?" Gabriel asked as they ate.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, the only non-class activity is Quidditch, and that’s played mostly by those on the House teams. But what do other students do for fun? Are there any groups that meet and play other sports, or read books and discuss them, or do art, or even study?”

Draco’s brow wrinkled in thought. “I know there are study groups in Slytherin, usually organized by year. Sometimes there are groups that will form in the smaller classes, for example there’s an inter-House study group for both my Arithmancy and Ancient Runes classes.”

“It just doesn’t make any sense to me, how can you grow and learn when you separate yourself from three-quarters of the school? All the House system is doing is creating more prejudice and separation within the wizarding world.” Gabriel took a sip of his lemonade and continued. “For example, did you know that Ron Weasley is a very skilled chess player? Both of you have trouble finding people within your own House who can play a challenging game, and yet neither of you have ever thought of trying to find someone outside of your common rooms to play against. I bet there are skilled players in Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, too.”

“What would that serve? The students are divided for a reason.”

“Yes, we’re divided so we can live together as harmoniously as possible. However, Draco, it was four friends who founded Hogwarts, four people with very different personalities who lived and worked together to create our school. Do you really think they meant for the students to become so
“What about Slytherin wanting only purebloods to attend Hogwarts?” Draco asked curiously.

“I think that entire thing has been blown out of proportion. I think Slytherin was doing it to protect Muggle-born students, not to reject them. Also, I doubt that they separated because of something like that, despite how stubborn Gryffindor supposedly was.”

Draco leaned in, his gray eyes narrowed in suspicion. “You don’t think, you know! I can see the certainty in your eyes. What do you have access to that no one else does?”

“Maybe someday, if you’re good, I’ll tell you,” Gabriel teased. Draco huffed and sat back in his chair. He knew Gabriel was hiding a lot, but being a Slytherin he could wait patiently until he found out what he wanted to know.

They spent the rest of the afternoon talking and exploring the town. Draco even took Gabriel to the Shrieking Shack. On the walk back to the castle, Gabriel reached out and linked his fingers with Draco’s. Draco stiffened for a moment and then relaxed, squeezing the warm, calloused hand.
October 31st, morning..

Gabriel woke slowly, a smile flitting about his face as he waved his hand to clean himself. Almost every night he dreamed about Draco, and woke sticky and rather happy. He spent a lot of time with the sexy blond, and though they had snogged a lot, they hadn't gone much further. While he didn't think one had to be deeply in love to have sex, Gabriel felt that they should be able to trust each other and not be keeping huge secrets. Gabriel could feel Draco's wariness and concern. It would get worse every time he got a letter from his father. Gabriel figured the only reason Draco felt safe to date him was because Lucius thought it was part of a 'plan'; however, it didn't bother him because he could feel how much Draco truly liked him.

Gabriel sighed; he was keeping his own secrets from Draco. He still hadn't told Draco about his sister being alive, nor had he told his boyfriend how much he knew and what he'd studied over the years. Draco noticed his disappearances, even though he didn't ask about them. Gabriel needed to tell Draco everything before their relationship could progress any further. He was falling in love with Draco, and wanted to make love to him desperately. The only question he had to answer was: did he trust Draco with his secrets?

As Gabriel went through his morning yoga routine, he thought about everything that had happened over the past month. The castle stones had cleansed almost completely, and no one had any clue as to why. Rita Skeeter had printed all sorts of articles, claiming everything from an attack by Voldemort to the Founders' ghosts taking over Hogwarts. Aurors came and after three days of investigation decided that the school was not in danger, and the public calmed down. The students and staff had changed, too. People from different houses were getting along better and old animosity was slowly being washed away. Those sensitive, like Gabriel and Luna, were much more relaxed, although Luna still didn't make any sense to most people.

Finishing up, Gabriel went to the dorm to shower. Stopping by Draco's bed, he watched him sleeping for a moment. Golden eyelashes lay against his pink cheeks, and Draco's face was so relaxed and peaceful that he looked like an angel. Gabriel bent over and kissed Draco's lips. The blond hummed happily and gray eyes slowly blinked open. "Morning," Draco mumbled his voice rough with sleep.

"Good morning. Sorry I woke you, but I just couldn't resist."

"Well, make it worth my while and I'll consider forgiving you."

"I'll do my best," Gabriel replied in a sultry voice as he lowered his lips to Draco's.

Beaming with happiness, Gabriel sat down next to Draco at breakfast. He was just spreading rhubarb jam on his toast when Luna sat down across from him at the Slytherin table.

"Good morning, Gabriel."
"Hello, Luna. How are you today?"

Dreamy gray eyes met his. "I'm fine; however, something big is going to happen later today. You need to make sure you're fully dressed."

"What?" Draco asked, as he looked over his boyfriend.

"What's going to happen?" Gabriel asked, worry tingling his voice.

Luna leaned in. "A battle."

Draco scoffed even as the hairs on the back of his neck stood up in fear. "I seriously doubt it."

"Of course you would," Luna said simply with no anger in her voice. Turning to Gabriel, she continued. "Full gear, I'd hide it so no one knows."

"Thank you, Luna. I'll be ready."

Luna's eyes became unfocused and her voice far away. "Of course you will, you're the hero."

Watching as she walked away, Draco turned to Gabriel and whispered, "Do you believe her?"

"Yes."

Draco blinked, not expecting that answer. "What are you going to do?"

"Change my clothes."

Draco cocked an eyebrow as he watched Gabriel walk away.

All day Gabriel had been watchful and withdrawn. As he sat down to dinner, he smiled softly at those sending him worried looks from across the Great Hall.

"Why is it," Draco asked as he sat down, "that your mood seems to affect all those around you?"

Gabriel smiled and said the same thing he said every time Draco asked a question he wasn't ready to answer. "I don’t want you to get bored, so I'm keeping that a secret."

Draco snorted as he always did and then turned to greet Pansy and Blaise.

Gabriel looked around the Great Hall; it was decorated for the Halloween feast and looked great. Bats fluttered around floating black and orange candles. Charmed jack-o-lanterns sat on the tables, their faces changing every few minutes and bowls of sweets were placed every foot along the tables. Gabriel zoned out while the Headmaster gave a short speech, and jumped a bit when the food appeared.

"You need to relax," Draco said placing a comforting hand on Gabriel's back, frowning as he came into contact with an unseen object. "What is this?" he hissed.

"A sword."

"Why?"

Gabriel sighed.. "Luna."
Draco’s eyes narrowed. "You truly believe what she said? I didn't know you trusted divination."

"Yes, I believe her, and I don't trust all divination, but I do trust Luna." Draco just looked at him as if he'd lost his mind. "Can we talk about this later in private, please?"

"I will expect a thorough explanation, to this and many other things you’re keeping from me."

"I'm not the only one keeping secrets," Gabriel said softly.

Draco nodded and had begun dishing himself up some roast beef, when the castle wards screeched and children appeared on the Slytherin table, spilling food and dishes everywhere. The teachers were trying to calm the panicking students, but Gabriel ignored them all.

"Kamala! Aubrey! Tatiana!" he shouted, surging forward and wrapping his arms around their shaking bodies as they clung together. "What happened? Are you all right?"

Kamala looked up, tears and dirt staining her face. "Gabriel, these people in black robes and white masks came and started hurting everyone. Maataa and Pitaa made us come!" As she pulled back, Gabriel noticed Talha clinging to her.

“Gabriel!” Tatiana and Aubrey cried as they launched themselves at their brother. He held onto them tightly as they sobbed.

"Mr. Dragonheart, would you care to tell us what is going on?" Professor Dumbledore asked in his grandfatherly voice.

Gabriel looked up, his emerald green eyes hard and determined. "Death Eaters attacked my family. I have to go." Finding Severus’ black eyes, Gabriel said, "Take care of them for me."

"We're coming with you," shouted Sirius as he and Remus pushed through the crowd.

"Tatiana, Aubrey, I have to go, but Severus is here and he will take care of you." Gabriel untangled himself and stepped back, dropping his glamour. Several people gasped as battle robes and weapons were revealed and he disappeared. Everyone was silent, frozen in shock for a moment, not sure what had just happened or what to do.

“Wait!” Sirius yelled upset at being left behind. Remus gripped his lover’s shoulder holding him back.

"Uncle Severus!" Tatiana called out.

The strict Potions professor strode forward to the gypsy children. "Are you harmed?"

"Just a few bumps and bruises I think," answered Kamala.

Aubrey sniffled as his lavender eyes filled with tears. "I fell and scraped my knee, Uncle Severus."

Severus scooped up Aubrey. "Well, I think we should go to the infirmary and get you fixed up." Holding out his hand Severus waited for Tatiana to get down from the table.

The delicate girl with white-blonde hair sniffed and stepped down reaching for her Godfather’s hand. "Ow!" she cried, falling to the floor.

Draco rushed forward, curious to meet Gabriel’s siblings. “Are you all right?"

"My ankle hurts. It twisted when we ran away from the bad people,” she said turning large gray eyes
Draco began to shake. "Oh Merlin," he whispered.

"Draco," Severus said in a calm, firm voice. "Please pick her up and bring her to the infirmary; I will explain then. Blaise, you should come also."

Blaise was confused, but he stepped forward. When he saw the little girl on the ground he gasped and turned to the small boy Severus held in his arms. "Draco, do you think…?"

Draco held onto his composure as he lifted his sister into his arms. "Come along, Blaise; soon the masses will come to and it will be a madhouse in here."

Blaise stood still for a moment, when he noticed a lovely Indian girl struggling to walk and hold a boy he guessed was her brother. "Here, let me take him," Blaise offered. Kamala gratefully handed over her brother. Once they disappeared through the doors, the Great Hall burst into noise as everyone began talking at once.

"Please, please," called out Professor Dumbledore. "I know this is very exciting, but I must ask everyone to calm down. Please sit and finish your meal. I and some of the other professors will find out what is going on. Professor McGonagall, will you please stay and help to calm the children. Professors Black and Lupin, would you come with me?"

Gabriel was glad he'd Apparated behind the barn instead of using his Portkey earring as Death Eaters surrounded all of his family. Ria was closest to him; a Death Eater had her by her hair and was pulling her across the yard. A glint of silver flew through the sky and the Death Eater screamed as a throwing star pierced his arm. Gabriel was planning on sneaking forward slowly, but then a scream tore the air and soon others followed. Adonis, Naveen, Vincent and Mudiwa lay on the ground, while three black-robed wizards cast curses at them. Gabriel’s eyes narrowed as Adonis and his Baba arched and writhed under Crucio.

He didn’t understand why his family hadn’t used their Portkeys! Then he saw a figure move through the trees on the other side of the house. Lucas was holding three children and leading several of the Squibs who lived in the village to safety. Looking around, he found several groups sneaking away from the evil wizards. His family was sacrificing themselves so the others would be safe. Well, he could help with that!

Purposefully he walked towards his family, his black robes snapping around him, as he reached back and drew his katana. A glamour highlighted his scar for all to see as he called out, “Cowards!”

“Is that him?” whispered one Death Eater.

“Malfoy didn’t say anything about Potter being here,” said another, his voice filled with fear.

“Come on, he’s just a stupid kid, let’s prove ourselves to the Dark Lord,” said another.

The entire group was made up of young Death Eaters, most of them newly out of Hogwarts. They had thought it would be easy, but the gypsies had fought back and every Death Eater was injured.

“I don’t know…” began one.
“Crucio,” called out another grinning as the lavender eyed man with long chestnut hair screamed in agony.

Green eyes narrowed in anger. Strengthening the power of his voice, Gabriel yelled, “Abatu, Kamala!” And in a flash all of his family was safe. Snarling, Gabriel continued to advance on those who had hurt his family.

The Death Eaters trembled in fear, not understanding why their prisoners had suddenly vanished. “Mitchell, we should go.”

“Shut up, Tomlin!” he snarled, “and get Potter.”

The air crackled with magic, as spells were flung from wands. Gabriel advanced, stepping out of the way of some spells and shielding himself as best he could from the rest. As he got close to the first Death Eater, he raised his hand and without word or wand the person vanished from the field. Turning his focus on the other three, he flipped his hand, sending two of them to the ground gasping in pain.

“You will leave here and never return!” Gabriel yelled. Another flip of his hand and the two men on the ground screamed and then disappeared.

“Where are they?” shouted Mitchell.

“I sent them back to their master, would you like to go on your own or should I force your body too through time and space?” Gabriel hissed.

“You can try,” sneered Mitchell. The two men circled each other, both casting spells, their shields holding tight. “The little ones screamed so prettily when we got here. Where are they, Potter? Will I get to play with them once you’re gone? Do you think the Dark Lord will give them to me as a reward for bringing you in?”

Green eyes glowed in fury and with a yell Gabriel charged the vile man.


Gabriel didn’t even slow down, he leapt forward and plunged the katana into the Death Eater’s body. The wizard gasped, blood falling from his lips. Viciously, Gabriel removed the steel from the man’s body causing him to fall to his knees.

“Tell Voldemort to leave my family alone! If the coward wants to fight me, then he can come and get me. Now go,” and Gabriel sent the man away.

“Gabriel!”

“Lucas, is everyone all right?” he asked, clutching the man’s strong shoulder.

“Yes, they focused on your family, everyone else got away. Don’t worry about us, go to them.”

“Thank you, Lucas. I’ll set up wards so they can’t return. Tell Oma I’ll visit soon.”

“If I can help let me know I need to make sure everyone is all right. Don’t worry we have enough potions, and most injuries are from falling down while running.” Lucas said giving Gabriel a hug.

“Can you keep everyone out of this area while I work? I’ll need to concentrate.”

“Of course.”
Voldemort screamed in rage as his servant delivered the message. He hadn’t expected Potter to show up, let alone know enough to defeat even his newest followers. If Harry Potter wanted a fight, then he would get one.

“Lucius, plan an attack on Hogwarts.”

“My lord, are you sure? Hogwarts is well guarded and our negotiations with the vampires, werewolves, and giants have just begun.”

“Silence! You will get everything ready. I want to be in battle by Christmas Day!”

Lucius shivered as the red eyes glared at him, making him feel exposed and weak. “As you wish, my Lord, it will be done.”

“That’s better, Lucius. Tell your son I expect him to meet us at the gates with Harry Potter gagged and bound. Now go,” Voldemort demanded.

Lucius quickly fled. He had a letter to write and a war to plan.

Hogwarts infirmary.

Draco shook slightly as he watched Severus tend to Gabriel’s siblings. Blaise stood just behind him with his arms wrapped around his body. Madam Pomfrey had shooed them away from the children, and they were waiting for them to be tended to before asking questions.

“Did you know?” Blaise whispered.

“No.”

“Do you think it’s them?”

“Yes,” Draco choked out.

“Uncle Severus?” the little blond girl whispered as quietly as a six-year-old can.

“Yes.”

“Why are those boys staring at us?”

“Your hair!” Aubrey screeched suddenly, realizing that his sister’s hair was the lovely white-blond color they always hid when around wizards.

Tears filled her gray eyes. “I didn’t have time! Do you think Daddy and Baba will be mad at me?”

“Hush now, you know better than that,” Severus chided softly. “All they will care about is that you’re safe.”

“Tatiana,” said Kamala sitting down next to the worried girl. “Do not worry; we knew this would happen one day. Everything will be fine.”
“I still don’t know why he’s staring,” she said petulantly.

“He is waiting patiently, something you need to learn how to do,” answered Severus. “Draco, Blaise, come here please.”

The two Slytherins walked forward, fearful and hopeful at the same time.

“This is Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini. Gentleman, I would like you to meet Kamala and Talha, friends of mine and Gabriel’s chosen siblings, and Tatiana and Aubrey Dragonheart, his adopted siblings.”

“Are they…?”

“Yes, Blaise, they are,” answered Severus.

“We are what?” demanded Tatiana, her face set into a scowl very much like her big brother’s.

“You remember the story of how your family found you?” Severus asked. Both children nodded.

“Well, these are your brothers from your first family.”

“The ones who were sad when we were gone?” Aubrey asked shyly.

“So much,” Blaise answered, as tears ran down his mocha cheeks. “We missed you so much.”

Before any more could be said, the wards screeched again and seven people appeared. Screams echoed through the air.

“Bloody fucking hell! I’m going to kill that boy!” Soto yelled. “Elena, are you all right?”

“I’m fine, is everyone here?”

“Where are we?” Ria asked looking around. “Kamala, are you okay? Is Talha with you?”

“Yes, Maataa, we are all fine. Where’s Gabriel?”

“What is going on in here?” Madam Pomfrey demanded. Seeing the new group of people on her floor she sighed, “Do any of you need help?”

“Please,” groaned Naveen.

Madam Pomfrey gasped as she took in the sight of the four badly injured men, only one of whom was conscious. “Severus, I will need your help. Get them all onto a bed and begin casting diagnostic spells. Who is bleeding?”

“It’s not me,” said Naveen, as he allowed Ria to help him to the bed next to their children.

Severus walked over quickly and began casting spells on his lover. Adonis’s blood-soaked shirt was ripped in several places. His skin was ashen and his body trembled. Trying to distance himself, he looked over Vincent and Mudiwa. “It looks like Cruciatu and Sectumsempra to me.”

“I’ll get the dittany,” the mediwitch replied.

Gently, Severus lifted his lover and placed him onto a bed. Those who were able quickly tended the others under Madam Pomfrey’s direction.

Draco felt a tug on his sleeve. “Will my Daddy and Baba be all right?”
“Of course they will,” Draco answered, pulling his sister into his arms for the first time in four years. “Madam Pomfrey is the best mediwitch there is.”

“Do you know when Gabriel will be back?” Aubrey sniffed.

Blaise sat down on the narrow bed and held out his arms. It was only a moment before his baby brother climbed into them. “I’m sure he’ll be back very soon. He just wanted to make sure your family was safe. Now that they are, he’ll be right back.”

“As soon as he kicks their arses,” Tatiana added fiercely.

“Where did such a pretty young girl learn language like that?” Draco asked teasingly.

Tatiana snickered and snuggled into the firm chest. Draco smiled, holding onto his sister tightly. Out of the corner of his eye he watched Blaise do the same.

Thirty minutes later a soft ‘crack’ alerted everyone to Gabriel’s presence. He swayed softly, then stood tall. “Did everyone make it? Is everyone all right?”

“Yes,” said Ria soothingly. “Everyone is fine, are you all right?”

“I got hit with a spell. Is there any dittany?”

“Come here right now,” scolded Madam Pomfrey pointing to a bed. Gabriel’s shoulders slouched as he walked over to the bed and lay down. “You need a lot more than dittany, young man!” With a few waves of her wand, she removed Gabriel’s shirt and cleaned the blood off his chest. A large wound crossed his chest, starting at his right shoulder and ending at his left ribs.

Severus was stood over him with the pot of dittany ready to apply some when his Mark burned. He caught his breath, his face closing down into a blank mask. “He’s calling.”

“You can’t go. He must know about what happened in the Great Hall,” Gabriel said.

“He doesn’t know yet,” Severus insisted. “Dumbledore has stopped all owls from leaving. I’ll be back soon.”

“Be careful,” Gabriel called out as Severus swept out of the room.

Reaching for the jar Severus had placed on the bedside table, Gabriel’s hand was stayed by Draco. “Let me help you.”

“Okay, how is everyone?”

“They’re okay, your fathers and Adonis are still unconscious, but Madam Pomfrey says they’re resting comfortably now.” Reaching into the jar, Draco scooped some of the soft paste onto his fingers. With firm but gentle strokes, he applied it to Gabriel’s chest. “Why didn’t you tell us about Tatiana and Aubrey?”

“We’re both still keeping secrets from each other. Why didn’t you tell me about your father?”

Draco stilled for a moment. “What about him?”

“Why is he okay with us dating?”

Draco closed his eyes, he wasn’t sure if he was ready to trust Gabriel this much.
“It’s okay, Draco. You don’t have to tell me.”

“No, I think it’s time. My father wants me to get close to you, so I can bring you to the Dark Lord.”

Gabriel met Draco’s worried gray eyes. “Is that the only reason you’re dating me?”

“No.. I like you, but I’m not ready to defy my father just yet. So, I got to date you and bought myself a few more months.”

Gabriel smiled and reached up, placing his hand against Draco’s soft cheek. “I really care about you, and I know you’re not safe right now.”

“It doesn’t matter, I’m going to tell him to piss off,” Draco said.

“No, not yet,” Gabriel started, but was interrupted by Madam Pomfrey.

“Drink these,” she insisted, handing Gabriel several potion vials. Gabriel downed them quickly. His eyes fluttered closed, and he fell asleep. Draco looked at the mediwitch askance. “He needed to sleep in order to heal,” she said with a shrug and moved on to check her other patients.
Chapter Seventy-three

November 1st

Gabriel woke slowly, trying not to move as he was unsure where he was. His head was foggy and his body ached. He could feel the weight of Tatiana and Aubrey curled against his sides. The air smelled of potions and cleaning fluids. Was he in a hospital? The soft murmur of voices reached his ears. Severus and Draco where whispering about a meeting? Slowly the pieces all came together and he remembered the night before. Opening his eyes, Gabriel tried to sit up and groaned as his body protested the movement.

“Gabriel, wait,” Draco called out softly as he hurried to his side. “Your chest is still healing; you need help.”

Gabriel ignored him as he tried to force himself into a seated position. “Is everyone all right?”

Draco wrapped his arms around Gabriel’s back and helped him to sit up. “Everyone is just fine. Do these two ever wake up?”

Gabriel’s face softened as he looked down at his sleeping siblings. “They frequently crawl into bed with me, and are used to me moving about before they wake up.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about her?” Draco whispered, his voice pained.

“I wasn’t sure you would want to know. I could tell you had a plan, and it seemed like you wanted to break away from your father. I wasn’t sure what would happen if you found out about your sister.”

Draco nodded. He didn’t like it, but he understood. It was the same excuse Severus had given for not telling him about his sister. Severus joined the two young men, pulling up a chair.

“How did the meeting go, Severus?”

“The Dark Lord is very angry at you, Gabriel. He is planning an attack, and Lucius is helping him. I don’t think I can go back to find out more, but he did hint that young Draco here would be helping him, and would be greatly rewarded.”

“I got a letter from my father early this morning,” Draco said pulling the parchment out of his robe pocket. “He wants me to get closer to you, and by Christmas I’m supposed to be ready to deliver you to the Dark Lord at a moment’s notice.”

Gabriel sighed and winced as he shifted, trying to get more comfortable. “He's going to attack Hogwarts. He’ll come for me here.”

The conversation stopped as a moan was heard. Gabriel looked over and saw Soto stretching as he woke. “Good morning.”

Narrow, black eyes opened and hardened as he rose. “What were you thinking, sending me away like that? I could have helped you, damn it!”
Everyone else woke up at Soto’s yelling.

“I know. I saw you protecting everyone, but I needed to get those who were injured out of there and I couldn’t isolate each Portkey,” Gabriel explained hurriedly.

“Everyone is safe now, that’s what matters,” Elena replied soothingly, placing her hand on her husband’s arm.

“Bloody hell,” gasped Adonis as he tried to move. Severus flew to his side and with extreme gentleness helped his lover sit up. He fussed for several minutes over the blond.

“Are they still together?” Draco asked, his voice full of wonder.

Gabriel smiled softly at the pair. “Yes.”

Draco shook his head in amazement.

“Good morning,” greeted Madam Pomfrey cheerfully. “Let me check bandages and dispense potions, and then everyone will eat a good breakfast.”

Gabriel watched closely as his family was being tended, listening to find out how they were healing. A small hand on his face made him turn, and he looked into soft gray eyes. “Good morning, sweetheart, how are you feeling?”

Tatiana beamed, “I’m fine. We sneaked into your bed once she went to bed,” Tatiana explained pointing to the mediwitch.

“Always sleep well with you,” mumbled a sleepy Aubrey. He was never good in the mornings.

Gabriel chuckled softly, trying to not aggravate the wound on his chest.

“How are you guys?” Vincent asked, his voice hoarse from screaming.

“Daddy!” Aubrey and Tatiana cried, running over to him and climbing into his bed. “We were so worried!”

“Hush, everything is fine now.”

“Yes, we’re all going to be just fine,” added Mudiwa.

A cry of ‘Baba!’, and both children flung themselves onto the ebony man clinging to him.

“We’re safe, don’t worry,” Mudiwa comforted, his voice much deeper and rasplier.

“Indeed,” offered Madam Pomfrey. “Everyone is healing quite nicely. After breakfast I will let you all go, with a supply of the proper potions and salves.”

“Thank you,” they each called out. Soon they were tucking into eggs and toast.

“Where are we going to go?” Kamala asked from where she was tucked in between her parents.

“You’re staying here,” stated Gabriel. Severus and Draco both looked at Gabriel in surprise. “They will stay here,” he insisted.

“Well, there are several guest rooms; we can certainly ask the headmaster if they could stay,” Severus said.

“Yes it is. You were all hurt really badly, you could have been killed!”

“Why did you stay so long?” Severus asked, his brow wrinkled in confusion. “You didn’t need Gabriel to activate the Portkeys.”

“Lucas and his clan were there, along with most of the village,” Mudiwa explained. “We had to keep the attention on us while they escaped.”

Severus’ black eyes burned with anger as he slowly turned towards Adonis, taking in the man's bandages, trembling, and ashen skin. “This is not acceptable.”

Adonis just grinned. “I love you, too.”

Severus closed his eyes and placed his forehead against his lover’s. “Prove it and stay safe.”

“Well, I can think of at least one benefit of staying here.”

Severus smirked. “I will make it worth your while.” The two men pulled apart as the infirmary door swung open.

“Dumbledore and Minister Fudge are coming,” Blaise warned as he pulled a chair over next to Draco. “The school is in uproar and what happened yesterday is all over the Daily Prophet! They're wondering how powerful Gabriel really is.” Blaise would have continued, but the door opened.

Gabriel’s eyes hardened at the news; with a wave of his hand he transfigured all of the striped cotton pajamas that Madam Pomfrey had made everyone wear into sleek, black silk ones. The other gypsies kept talking as if nothing had happened.

Gabriel turned to Draco and Blaise. "Are you sure you want to be here for this?"

Draco snorted. "Are you kidding? I wouldn't miss it!" Gabriel's eyes softened, amused at his boyfriend’s answer.

"I want to be here," stated Blaise. "My baby brother is here, and this is where I belong."

Gabriel smiled, and quickly asked them about how the Quidditch team was doing, as their first game was that Friday.

Seconds later Dumbledore and Fudge arrived.

"Good morning, everyone!" Dumbledore called out cheerfully. "Madam Pomfrey assures me you are all doing much better, which is good news indeed."

Dumbledore wore soft gray robes decorated with raindrops and rainbows. His face was bright and inviting, and his eyes twinkled merrily, but Gabriel could see the cold intelligence in them.

"Yes, good to know you are doing better, Mr. Potter. Let me introduce myself, I'm Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic."

Fudge was a short, portly man with the most insincere face Gabriel had ever seen. He wore a sickly purple suit with lime green pin stripes. "Good show yesterday, fighting off those Death Eaters! I'm glad to see you had it in you. I must admit I was rather worried that you would be unable to fight You Know Who, what with your upbringing and all, but it looks like everything is going to be well now. Yes, yes," chattered Fudge, mindless of Gabriel's anger at having his family insulted. "So, I'm
here to talk about how and when you will be off to defeat You Know Who."

"Yes, well, we're working on a training schedule, and now that Mr Potter's family is here I can get their agreement," Dumbledore said, quite aware of how protective Gabriel was of his family.

Fudge's voice turned hard. "Why do we need their agreement? They are nothing but Squibs. No, the boy will do as I say."

Gabriel sneered, "'The boy' is sitting right here, and he does not like his family being dismissed so rudely."

Fudge opened his mouth to speak, but Gabriel cut him off. "I want to be very clear here, Minister. You and the Headmaster both want me to defeat Voldemort, am I right?"

Fudge gasped and stuttered, "Y-y-yes."

"Not without training, Mr. Dragonheart," Dumbledore answered kindly.

"So you do want me to kill Voldemort?"

Fudge gasped again, and nodded. Dumbledore got a grave, apologetic look about him, and inclined his head once.

"What's in it for me?"

"Excuse me?" Fudge demanded, as his face flushed with anger.

"Mercenaries, hired killers, assassins, they all get paid," Gabriel explained crossing his arms. It took all of his strength not to laugh at the dumbfounded looks around the room. He’d even surprised his family with this one.

"My dear boy," Dumbledore said in a soothing voice. "This is your destiny. Voldemort has only been defeated once – by you as a baby – and now we need you to defeat him again."

Fudge's anger and self-righteousness was further fuelled by Dumbledore’s words, "You owe the wizarding world! It is your duty to defeat him!"

"Why do I owe the wizarding world? What could I possibility owe a world that has done nothing for me?" Gabriel asked coldly. "Listen, I understand that we aren't going to agree on this, so let me make it very simple for you. If you want me to kill Voldemort, I expect to be paid for it. In advance."

Fudge spluttered, his face turning purple in fury. Dumbledore placed a calming hand on his arm.

"Mr. Dragonheart, what is it that you want?" Fudge assumed that the boy would only want simple, easy things. Unfortunately, he was wrong.

"Could you ask a house elf to get something for me?"

"Of course, my boy." Dumbledore snapped his fingers and soon a house elf brought Gabriel his school bag.

Gabriel pulled two scrolls out of his bag, handing one to each man. "The specifics are in here, but basically I want you to help stop the prejudice that rules the wizarding world.

"Minister Fudge, I want you to make all magical beings equal, having the same rights and privileges, including Squibs and so-called dangerous creatures like vampires and werewolves."
"Headmaster Dumbledore, I want you to end the House rivalries by letting the students create clubs, teach extra-curricular activities such as art, music and sports, and hold events, such as dances and concerts, which everyone can attend. Wizarding culture classes are a must. Muggleborns have no idea about the intricacies of wizarding culture and feel left out and unwelcome when they come to Hogwarts. Also, I want my family to stay here at Hogwarts until I have dealt with Voldemort."

"I will not be told what to do by a child! These are dangerous creatures that have no place here. They contaminate our world and put us all in danger!" Fudge screeched, sounding irrational.

"Gabriel, I commend your desire to improve the world, but the House system has been in place since the founding. It isn't our place to change tradition."

"Headmaster, I disagree. It is the responsibility of every generation to try to make our world better. The founders didn't want their school to be filled with hatred, or for a quarter of the students to be treated with contempt because of the house they were Sorted into. This is what I want. You want me to kill Voldemort and I want these changes made. I will not fight to free a society that will just create another Voldemort, another Dark Lord, because of its prejudices."

Fudge's color had faded and his face was now a cold mask. "I only pay highly trained people to protect the wizarding world; why should I give you anything?"

Gabriel smirked. "If I can prove I'm worth it, that I'm powerful enough, will you give me what I want?"

"I might. But these Squibs will have to go, they cannot stay here. Hogwarts is for magical children, not a sanctuary for freaks."

Gabriel glared at Fudge and then rose from the bed and fluttered his fingers casting a secrecy spell over everyone in the room. "What do you want to see me do? What spell defines a powerful wizard to you? I'll be nice. You can each pick two."

Fudge huffed in irritation, but Dumbledore's eyes twinkled madly in excitement. "I would like to see you perform the Patronus charm."

"Certainly, Headmaster."

Gabriel’s lips curved into a smile as he found his happiest memory, then he brought his hand up behind him and flung it forward, as if throwing a ball. Silvery gray mist erupted from his fingers and the room was filled with Gabriel’s Patronus. The large dragon roared and breathed silver flames over Fudge and Dumbledore. After curling around Gabriel and scanning the room for danger, the dragon snorted and vanished.

Tatiana, Aubrey, Talha and Kamala clapped and cheered.

Only the gypsies were calm, looking proudly at Gabriel and chuckling softly at the dumbfounded looks on the other wizards’ faces. Fudge gathered himself and demanded his turn.

"Mine is not going to be so easy," the Minister blustered. "I want you to cast a shield strong enough to defeat whatever spells Professor Snape can cast, and I want it to hold for ten minutes."

"I will not…” began Snape.

"Okay,” interrupted Gabriel.

"Headmaster, this is not proper,” Severus insisted.
“I understand, my boy, but the sooner Mr. Dragonheart realizes how dangerous a fully trained Death Eater can be, the sooner he will realize he needs our help.”

Severus glared at the manipulative old man. “Where should we do this?”

“I can cast a ward that will keep everyone safe. There’s no need for us to leave.” Dumbledore wanted Gabriel’s family to see how much danger their son was in so they would give their approval for his training.

Severus drew his wand and waited for Gabriel to be ready. Gabriel gave him a reassuring look and held up his hands in front of him letting Severus know he was ready. With a sigh, Severus cast an itching hex, which was absorbed by Gabriel’s shield. This was most unusual; most shields reflected spells, making them shoot off in another direction. Feeling better about this, Severus continued to cast jinxes and hexes while Gabriel held his hands in front of himself effortlessly.

After five minutes, Fudge spoke up. “Professor Snape, I want you to cast stronger and darker spells. The Death Eaters aren’t going to use seventh year spells.”

Gabriel made the shield flare blue to let Severus know he was happy with the change. Severus began with painful but easily stopped curses, and when Gabriel’s shield held he relaxed and began casting a wide variety of Dark spells. With two minutes left, Gabriel lowered his arms and began walking around the room. When Severus cast a bone-breaking curse at him, everyone gasped, but Gabriel’s shield held firm.

Crossing his arms over his chest, Gabriel gave the Minister a bored look. “Are we done yet?”

“Y-yes, very good then.” Fudge stammered, amazed at the power and control Gabriel had shown. Most Aurors could only hold up for five minutes under that kind of strain.

“Do you need a moment before I pick my next spell?” Dumbledore asked with fake concern.

“No, I’m fine.”

“Good. Well then, my boy, I would like to measure your magic.” Pulling a small amulet from his robes, Dumbledore held it out. “Simply hold this and let your magic flow into it freely. The stone will change color indicating how strong your magic is.”

Tentatively, Gabriel took the necklace; he had read about this in Godric Gryffindor’s journal. The necklace actually captured a wizard’s magic, and the person in possession of the necklace was able to withhold or allow the victim use of their magic. Godric had created the necklace to help keep mentally unstable people safe, or to trap a criminal’s magic if the crime warranted such a consequence. It hadn’t been long before someone had used such a necklace to harm an innocent person, and Godric in his fury had destroyed all he could find, along with the pages in his journal detailing how he had created them. Godric had left instructions on how to destroy any remaining necklaces and Gabriel fixed his mind clearly on the Latin incantation.

Taking a deep breath, Gabriel began to pour his magic into the amulet. If he got the incantation wrong, he would be Dumbledore’s slave.

Dropping his shield so he could fully attune with the magical necklace, Gabriel could feel Dumbledore’s greedy excitement, and it made him shudder in disgust. Under his breath, Gabriel said the incantation. “No longer are you to capture magic, no longer do you bind one to another.”

Over and over he chanted the Latin spell, sending more and more of his magic into the amulet. The stone did its job until the end, slowly changing color as it read more of Gabriel’s magic. The
headmaster gasped in delight as the stone turned a rich indigo blue, indicating the strongest level of magic. Then the stone sparkled in a rainbow of color and exploded.

Gabriel dropped his hands and panted in exhaustion, sweat dripping down his face. He hadn’t been sure he would be able to undo the ancient spells, and his magic had been battling a tug-of-war from the moment he’d touched the vile thing. His body shook from the strain. He would need to eat and sleep very soon. Taking a moment to calm himself, Gabriel held the broken necklace out for the Headmaster to take.

“Did that tell you what you needed to know?”

Dumbledore’s eyes were cold as he took the amulet back. “It has told me several things.”

Fudge was agitated because he hadn’t understood what was happening and he still wanted his next turn. “I know what I want my next spell to be.”

Gabriel sighed, walked over the bedside table and poured a glass of water. “Okay, what last trick should I perform for you, Minister?”

“Avada Kedavra.”

Gabriel’s face became a cold mask. “Did you bring something for me to kill, or am I just picking something at random?”

The gypsies sat up straighter in their beds, no longer amused by the situation. The wizards present in the room had paled; they stared at Fudge wondering what he was thinking asking a minor to perform one of the Unforgivable curses. Everyone wanted to stop what was happening, but knew that they couldn’t. Gabriel had a plan, he was trying to make changes, and keep his family safe at Hogwarts until the war was over.

The Minister fidgeted, “I didn’t bring anything with me. Anything will do really. A bug, perhaps?”

Gabriel let an evil smirk cross his face and held out his hand. “Accio beetle.”

A large beetle flew into Gabriel’s hand, its legs flailing wildly. Odd green markings framed its eyes. “Better to die, or show who you are?”

The beetle froze and then began to change. Soon a very upset Rita Skeeter stood before them. “Well really, young man, that was quite rude!”

“Skeeter, what are you doing here? Are you even registered?” shouted Fudge, turning purple in the face again.

“A good reporter must make sacrifices,” she sniffed haughtily.

“I’m afraid, my dear, that I cannot let you repeat what happened in this room.” Dumbledore raised his wand and quickly cast Obliviate over the reporter. “Minister Fudge, would you be so kind as to have one of your Aurors escort Ms. Skeeter to the Animagus Registration Office.”

“Yes, of course,” Fudge stammered.

Soon an angry Rita Skeeter was desperately trying to talk her way out of the mess she was in as two Aurors dragged her out of the room.

“Now Mr. Dragonheart, my spell?” Fudge insisted.
“Of course.” Looking around the room for an insect, Gabriel grinned wickedly when he found one hovering right by Fudge’s left ear. Pointing his finger, so he could control his accuracy, Gabriel sent the sickly green spell out, hitting his target.

Fudge yelled in surprise and flinched as the dead fly fell onto his shoulder. Shaking, he patted himself down as if to assure himself he was still alive and well.

Gabriel crossed his arms over his chest. “I have done as you asked. Now what about you?”

“Your requests are all reasonable,” said Dumbledore carefully. “I will expect your involvement with getting some of them under way. However, this is a school and I cannot approve of your family staying here.”

Gabriel glared but nodded his head, then turned to Fudge for his answer.

“These will be hard to pass. Not everyone wants the same things you do.”

“If you get them going, I will give an interview showing my support and admiration for what you are trying to accomplish.” Gabriel knew the politician in Fudge wouldn’t be able to resist this.

“Yes, well, that should help. Unfortunately, I too, cannot approve of your family staying here.”

“No matter, we have an agreement?” Gabriel asked filling the air with magic to seal their words.

“Yes,” both men agreed, then a spell settled through all three of them, sealing their promises to their magical cores.

“Good, and as far as my family is concerned, I hadn’t planned on doing this just yet, but things change.”

Holding up his right hand, Gabriel grew out a fingernail and then transfigured the edge to a sharp blade. Cutting his left palm, Gabriel walked over the wall and pressed his bleeding hand to the stone. Everyone else in the room was frozen in shock. “As heir to the Four, I claim my birthright.”

The castle shimmered as a blue light transferred from Dumbledore to Gabriel. Now the wards were Gabriel’s to carry and control.

“The school is yours, Headmaster, but the castle is mine. You’re certainly welcome to stay here.”

Fudge kept opening and closing his mouth looking rather like a fish gasping for air. Dumbledore was pale, his eyes wide, and he seemed completely incapable of speaking.

“If you would excuse us please, gentlemen,” Gabriel said as he climbed into bed. “I’m still trying to recover from the attack yesterday and I would like to get some rest.”

Both men mumbled some sort of goodbye and walked out of the hospital wing.

“Gabriel Alec Dragonheart, you have some explaining to do.”

Gabriel winced as he looked over at his fathers, both of them with their arms crossed and looking rather put out.
Chapter Seventy-four

Gabriel grinned sheepishly at his fathers as they glared at him.

"When exactly did you learn a curse that could kill?" Vincent demanded.

"And," added Mudiwa, "What exactly was that necklace?"

Gabriel groaned and covered his face with his hands. "I learned to cast the killing curse several years ago. The necklace was an amulet made by Godric Gryffindor. It was created to capture a wizard’s magic if they were mentally unstable or if they had been found guilty of a horrible crime."

"Why have we never heard of them?" Severus asked, arching an eyebrow.

"Godric destroyed all that he could find."

"Why?"

"They were being used against innocent people as a way to enslave them," Draco answered, earning a glare from his boyfriend.

"Could that have happened to you? Could Dumbledore have enslaved you?" Soto asked softly.

"Yes," Gabriel whispered.

"That's it!" Adonis shouted as he sat up, pushing at Severus to let him off the bed. "We are taking you home, and getting the hell away from here!"

"Adonis, please, I have to stay. I can't leave everyone at the mercy of Voldemort. Anyway, we have always known it would come to this. I've been training to fight Voldemort since I was eight."

Adonis slumped back into the bed with a defeated sigh. "I know, but we should be protecting you. And look what those two arses made you do!"

"They won't try it again. Anyway, Voldy is going to be coming after me here at Hogwarts. I need to be here to meet him and, hopefully, finally defeat him."

"We will need to get our stuff."

"Don't worry about it, Baba. I can set up a triangulation spell, and Apparate all of the buses onto the grounds here."

"Yay, we get to stay!" squealed the little ones, and they began bouncing around the infirmary.

November 1st, 9pm

Gabriel crawled into bed, his whole body aching. He was still recovering from his injuries. A small pink scar ran across his chest; it would fade with time but never completely disappear. His family was settled into their tents outside near the Quidditch pitch. The Apparition spell had worked well, but it had taken a lot of energy to complete and now all Gabriel wanted to do was sleep. With a soft
moan he settled into the bed, reached down, and tried to pull the covers up, but his fingertips just barely touched them.

"Poor baby," cooed Draco, sitting down on the bed.

Slowly he took in the sight of his boyfriend’s body. Soft golden skin covered sleek muscles, just the tips of hipbones showed over white cotton pajama bottoms. His breath caught at the sight of the pink scar, and with a trembling hand Draco carefully reached out and traced it. Gabriel sighed softly at the touch. Draco bent over and began to kiss and lick the raised pink skin. He started at the bottom of the scar, grinning as Gabriel’s sensitive skin twitched under his touch. Gabriel’s skin was silky and warm beneath his mouth, while the scar was rough against his tongue. When Draco reached Gabriel’s nipple he paid special attention to the soft pink nub. Gabriel bucked and moaned underneath him. Having such a powerful and sexy man beneath him inflamed Draco’s blood. With a groan he lay on top of Gabriel, his fingers gripping the heaving sides as he continued to lick and nip at the sensitive flesh.

Gabriel reached up and slid his fingers into silken blond hair. “That feels so good,” he said, his voice rough with desire.

Emboldened, Draco continued to map his lover’s chest with his lips and hands until his chin reached the waistband of Gabriel’s sleep pants. Looking down he saw the evidence of Gabriel’s enjoyment. Nervously, he rubbed his cheek along the firm bulge.

“Draco!” Gabriel called out, arching in pleasure.

Tentatively Draco took hold of the cotton and pulled it down Gabriel’s hips. Once the pants were off, Draco laid between the muscular thighs. His breath came in soft pants that teased Gabriel’s cock. Gabriel whimpered softly at the faint contact.

Draco knew about blow jobs, but he’d never received one, nor given one. Taking a deep breath of the clean, musky scent, Draco leaned in and gently licked the hard flesh. Gabriel trembled and moaned his name. Happy with the response, Draco continued to lick Gabriel’s prick. The shaft was hard and almost throbbing under his tongue, yet the skin was so soft and silky. The head peeked out of the foreskin and the foreskin tickled his tongue. The precome was salty and bitter, but Draco found he liked it. Slowly he took the head into his mouth. He moaned softly as the feeling of Gabriel’s hard flesh in his mouth made his own cock ache with need and leak against the silk of his boxers.

Draco was able to get half of Gabriel’s cock into his mouth comfortably and used his hand to cover the rest moving them in tandem. If Gabriel’s moans and shaking thighs were anything to go by, Draco was doing well for his first blow job. Finding a steady rhythm, Draco experimented with different levels of suction, hand movements, and teasing the slit with his tongue. It wasn’t long before Gabriel was clutching his hair in warning.

“Draco… Goddess, so good… I’m going to come.”

For a moment Draco thought about stopping, but quickly decided against it.

“Draco you’re so hot. Your mouth feels so good, so hot and wet. I’m going to… oh… oh… oh… Draco!”

Gabriel’s body shook and his back arched as came into Draco’s mouth. Draco drank him down, not letting any of him go. When Gabriel collapsed back onto the bed panting, Draco released the softening flesh and laid his head in the curve of Gabriel’s hip. Suddenly hands reached down and
pulled him up Gabriel’s body, where he was fiercely kissed.

“That was incredible; your mouth is so hot! I don’t think I will ever be able to look at your sweet, pink lips again without thinking of them wrapped around me.”

Draco blushed and then squeaked as he was rolled onto his back. Gabriel unbuttoned his shirt and began kissing his way down his chest, paying attention to his nipples as his chest was exposed. It felt good, and when Gabriel bit the soft pink nubs Draco felt it in his cock, but he could tell that Gabriel’s nipples were much more sensitive. Agile fingers undid the buttons on his trousers, and easily pulled them off. Gabriel’s breath was hot against his cock, and Draco was disappointed when that lush red mouth passed his aching flesh and began kissing his stomach.

Impatiently, he pressed his needy flesh into Gabriel’s chest trying to get the attention where he wanted it. Gabriel just chuckled and continued as he wanted. Draco scowled at the black head bent over him, until the tip of Gabriel’s tongue teased along his hipbone. With a cry he arched his body, shocked at the pleasure that inflamed every cell. Gasping, he looked down to see wicked green eyes. Slowly Gabriel bent his head to Draco’s hipbone. Draco panted, not sure if he wanted to experience the intensity of pleasure again, when Gabriel took the choice from him. Hands held him down as his hipbones were ravaged by Gabriel’s mouth.

Within minutes Draco was begging for release. Swiftly Gabriel moved from the now red skin to Draco’s cock, and sucked down the long rosy flesh, moaning at the taste and feel of it in his mouth. Draco screamed, clutching frantically at Gabriel’s hair. His body was torn apart in overwhelming pleasure. Losing control, Draco thrust into Gabriel’s mouth and came violently.

Draco felt Gabriel move up the bed, and was then wrapped up in his arms. “Are you okay?”

“That was amazing,” Draco answered, his voice soft.

Gabriel pulled him closer and kissed the top of his head. “For me, too. Stay with me tonight?”

Draco snuggled into the warm chest. “As I’m not even sure I could move right now, yeah.”

The last thing Draco knew, the soft duvet was covering their entwined bodies.

Sunday, November 2nd

Gabriel woke entwined with Draco; happiness flowed through him as he snuggled in closer to the warm body. Deciding to skip his morning workout, Gabriel let his mind wander. Draco was in his arms; his family was safe at Hogwarts with him, and Dumbledore and Fudge had agreed to make the changes he felt were important. All he had left to do was to work out how to defeat Voldy. Gabriel had read almost all of the Dark Arts books in the Founders’ library and so far he had come up with nothing.

The spells which talked about immortality just didn’t fit with what Voldemort was. One spell let your soul transfer from a dying body into a baby’s body. Another seemed to be the original version of wizarding paint that made portraits alive. Voldemort didn’t fit those spells.

Carefully, Gabriel sat up, propping himself against the headboard he grabbed the next book in the pile. His brow wrinkled as he read the title, Heroes Against the Dark. Quickly, he realized it was a book of stories in which the hero or heroine defeated a Dark wizard, or witch as the case might be. Hoping to get a clue as to what Voldemort had done to become immortal, Gabriel began to read.
An hour later, Gabriel was stroking Draco’s hair as Draco slept with his head pillowed on Gabriel’s thigh, when Gabriel found what he was looking for. It was the tale of Helen and a Dark wizard no one could kill. A Seer told Helen that the wizard had split his soul into two pieces and that was what kept him alive. That just might be it, Gabriel thought excitedly. The Dark wizard looked less human after splitting his soul, and yet he’d gained power. Finally, feeling there was hope for ending the war and defeating Voldy, Gabriel read on:

Helen held the sword behind her back as she approached the evil wizard. “I can’t defeat you,” she whispered, stepping closer even as fear gripped her heart.

“No, my child, you cannot. Join me instead; stand by my side and we will rule together.”

Helen was grateful for her small stature; it frequently made people underestimate her. Smiling, she struck, driving the sword deep into his stomach she channeled her magic through it. A soul was meant to be whole, and Helen hoped that her magic would be able to bring the two pieces together. Not only would she be able to end the Dark Lord’s reign, but maybe she could save the soul of the man he’d been before evil had taken him over. Not exactly sure how to fit a soul together, Helen focused instead on how her magic felt when she was repairing a broken dish. And so her magic reached out and pulled the broken shard of soul to her and fused the two pieces together.

Her delicate body began to shake, and sweat glistened and plastered her white-blonde hair to her forehead as she continued to send her magic into the Dark Lord. He screamed, yet the power of her magic made it impossible for him to fight back. Tears ran down her cheeks as she forced the very last of her magic, and her life, into the man and his soul was restored. The last thing she heard was a soft, whispered, “Thank you.”

The Earth brought the two bodies into herself. The next summer Helen’s parents saw a unicorn grazing on the site where Helen had sacrificed herself. When the beautiful animal had moved on, a new plant was found growing there. Helen’s parents named it unicorn’s breath….

Gabriel exhaled shakily. Was this the answer he had been searching for? Would he need to give his life in order to defeat Voldemort? Re-reading the story, Gabriel felt his heart sink. First, he needed to be sure that Voldemort had chosen to split his soul. He wanted to get up and walk around, but if he moved suddenly Draco would ask what was wrong and right now Gabriel wasn’t sure he could lie. Draco shifted against his thigh. Gabriel had felt his breathing change several minutes ago and was wondering when he would fully wake up.

“Gabriel?”

“Yes.”

“I understand why you and Severus kept my sister from me. Now that I know she’s alive, I certainly can’t imagine being in the same room as my father. It hurts not knowing anything about her, but I understand.”

“Honestly, Tatiana will tell you anything you want to know, she loves to talk about herself,” Gabriel said playfully.

“I really do want to get to know her,” Draco said softly. Gathering his courage he asked, “Tell me about how you found her?”
“She was in France; they were both left by the side of the road by your house-elf Dobby. We healed them, with Severus’ help, and here they are.”

Draco snorted and moved so he was straddling Gabriel’s lap, facing him. His gray eyes were determined. “You know what I mean. How did you even find her?”

“I’m empathic, Draco. When you handed me your father’s list for the potions ingredients, I saw it all. What they were going to do and where they would be.”

“That sounds like more than just empathy,” Draco insisted.

“Well,” answered Gabriel sheepishly. “I’m a bit psychic too, I have dreams and I can pick up on things from people and the things they have touched.”

“And what have you found out about me?”

“That sounds like more than just empathy,” Draco insisted.

“Well,” answered Gabriel sheepishly. “I’m a bit psychic too, I have dreams and I can pick up on things from people and the things they have touched.”

“And what have you found out about me?”

“Nothing, Draco. Normally I keep up shields so I’m not bombarded by emotions and impressions. Sometimes I can feel what you’re feeling if it is very strong, but other than that, nothing.”

“Okay. Now back to my sister, how was she when you found her?”

Gabriel’s green eyes were filled with concern. “Are you sure you want to know?”

“Yes, I need to know. Please tell me.”

“Both Aubrey and Tatiana were in pain. Their nervous systems were in shock and severely damaged. Tatiana suffered from heart damage and Aubrey had damage to his lungs. We called in Severus for help and he was amazing. He brewed so many potions and came by every day to check on them. We wouldn’t have been able to save them if not for all his help.”

Draco leaned forward and kissed Gabriel. “Thank you.”

In silence they held each other, each lost in their own thoughts.

“Gabriel, have you ever had a dream about me?”

Gabriel gave a throaty, masculine chuckle. “I dream about you all the time.”

Draco rolled his eyes. “Not like that. Have you ever dreamt about something happening to me?”

“No, I’ve had other dreams about the school, but you seem to stay out of trouble all on your own,” Gabriel said thinking of the dreams he’d had and the help he’d offered. “The diary!” he shouted remembering the dream he’d had about Ginny Weasley. “We need to see Severus; I hope he still has it.”

“What are you talking about?” Draco snarled as Gabriel pushed him off his lap.

“I think I know how to destroy Voldy! But I need to see something first.”

Thirty minutes later they’d found Severus in his office grading essays, a pot of red ink set in front of him.

“Severus, do you still have the diary?” Gabriel asked frantically.

Severus quirked an eyebrow at Gabriel’s behavior. “The one Miss Weasley brought me?”
"Yes!"

"It is in my quarters. I can get it for you later."

"No, I need it now Severus, please," Gabriel begged, reaching out and clasping Severus’ left hand and tugging him up.

"Why is this so important?" Severus insisted even as he stood and allowed Gabriel to pull him towards the door.

"I have no idea," Draco answered as he watched his boyfriend worriedly.

They were halfway across the room, when both men gasped in pain. "I have to go," Severus said, his Dark Mark burning.

Gabriel began to shake, his eyes wide. "He knows about what happened here yesterday. He knows how close you are with my family. He’s so angry, so very angry. He wants to know why you haven’t told him, why his trusted servant would keep something like this from him."

Normally the call to join Voldemort was quick, but somehow Gabriel was keeping the connection open and the pain drove them both to their knees.

Draco quickly cast privacy charms around the room, and locked the door so no one could spy on them. He was grateful he knew about Gabriel’s psychic abilities. Quickly he went to Severus’ cabinet and got two pain-relieving potions while listening intently to what Gabriel was saying.

"He questions your loyalty. He plans on killing you if you prove to be a spy for Dumbledore," Gabriel gritted out through clenched teeth, fighting the pain.

"Gabriel, let go," Severus insisted, trying to pry Gabriel’s fingers from his arm. "No more, you’re hurting yourself."

Gabriel didn’t even feel his scar open up, or the blood that trickled down his face. "He wants you to bring him…my family. They’re only worthless Squibs, and you will have no problems turning them over to him. He will use them as bait, and then kill them all. Except maybe for Lucius’ daughter. He has always found the Malfoys attractive and if she is pretty maybe he will train her… NO! NO! NO!" Gabriel screamed pulling away from Severus and vomiting on the floor.

Draco rushed forward. "Gabriel, are you all right?"

"No, don’t touch me," he whimpered backing away from Draco’s outstretched hand.

"Draco, can I have a vial please?"

Draco reluctantly turned from Gabriel and handed his godfather a vial of pain potion. "What happened?" Draco asked.

"I don’t know. Somehow Gabriel seemed to intensify the connection with Voldemort."

A whimper of pain drew their attention.

"Gabriel, Draco has a potion for you to take," Severus said soothingly.

Gabriel backed further away curling in on himself.

"Severus what's wrong with him? How do we help him?"
"His shields are completely down, and right now he can't block any emotions surrounding him. We need his fathers."

"I'll get them," Draco said jumping up, when suddenly there was a flash of flame, and a phoenix landed next to Gabriel and began to sing. The song was breathtakingly beautiful and so soft even the stone they sat on felt comfortable. Slowly Gabriel began to sit up as his body stopped shaking.

"Thank you Mbiriviri." Gabriel reached out and stroked the lovely blue, green and purple feathers. "That was truly disgusting," he said, turning back to his vision. "Voldy's mind is a really gross place. He doesn't trust you Severus; he wants you to bring me to him."

"What are you going to do?" Draco asked, his eyes darting between the two men.

"You can't go back. He will kill you," Gabriel insisted.

Severus nodded and then flinched as the Dark Lord called him again. "He will just get more insistent every time he calls. I don't know how I can stop it."

Gabriel sat up straighter. "Let me see your arm, but don't touch me."

Severus unbuttoned and then flinched as the Dark Lord called him again. "He will just get more insistent every time he calls. I don't know how I can stop it."

Gabriel sat up straighter. "Let me see your arm, but don't touch me."

Severus unbuttoned his cuff and pulled his sleeve up high enough to expose the Dark Mark. Gabriel held his hand over the mark and sent a small amount of magic into it, testing to find its boundaries and purpose.

"Okay, I think this is a vampire bonding mark. There are several variations, but this one is for slaves. It leeches life and magic out of you; it demands your obedience, and can punish you when the master wishes."

"Are there other types of bonding marks?" Draco asked.

"Certainly. There are marks for servants, companions and clan members," Gabriel said as he continued to magically examine the mark. "Okay, I can undo this. It's a basic slave brand, just unusual because it was cast in Parseltongue."

"What do you need?" Severus inquired, hopeful his Mark could be removed soon.

"Nothing, I should be able to do it right now."

"Except that you won’t!"

Gabriel looked up into the worried eyes of his dad. "But..."

"No, your body has been overloaded. You need to rest."

"Dad, Severus needs my help. Voldy is hurting him and it will only get worse."

"What happened?" Vincent asked as he walked over and wrapped his arms around his son.

Gabriel sighed and leaned back into his father's embrace.

"I was touching Severus when he got called by Voldy and I saw what that evil bastard was thinking. He knows that Severus is close to us. Voldy wants to use that to get to me, and then he'll kill Severus." Gabriel took a deep breath, his voice cracking as he continued. "He was excited to hear about Tatiana, he wants her as a pet or something. Daddy, the images in his head..."
"Hush, baby," Vincent said rocking them back and forth. "She's safe. No one will touch her here."

Draco’s eyes blazed in anger. "There are some students here who want to be Death Eaters, who think Voldemort is right. We will need to protect her from them."

"Don’t worry, Draco. We will all keep her safe," Severus reassured his godson, his voice tight with pain.

Gabriel turned worried, wet eyes to his dad. "I need to help him. Please Dad. You can ground me, together we can do it."

Vincent sighed. "Tell me what's going to happen."

"I just need to undo the slave mark. It shouldn't take too long. But I will need to remove the connection Voldy has to him, that could be tricky." Gabriel said softly and quickly, trying and failing to downplay how difficult that part would be. "Then I will seal up the magical wound and ta-da, a Voldy-free arm." Gabriel smiled brightly at his dad who was glaring at him.

"Won’t you have to be fully open so you can feel their individual magic in order to separate it?"

"Yes."

"And won't that open you up to their memories and emotions?"

"Yes."

Vincent was quiet for a moment, and then turned to Draco. "We will need Mudiwa. Can you get him without letting the others know what we're doing?"

"Of course I can," Draco said, slightly affronted. "I'll be back in a moment."

"We will be in my quarters," Severus let him know.

"I'll be back soon." With one last longing look at Gabriel, Draco left.

"Come along. We’ll get comfortable while we wait for Draco and Mudiwa to return."

Soon they were spread out on Severus’ bed. Severus was propped up against the headboard with several pillows, while Gabriel sat on his left side between Vincent's legs.

"Uncle Severus!"

"We're in the bedroom, Draco."

The Slytherin walked in, his arms crossed in front of him. Behind him, Mudiwa and Adonis entered the bedroom.

Mudiwa walked right over to the bed and wrapped his long muscular arms around his family. "What do you need me to do?"

"Keep us grounded," Vincent answered as he settled back against his husband.

Adonis crossed the bedroom, and climbed onto the bed on the other side of Severus. "Will it be a problem if I'm touching Severus?"

Gabriel tilted his head to the side as he though it over. "If you can keep yourself calm and grounded
then it shouldn't be a problem at all."

"Good," Adonis said as he slid in behind his lover, wrapping his golden arms around him. Severus stiffened for a moment, unused to such physical affection in front of his godson and, sadly, in his own bedroom. "I like your rooms," Adonis whispered against his ear. "I hope I get to come and see them again."

"I'm sure something can be arranged," Severus said softly, his cheeks flushing slightly at his godson's smirk.

"Draco, I would like you to stay and keep watch over us. Please don't touch anyone or use any magic during the ritual, but afterwards I'm sure we will need some help."

Draco reached his hand out wanting to touch his boyfriend, but instead pulled back, letting his hand drop uselessly to his side. "I'll stay."

Gabriel smiled softly. "Thank you, Draco."

“Cherub,” Mudiwa said softly.

“Yes, Baba.”

“Afterwards, will you feel they way you did in Turkey?”

Gabriel stiffened, his voice soft. “Maybe, I don’t know exactly what will happen.”

“We will be here and ready then.”

Gabriel nodded and taking a deep breath, reached out for Severus’ arm.
Seventy-five

Chapter Seventy-five

Gabriel let the images flash around him as he worked to separate Severus' magic from Voldemort's. Thankfully there wasn't a lot of emotion mixed in with the magic. To Gabriel it was like watching two movies playing at the same time. The only emotion he felt was his own, so he was able to keep his focus firmly on the task at hand. He wasn't sure how much time had passed, but when Gabriel finally finished he was shaking from exhaustion. Keeping his focus and magic on Severus’ arm, he waited, making sure he had found everything. While he waited his subconscious mind replayed some of the images of Severus and Voldemort.

A young Tom Riddle, his heart breaking as he waited desperately to be adopted while other 'normal children' were picked over him. Year by year he became the monster the staff and children already feared he was. Gabriel watched as Tom went through school alone, and then when he first split his soul as a young man of sixteen. Gabriel cried out and felt his dad's arms tighten around him. Six times Tom Riddle split his soul, and each time he became less and less human. Gabriel shuddered, thankful he'd only watched, and that he hadn't felt Riddle severing his soul into pieces.

The images changed, and a young Severus filled his mind. He watched as Severus was adored by his mum, and abused by his father. He watched as a hopeful young man got on the Hogwarts Express, and as his dreams were cruelly destroyed by James Potter and Sirius Black. In Slytherin he had a home, safety, and allies, but no true friends. These moments of solitude were interrupted by visions of happiness with pretty, auburn-haired Lily Evans. He watched Severus choose the Dark Lord hoping for power and family, but finding only servitude and fanatics loyal only to themselves and to Voldemort. He saw Severus’ decision to spy for Dumbledore when he realized how disappointed his mum and Lily would be in the world he was now trapped in. Gabriel watched Severus run to Dumbledore hoping to save his childhood friend and being too late. Then he saw the peace and family Severus finally found in the gypsies.

Gabriel cleared his mind and checked for any trace of the Dark Mark. Finding nothing, he dropped his hands and slowly opened his eyes. "Severus."

Severus opened his eyes, his face tight in pain. Looking down, he saw his bare arm. "Thank you," he whispered thickly, his eyes filling with tears.

"I saw pieces of your life. I'm so sorry."

"Hush, Gabriel, none of it is your fault. You have been a joy."

Gabriel reached out a shaking hand, but Vincent quickly pulled it back. "No, Cherub, your shields are completely down. Adonis has him, Severus is just fine."

"I think we all need a bit of a nap," Mudiwa said softly.

"How long?" Gabriel wondered aloud.

"Two hours," Draco answered, the worry evident in his voice. "Do I need to run any scans? I just asked the house-elves to bring up some tea and sandwiches, as we missed breakfast and I'm not sure we'll make it to lunch."

"Thank you Draco, I would love some tea," Severus answered giving his godson a soft smile.
"I think we’re all okay, Draco," Mudiwa said. "Would you please bring the tray of tea and sandwiches to the bed? We all need some refreshments."

Draco nodded and set the tray in the middle of the big bed. He wanted to be of help, but really felt left out. He was planning on sitting in a chair when pleading green eyes caught his. Settling down on the bed, Gabriel sent him a grateful look. For few moments everyone was quiet as they sipped tea and munched on the sandwiches. Draco delicately wiped his mouth and turned to his godfather.

"How are you feeling?"

"Tired, but good. Free."

"And you?" Draco asked turning to his boyfriend.

"Tired. Raw, but not as emotionally overwhelmed as I feared I would be. I did see pictures of both Voldy's and Severus’ lives. I think I know why he was able to come back."

"Before we begin let's lie back and relax," Adonis suggested, picking up the tray and setting it on the ground.

Moving to the head of the bed, they lay down. All except Draco, he wasn't sure what to do.

"Draco, can you lay between me and Severus? I'm going to want to touch him, and honestly I'll overload if I do so right now."

Draco smiled and, getting a nod from Severus, climbed in between his godfather and boyfriend. Gabriel shifted and placed a hand on his chest, while Severus placed a hand on his shoulder. Draco felt as if he was connecting the two men somehow. Once everyone was tucked in, Severus began to chuckle.

“I never thought I would have this many beautiful men in my bed during my lifetime, let alone all at once."

“Should I be jealous?” Adonis teased playfully.

“I rather think not,” snarked Draco. This was his godfather after all!

Low chuckles flitted around the room and then there was silence.

Gabriel took a deep breath, trying to figure out the best way to tell everyone what he saw, then suddenly he blurted out, “Voldemort split his soul into seven pieces.”

Everyone tensed, holding their breath. The horror of what they had been told slowly sinking in.

“Nice way to ease us into the bad news,” Adonis quipped hoping to ease the tension.

“What?” Severus demanded, his voice cold.

“I watched as Tom Riddle murdered people and then used an ancient ritual to sever his soul and place the pieces into different objects so he couldn’t die.”

Mudiwa began to utter a prayer in Shona, gripping his family tightly.

“That goes against all the laws of nature,” Vincent whispered harshly as if afraid to talk too loudly about it.
"Yes, but that will work to my advantage. His soul isn't meant to be split and I think it will naturally want to be brought together again."

"That's why you want to see the diary?" Severus asked.

"Yes, I think he put part of his soul in it. I should be able to feel it, and that will help me determine how easily I can bring the pieces of his soul together," Gabriel answered calmly.

"Won't you need to destroy each Horcrux?" Draco asked.

Severus propped himself up on an elbow. "What do you know about Horcruxes?"

Draco shrugged. "Father has a large library."

Severus glared and laid back down in a huff, with Adonis only too happy to soothe him.

"That would destroy his soul forever. I want to heal it, to make it whole again," Gabriel answered.

"Why?"

Gabriel gazed sadly at Draco and Severus. "Because once he was a little boy who was abandoned and alone. No one came for him; no one helped him. Tom Riddle went to school here, he was in Slytherin and none of the staff noticed that he was an angry and hurting young man. No one reached out to help him. I think his soul can be healed, I think something so precious deserves to be healed."

"We will help you, but right now we need to sleep. Dumbledore invited us to dinner so he could make introductions, and we all need to be there," Vincent explained soothingly. In agreement everyone closed their eyes, and soon they were sleeping contentedly.

6pm

Gabriel laughed yet again as Draco blushed. "Shut it. I was just flustered waking up in bed with five other people!"

While they had slept, their legs and arms had become intertwined, and Draco had stammered and fallen out of the bed in his hurry to get away.

Severus had swiftly, but elegantly, gotten out of the bed. The gypsies had merely grinned at the Slytherins' antics and stretched lazily, slowly getting up from Severus' comfortable bed.

Gabriel pulled on a pair of black denims and a black tee shirt with Jareth from Labyrinth on the front. Printed on the shirt was: "Love me, fear me, and do as I say." It was one of Gabriel's favorite shirts.

"Are you ready?" Gabriel asked as he turned to Draco. The sexy blond was wearing fitted gray silk robes, which hugged his body invitingly. "You're beautiful," Gabriel couldn't help gasping.

Draco's cheeks tinted pink at the honesty of the compliment. "Thank you. And yes, I'm ready to go."

Gabriel held out his hand for Draco and they chatted quietly as they walked to the Great Hall. Gabriel was rather excited about his family being at dinner tonight, and was now rambling about them. Draco smiled indulgently.

When they entered the Great Hall, Gabriel bounced as he saw his family sitting at a newly added
table. Soto stood up and Gabriel ran, throwing himself at the Japanese man and wrapping his legs and arms around him. Draco's eyes narrowed at their physical closeness, and he tried to remind himself that this was normal – and completely platonic – behavior for the troupe. The shows they performed required a deep level of physical comfort and closeness. Relaxing a bit, Draco walked over to the now loud table. It only took a moment for Gabriel to turn to him and introduce him to his family. Draco smiled and tried to take in the exuberant family. He declined the invitation to sit with them, and breathed a sigh of relief as he sat amongst his fellow Slytherins.

Once everyone was seated, Dumbledore stood up. "Good evening, everyone. I would like to introduce some very special guests who will be staying with us for a while. Some of you may have noticed their colorful tents out on the grounds. Anyway, on to introductions." Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled merrily. "Vincent and Mudiwa Dragonheart are Gabriel Dragonheart’s parents."

Both men stood up and nodded to the students. Dumbledore continued, and each member of Gabriel’s family stood when they were introduced.

"I hope everyone here will do their best to make our guests welcome. Now, let’s eat!"

The Headmaster clapped his hands and food appeared on the tables. Kamala, Talha, Tatiana and Aubrey squealed with delight. At first everyone chatted quietly while they served themselves food. The gypsies were quite happy with the delicious meal the house-elves had provided for them: ravioli filled with savory pumpkin and tossed in a spicy tomato sauce, accompanied by hot garlic bread and a lovely green salad.

It had been so long since they had eaten together that at first they ignored everyone else, but whispered words soon reached their ears. Tatiana was the first to hear a slur against Squibs. Large gray eyes filled with tears as she looked to her big brother for help.

Gabriel stopped, not sure what was wrong until he heard, "I hope our magic isn't ruined by these Squibs being around."

Gabriel pushed back his chair and opened his arms allowing Tatiana and Aubrey to climb onto his lap. He wrapped his arms around them and whispered soothing words. It only took a minute before both sat up again. Aubrey happily went back to his chair, while Tatiana’s lips were quirked into a superior smirk that was obviously an inherited trait. With poise and grace she sat back down and continued eating.

Gabriel stood and the air around him crackled with power. "It is truly sad how much of the wizarding world revolves around old wives' tales," he said. "I grew up around Squibs and I think you can see that my magic is still present. Maybe you should try and live based on facts instead of superstition."

A Hufflepuff snorted and rolled his eyes at his friends. Stalking forward, Gabriel stood behind the foolish boy. Placing his hand behind the other boy’s back Gabriel tugged at his magic. The Hufflepuff gasped, his eyes wide in terror.

"Gabriel," said Vincent sternly. "That's enough. We all know better than to let the opinions of the uneducated affect us."

Gabriel dropped his hand, walked back over to the table and sat down with a petulant look on his face.

Vincent and Mudiwa went back to their dinner and the others quickly followed their example. It didn't take long for the students to begin talking again, and the rumors flew faster than anyone had
ever seen.

Gabriel groaned and looked sheepishly at his dad, whose lavender eyes shone with mirth.

"You brought this on yourself, son," Vincent snickered.

Just as they were finishing pudding Dumbledore stood to make another announcement.

"We can no longer ignore the fact that we are at war. Voldemort is growing stronger and gaining more followers all the time."

Students and staff alike gasped at the Dark Lord’s name, but Dumbledore didn't stop speaking.

"My heart fairly breaks with the thought of any of you fighting against each other. Right now we are divided by houses, classes, and age, so I've decided to try and break down some of those barriers. With help, of course."

The headmaster paused dramatically, his eyes twinkling madly. Gabriel scowled and vowed to find the counter spell to the unnatural twinkling.

"For the first time in Hogwarts history we are going to have clubs – groups which will meet for a common purpose. Anyone can come up with an idea for a club, and several of the staff already have. The rules are this: you will need a teacher to supervise – they can simply be in the room marking papers, they don’t have to participate – and it must be open to anyone of any house. If you want to do something which could be dangerous or has an age restriction you will need to get your idea approved by your Head of House. Now for the really exciting part! Several of the professors have already offered to lead certain clubs and I will now let them tell you all about them."

Professor Maklin, who taught Muggle Studies, stood up. "I thought it could be fun to have a yearbook committee. In Muggle schools in America, every year the students have their pictures taken and the yearbook committee takes pictures of groups, events. Then they put them together with captions and little essays. At the end of the year everyone gets one and all their friends sign it. I think this would be a good project for Hogwarts; we would be bringing this tradition to wizarding Britain."

Colin and Dennis Creevey were bouncing in their seats with excitement, already looking forward to taking the pictures.

Professor McGonagall stood and gently cleared her throat. "I will be starting a study group for Animagus transformation. The first part will be theory only, and only once I’m satisfied the theory is understood will I begin the practical sessions. At this time, I’m allowing sixth and seventh years only to participate."

Now it was Hermione’s turn to bounce in excitement.

Professor Vector was next and she announced a chess club, which several students, including Draco and Ron, were excited about. Professor Sprout offered to host a drawing group, and lastly Professor Snape stood up, much to the shock of everyone in the school.

“I am opening a fencing group. All levels of skill will be welcome,” Severus announced.

When Severus sat down, Dumbledore stood again clapping gaily. “Thank you all so much for being the first to support our new program. And before you all go back to your common rooms for the evening, Gabriel Dragonheart and his family will be hosting a dance for everyone in the near future. There is so much to look forward to, I sincerely hope this helps bring all of you closer and encourages you to form new friendships.”
Gabriel quirked an eyebrow at Dumbledore’s announcement and turned to his family, shrugging his shoulders. “At least it will be something fun to do.”

“Oh yes,” sighed Elena happily. “It will be fun. Maybe we could have some kind of theme?”

“We will plan all of that later. Right now these two need to get to bed,” Soto said looking down at Aubrey who was nodding off on his lap. Tatiana’s eyes were sleepy, even though she was trying to stay awake.

“I’ll walk down with you,” Gabriel offered.

“Blaise and I would like to come with you.”

“Of course, Draco, Blaise,” Vincent greeted the Slytherins who had appeared next to Gabriel.

They walked quietly out to where their tents were set up. A silhouette in the pale moonlight let them know someone was waiting for them. Not knowing who it was, Gabriel strode forward. The wards hadn’t alerted him to anyone entering the grounds.

“Good to know everyone is all right. Couldn’t you have sent a bloody note?” snarked Lysander once they got close.

“How did you get on the grounds without tripping the wards?” Gabriel demanded, worried that just anyone could get onto the castle grounds.

“Oh, we're so sorry, Lysander, for making everyone worry. Thank you for coming and checking on us. Is everyone back at Becky’s place all right?” Lysander drawled, his voice oozing sarcasm.

Gabriel stopped and took a deep breath. Bloody hell, that man could be irritating. “I’m sorry, Lysander, and you’re right, we should have let some one know that we're safe. Is everyone all right? Lucas said no one was hurt badly.”

“Everyone's fine, just a few scrapes and bruises. Becky’s rightly pissed off at not knowing how all of you are doing. I would send her an owl soon, if I were you.”

Vincent had the grace to look guilty. “Come on, let’s get a fire started and we can all talk.”

“I’m going to put Aubrey and Tatiana to bed,” Mudiwa said, as the little boy slurred that he wasn’t tired.

“May I help you, Mr. Dragonheart?” Blaise asked. Mudiwa gave a nod of his head.

Gabriel sat down next to Lysander, pulling Draco down with him. Draco huffed, not happy about being so close to the vampire who had bitten his boyfriend.

“Lysander, I really need to know how you got onto Hogwarts grounds without the wards letting me know.”

Lysander pulled an amulet from his shirt, the same platinum amulet that Gabriel wore. “That would be the second reason I’m here: as a member of the Counsel. Due to the blatant attacks against you and your family, we are publicly announcing our loyalty to you, Little Angel.”

Gabriel sucked in a breath, his face pale. “Have others joined Voldemort?”

“Yes. Would you like us to make our position well known?”
“No, not yet. Voldemort doesn’t know much about me and right now he's angry. He believes himself more powerful and will come here and attack. If he knows about you and the Counsel he might go into hiding, and really I want this over with.”

“So you know how to defeat him?”


“Not all of those stories ended well,” Lysander commented carefully.

Instantly, silence fell over the group. “Gabriel,” pleaded Vincent.

“I’m working on it, but we all knew this might be a possibility. Anyway not all of the stories end badly.” Gabriel took a sip of tea, not making eye contact with anyone.

“What story are you basing your plan on?” Draco asked curiously. His parents had told him hundreds of stories as a child to show the pride and power of his ancestry, and yet he couldn’t think of a single one where anyone had split their soul.

“It doesn’t matter, it’s just a story. The point is that it led me in the right direction, and I now know Voldy’s weakness. Plus I can work on many different ways to stop him, hopefully none of which will involve me dying.” Gabriel prayed they would all cling to the hope he offered. He didn’t want his family looking at him like every second could be his last. They had a little over a month together and Gabriel was determined to enjoy every minute.

“Let me know if I can help at all. Maybe Voltaire can help you?” Lysander offered.

Quickly his family offered their help, each holding onto the hope of their Cherub surviving the fated encounter with Voldemort. Draco reached over, laced their fingers together and whispered into his ear, “I’m not a foolish Gryffindor or a weak-willed Hufflepuff. I don’t believe for a minute in this shred of hope you’ve cast out. I will tell you this: if you die when I’m enjoying having you around, I will bring you back and kill you again.”

Gabriel turned and kissed his boyfriend softly. “Anything to see your face one last time.”

Draco’s eyes narrowed in suspicion.

“Please, my family needs this,” Gabriel begged.

Draco kissed him back hard and turned, picking up his tea and listening to the conversation. He would discuss this with Gabriel later, and the green-eyed boy would answer his questions satisfactorily, or he would find out exactly what Draco had learned from his father.
Chapter Seventy-six

Monday morning

Draco stretched, unsurprised to find the bed empty this morning. When he and Gabriel had returned to their dorm room last night, Draco had planned on digging the truth out of his boyfriend. However Gabriel attacked him, effectively kissing his thoughts away. His body still hummed softly from the pleasure Gabriel had brought him last night. He wondered how long Gabriel would try and avoid him.

Draco sipped his tea as he read the Daily Prophet. “Boy Who Lived Magically Unstable?” the headline proclaimed. The article went on to explain how Harry Potter, aka Gabriel Dragonheart, had exploded with accidental magic and then spent two days in the infirmary recuperating. Taking a bite of raspberry pastry Draco wondered how he could make this work to his advantage.

Suddenly he stood and strode out of the Great Hall to an empty classroom. Sitting down at the desk, Draco pulled out a quill and piece of parchment.

Dear Father,

It is amazing how accurate the Daily Prophet can be every now and then. My boyfriend has recovered, thankfully. I have a plan to help us make our dreams of the future become reality…

An hour later Lucius Malfoy was almost giddy with excitement. When the Dark Lord attacked Hogwarts he would win, Draco would see to it.

7pm

Draco smiled as Gabriel chatted with Ivy and some of the other first years. All day Gabriel had made sure they weren’t alone, and couldn’t talk about anything really important, yet he made sure not to ignore him. The day had been full of gentle touches, longing glances, and a few sweet kisses. Draco never felt so cherished, and yet he didn’t let the attention win him over. Gabriel had a lot of explaining to do.

“Draco.”

“Yes, Gabriel.”

“I’m going to go down and train with Soto for a while.” Gabriel smiled and kissed him softly on the cheek.

“I’ll meet you down there; I’ll just change, all right?”

“Sure,” Gabriel said looking a bit surprised. Draco just smirked, his gray eyes laughing and calculating at the same time.

Draco felt rather smug as he walked into the fire lit camp with Severus at his side. They usually trained together on Monday nights, and he had talked his godfather into training with Gabriel and
“What are you wearing?” Gabriel asked as he saw Draco for the first time in black karate gee trousers and a tight black tee shirt.

Draco kept his face innocent while inside he beamed at the lustful look on Gabriel’s face. “I always wear this when I train with Uncle Severus.”

“You’re training with us?” Soto asked.

“If that’s all right,” Severus replied.

“Sure, we had just started stretching. Gabriel and I were planning on sparring, but we could do something else.”

“I’m agreeable to sparring. Draco?”

“Why not,” he answered with a soft shrug.

When they stood facing each other Gabriel whispered. “Just tell me if it gets to be too much. I don’t want to hurt you.”

Draco’s eyes narrowed. “Listen carefully: I’m not some pansy arse wimp. I’ve been taking care of myself for a long time. You might be able to beat me, but you’ll have to fight for it.” And with that Draco struck. Punches and kicks were thrown and blocked as the two teens danced around each other.

Draco breathed heavily as he held his own against Gabriel. He guessed Gabriel was holding back a bit, but not much. Looking up he was startled to see the lust in Gabriel’s eyes. In the second he was distracted Gabriel darted forward and pinned Draco’s arms to his side his lips barely touching Draco’s.

“I want you so badly right now. I can’t decide if I want you underneath me, all of that energy and power at my mercy, or if I want you above me dominating and controlling me.”

“Both sound rather pleasant.” Draco said melting against Gabriel’s hard body.

Gabriel relaxed his hold and stretched up for a kiss. Draco leaned down and pressed their lips together. Bringing his hands up one grabbed Gabriel’s hair and the other his chin, with a firm twist Draco had his boyfriend twisted, flipped and pinned to the floor. Draco’s hand pushed Gabriel’s jaw into the floor, and his body and legs pressed the rest of him down.

“I know you were holding back,” Draco hissed into Gabriel’s ear. “I might not be as powerful and strong as you, but I’m also not weak or pathetic.”

Draco eased the pressure on Gabriel’s jaw so he could speak, but still kept him pinned. “I’m sorry if you felt I treated you poorly, but Draco I didn’t know how much you had trained, it would have been irresponsible to go at you full force. I don’t want to hurt you.”

Draco let go sitting up a bit, but still leaning over his boyfriend. “You will not hold back again.”

“Yes Draco, I will. I have trained to kill. I have trained with a vampire, who is much stronger and faster than either of us. I only completely let go when I train with Lysander.” Draco’s eyes were cold steel gray letting Gabriel know he was still angry. “Draco, I respect you. You’re a very strong person, and a strong wizard. I would be honored and feel protected having you at my side during a
conflict. Also if you always throw me to the ground when you’re irritated with me I might do it on purpose.”

Draco nodded. “I understand, I will be standing at your side when Voldemort comes, and that is not up for debate.” Gabriel shut his mouth with a snap. Draco leaned down, his lips a breath away from Gabriel’s. “So you like it when I throw you to the ground?”

“Yes,” Gabriel answered his voice rich with lust. “I like feeling your strength and power.” Reaching up he threaded his fingers into Draco’s silky locks. “I’m embarrassed to admit I liked you being all forceful.”

Draco looked down at his lover. Gabriel’s cheeks were flushed pink and his eyes bright with desire. A groan escaped Draco as he crushed his mouth onto Gabriel’s. Draco’s body throbbed with need as Gabriel surrendered to him. Shifting Draco intended to cover Gabriel’s body with his own when someone cleared their throat. Looking up Draco tried to scowl at his godfather, but only managed to grimace as he blushed.

“While that is certainly an effective technique, I don’t wish to see it,” Severus commented dryly.

“If you liked it I’m happy to practice with you,” Adonis offered as he stepped out of the shadows. Now it was Severus’ turn to blush.

“I’ll go and see how Elena is feeling.” Soto quickly slipped away before anyone could reply.

“I think we should get back to the castle,” Severus said.

Adonis walked over to his reserved lover and wrapped his arms around him. “I thought living here would have perks.”

Severus desperately tried to control himself, but he missed his lover, and he still hadn’t gotten over seeing him so badly injured. Fiercely he grabbed Adonis and snogged him. Hands roamed, as they seemed to devour each other.

“Bloody hell, I can’t decide if that is disturbing or hot,” Draco whispered.

Gabriel smiled as Adonis jumped and wrapped his legs around Severus’ waist, “Definitely hot.”

Severus pulled Adonis' head back, panting. “I have to go back to the castle. I need to be there for my Slytherins.”

Adonis sighed and then got a wicked gleam in his eye. “Cherub, I want to see where you live.”

“Sure,” Gabriel answered with a smirk.

Draco looked over at Severus. His godfather stood there looking stern and irritated, but his eyes glittered in amusement and something Draco chose to ignore.

Arm in arm Gabriel and Adonis walked back to the castle boisterously talking about Hogwarts and Slytherin. Severus and Draco followed along behind them not quite sure what to make of the two gypsies.

Gabriel introduced Adonis to almost everyone, and showed him everything within the common room and bedroom, not stopping until the curfew chime sounded.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Professor Snape,” Gabriel said his eyes wide with shock. “I didn’t mean to take so
long, thank you for allowing Adonis to come down. I don’t want to be out after curfew so would you please make sure Adonis can find his way out?”

Severus sneered making most of the student's worry about what would happen next. “I will not be so lenient in the future if you aren’t more careful. Come along, Mr. Dyonysius.”

Adonis hugged Gabriel goodnight and obediently followed his lover. When they were in the hallway, Adonis whispered, “I’d love to see your rooms again.”

Severus said nothing, but after making sure no one was nearby he took advantage of having his lover with him. Soon Adonis was being pressed against a door, and kissed while Severus almost ripped the clothes from his body.

“Your bed,” Adonis panted. “I want you to lay me out on your big bed and fuck me into the mattress.”

Severus snarled and picking Adonis up carried the golden man to his bedroom. Tossing Adonis to the bed, Severus quickly divested himself of his own clothing. Soon hands and mouths explored warm naked flesh. Moans and whimpers echoed in the stone room. Adonis let his legs fall open as Severus fingers quickly prepared him.

Severus kneeled between Adonis’ thighs spreading lube on the twitching entrance Adonis lay before him, his chest heaving and his skin flushed with desire. Adonis’ hard cock, just as golden as the rest of him, was wet with precome and curved just slightly to the right. Severus knew his lover's body well and yet he never tired of it. Knowing how close he'd come to losing Adonis made him shiver, part of him wanted to worship Adonis, gently caress every part of him, and let his lover know how very much he was loved. Another part wanted to possess Adonis, pound into him, mark him, and prove that he was alive and well.

Seeing his lover pause Adonis slowly pulled his legs to his chest and held them open with his hands. “I want you to fuck me, I want it fast and hard. And Severus, I want all this right now.”

Severus grinned wickedly at hearing his own thoughts thrown at him, and held Adonis’ hips as he slid into his tight opening. The instant he was fully surrounded by Adonis, Severus knew he would not be gentle. Giving no time for either of them to adjust Severus pulled back and then thrust back in causing Adonis to cry out in pleasure.

Setting a fierce pace Severus plunged in and out of Adonis’ body, his fingers leaving bruises on the golden hips. Their skin glistened with sweat as they fucked. Wanting to be closer, Severus leaned down, yet again thankful for Adonis’ flexibility. Adonis’ knees were over his shoulders as Severus lay flush to him, trapping Adonis’ cock between their stomachs, making him shudder in pleasure.

Adonis screamed as Severus hit his prostate. “Oh goddess, Severus…. Yes right there… Please don’t stop… pleasepleaseplease!” he begged as Severus pounded into him. It didn’t take long before Adonis’ body spasmed as he came between them, his hot come coating both their stomachs.

Severus cock was caressed by the clenching of Adonis’ arse and with a deep groan Severus threw his head back and came deep inside his lover’s body. Panting harshly, he sat back, allowing Adonis’ legs to stretch out. Falling to the side Severus pulled Adonis into his arms and held him tightly as their breathing slowly returned to normal.

Adonis was basking in the afterglow when he felt Severus shudder. Turning he saw tears dripping down Severus’ cheeks. “Love?”
Severus buried his face in Adonis’ neck, his shoulders shaking as he cried. “I thought I had lost you.”

Adonis’ ran his fingers through Severus’ silky black hair. “Hush love, I’m here; everything’s all right. I will never leave you, you’re mine, remember?”

Images of the night Adonis claimed him flashed through Severus’ mind. The love and passion they had shared that night still overwhelmed him. Over the years they had been together they had made love in many different ways, and yet that night would always stand out in his memory. Severus hoped that he made Adonis feel as loved as he’d felt the night Adonis claimed him.*

Reaching over, Severus opened the top draw of his bedside table and pulled out a black velvet box. “I have been thinking about this for a while, and I had decided to wait until Voldemort was gone and I was completely free, but I’m a fool and I should have asked you ages ago. Adonis Dyonysius, will you do me the honor of becoming my husband?”

Ignoring the box Severus held out, Adonis held Severus' face in his hands and looked deeply into the obsidian eyes. “Yes, I… yes I will marry you,” he stuttered as his golden eyes filled with tears.

Severus beamed with happiness, his eyes suspiciously shiny. “Don’t you even want to see what I’ve got for you?”

“Of course I love getting gifts, but I’m saying yes to you, not a piece of jewelry.”

Still holding the velvet box, Severus wrapped one hand in Adonis' hair and pulled him closer, kissing him deeply. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Severus, now give me the box.”

Severus chuckled and handed over the box. Inside were two bracelets: one gold with a sun in the middle and Celtic knot-work hearts along the sides; the other was platinum and had a crescent moon in the center with the same knot-work hearts on either side.

“Severus, they’re lovely,” Adonis sighed as he gently ran a finger over the etched metal.

“I’m glad you like them.” A long finger carefully took the gold cuff and placed it Adonis’ left wrist.

Smiling brightly Adonis took the platinum cuff, and placed it on Severus’ left wrist kissing his palm when he was done. “Now,” said Adonis his voice rough with emotion. “Let’s go and take a bath, and you show me how much you love me.”

Severus smirked, pulling Adonis up from the bed. “It will be my pleasure.”

Thursday, November 6th. Slytherin common room

Draco stretched out in the wing-backed chair watching his boyfriend intently. He had yet to confront Gabriel about how he intended to fight Voldemort, he’d been having too much fun watching Gabriel try and get out of talking to him. Gabriel danced around making sure they were never alone, and continued to shower him with soft, affectionate touches. When they were alone, Gabriel pounced insuring Draco had no ability to make a sentence let alone have a serious discussion.

Draco had learned a lot about Gabriel in the past four days. He was dedicated to making sure those he cared for knew how he felt. Gabriel was constantly doing small things for people and casual
touches were common. However Gabriel was picky about who touched him, his family could of

course, along with Professors Lupin and Black. However Gabriel would subtly shift away from
incoming touches: other students trying to tap him on the shoulder to gain his attention; teachers
about to place their hand on his shoulder; little, simple things. He wasn’t obvious and usually turned
to the person with a smile so no one’s feelings were ever hurt, but Draco had seen the oddly
protective behavior.

Tonight Draco would have all of his questions answered, of course he wasn’t going to hope he could
have time alone with Gabriel, he wasn’t a Hufflepuff. And he wouldn’t ask directly for time alone to
talk, he wasn’t a Gryffindor, for Merlin’s sake! In fact his plan should go into effect just about now.

“Oh, I’m so sorry!” cried a third year girl. Draco had paid her to spill a bottle of ink on Gabriel,
knowing he would be sprawled across the floor helping his first years with their studies.

Gabriel smiled reassuringly. “Don’t worry, it will be just fine. I’ll just go and get cleaned up.”

“I’ll get your books together.”

“Thank you, Ivy.”

Draco waited until Gabriel had left the common room before glaring meaningfully at his dorm mates,
making sure they remembered to stay away for the next two hours.

Gabriel was in the shower, just as Draco had planed. When he got out he would dry off, put on his
trousers, and come out to sit on the bed and put on his socks and shoes. And that was when Draco
would pounce. Quickly Draco got everything ready and hid in the corner.

Just as predicted Gabriel came out in soft cotton sleep bottoms and sat on the bed to put on warm
socks to protect his feet from the cool stones. As he stood Draco fired off a spell and Gabriel was
bound to the bed arms and legs spread wide.

Smirking gleefully Draco spun his wand between his
fingers and approached his struggling boyfriend.

“Draco, what’s going on?”

“I wanted time alone to talk.”

Gabriel frowned. “Why didn’t you just ask?”

Climbing onto the bed Draco straddled his boyfriend’s thighs and sat down. “You’ve been avoiding
talking to me for days, quite skillfully I might add. So I felt this was the best way to get what I
wanted.”

Gabriel quirked an eyebrow. “What makes you think I’ll let you keep me here?”

“Oh, I don’t know; maybe the fact that the cord is a magic inhibitor. I’m sure you’re powerful
enough to break free,” Draco said coyly, “however you will most likely hurt me in the process.”

Green eyes flashed in anger, then closed. With a sigh Gabriel’s body relaxed completely. “Okay,
maybe we do need to talk and perhaps I’ve been avoiding having a conversation with you.”

Draco’s perfectly arched eyebrow let Gabriel know he wasn’t going to fall for any excuses.

“Why don’t you let me go and we’ll talk.”
“I don’t think so, I’m rather happy with you tied up. Now tell me about the fairy tale you read, specifically the one which led to you realizing the Dark Lord had spilt his soul and how you’re going to bring the pieces back together.”

Draco listened as Gabriel told the story of Helen, of how she drove a sword through a Dark Lord’s body and how using all of her magic she healed his soul.

“Stop. I’m going to ask a few questions and I would like truthful yes or no answers. She used all her magic; are you saying she died to bring his soul together?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think his soul was split into as many pieces as Voldemort’s?” Draco shuddered as he made himself say the Dark Lord’s name.

“No.”

“Are you more powerful than Helen?”

“I have no way of knowing.”

Draco fixed his storm gray eyes on sad emerald green. “Do you think you will survive?”

“No.”

Draco closed his eyes in pain. “Are you going to try to survive?”

Gabriel’s voice was rough with emotion as he answered. “Yes, with everything that I am, I’ll fight to live.” Draco’s eyes flew open as calloused hands cradled his face. “I promise to do everything I can, to use all that I know, all my strength to stay alive.”

Draco looked at the bed, the ropes were still there as if Gabriel’s wrists had just vanished from them.

“Prove it to me, I want to know why you’re so powerful and how you know all the weird things that you do,” Draco demanded moving off Gabriel. “I would also like to know why you like touching people, yet frequently shy away from being touched yourself.”

“I knew I shouldn’t have left you alone.” Gabriel sighed and cast Tempus. “Well it’s only eight-thirty; I have time to show you a little something.”

An hour later Gabriel was enjoying himself immensely as he lounged on a sofa in the Founders’ Quarters. Draco had not stopped since they had come in here. He was like a kid in a sweet shop after drinking several Cokes. Draco ran back and forth muttering half formed sentences and touching everything, exclaiming in delight and wonder.

Apparently being in the very quarters the Four Founders of Hogwarts had lived in was too much for the Slytherin Ice Prince. Unfortunately curfew was in fifteen minutes and they needed to head back.

“Draco, we need to leave.”

Draco froze, and turning slowly glared viciously at Gabriel. “You’re not foolish enough to believe that I will willingly leave the find of all Wizarding kind!”
Smiling calmly Gabriel kept his words soft and soothing. “Draco, I’m more than happy to bring you here whenever you like. In fact I can teach you the passwords and everything, but right now we need to go. We have people watching us and reporting our actions, we can’t give anything away. Can you imagine what would happen if the Dark Lord found out about this?”

Draco took a deep breath and calmed himself. “All right, can I at least take a few books?”

“Of course, help yourself.”

“Have you read all of these?”

“No, not even close! I’ve been focused on how to defeat Voldy. Now I’m looking up information on spiritual, emotional and mental healing.”

Draco nodded and gathered several potions journals, some by brewers who were suspected to be nothing more than myths, including the Russian Potions Master Esfir.

Gabriel climbed into Draco’s bed trying not to disturb his reading. With a happy sigh he snuggled into the pillow and closed his eyes, expecting Draco to be fully absorbed in his book for the rest of the night. He was rather surprised when Draco set his book down with a regretful sigh, and spooned in behind him. “You didn’t answer all of my questions.”

“What else did you want to know?”

“Why do you make such an effort to touch people?”

Gabriel’s entire body stiffened, he didn’t want to talk about this at all. “I know what it’s like not to be touched affectionately.”

“Your family is all touchy-feely,” Draco said with puzzlement evident in his voice.

Feeling the need to be face to face for this conversation Gabriel turned over. “My aunt and uncle didn’t like me at all. I can still remember what that felt like.”

“What did they do to you?”

“It was a long time ago, and it doesn’t matter anymore.”

“Gabriel,” Draco pleaded. “Please tell me.”

“They would make me do chores; they didn’t feed me much and only touched me to punish me.”

Draco didn’t like the cold monotone of Gabriel’s usually warm voice. Reaching up he began to run his fingers through the wavy black locks. “It was more than that.”

“Possibly, but that’s enough for you to understand why I touch people. Normally the people I touch don’t have a lot of physical contact with others. I don’t go out of my way to touch the Weasley twins, for instance.”

Draco understood, he wanted to know more but his question was answered. “So why do you shy away from other people’s touch?”

Gabriel began twisting the sheet in his nervousness. No matter what he’d done somehow this still remained a venerable subject, sometimes he wondered if he would ever be able to speak of what happened with detachment. “When I was eleven I was at a concert and a man approached me. His energy was so strong it overwhelmed my shields. Everything he was feeling and thinking crashed...”
Gently Draco tilted Gabriel’s chin up and met his eyes. He’d never seen the big green eyes looks so lost and vulnerable. “That’s not everything; will you share the rest with me?”

Gabriel took a deep breath. “He was a pedophile, he took boys and after raping them, sometimes for days, he would kill them.”

“Why was he near you?”

“He wanted me,” Gabriel whispered.

Draco wrapped his arms around Gabriel’s body holding him close. He hadn’t expected this, not any of it, especially not Gabriel’s honesty and vulnerability. “I’m sorry I pushed. I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“I’m capable of saying no, and honestly before our relationship progressed further we would have had to talk about it.”

“Does he need to be taken care of?”

Gabriel’s lip twitched at Draco’s possessive tone. “No, Aurora took care of him.”

“Good, is there anything I can do to help?”

“No. You'd think I would be better after five years.”

“I’m sure you're better. You’re here in my arms, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am.” Gabriel gave a small smile.

“Let’s try and get some sleep. Will you be okay?” Draco wanted to say something profound and healing, but had no idea what that could possibly be.

“Will you hold me?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’ll be fine.”

* Adonis and Severus bonded in ch 59
Chapter Seventy-seven
Extra warning: Gabriel acting like a typical angsty teenager and being rather silly.

Saturday, November 30th
Voldemort stood before his followers, watching everyone closely. He knew not all were loyal to him, and he suspected several were spies or planned to offer information in return for asylum. The meeting was just about finished; everyone had reported on the current status of their projects, at least those he was okay with others knowing about. Now it was time to see how many would sell him out.

“On December the 20th we will attack Diagon Alley as it will be full of people doing their holiday shopping. We will attack just after the Ministry closes for the day, it should be evening by then so our vampire allies will be able to fight by our side.”

His Death Eaters cheered, and Voldemort basked in their adoration. “Go home and prepare, soon I will call.” Reaching out a pale, skeletal finger he pointed to Malfoy and the leaders of the werewolf and vampire clans who had decided to join him. “You will stay behind and talk with me.”

It took only a few minutes for the hall at Riddle Manor to clear so Voldemort could speak privately with these men. Normally he would leave everything to the last minute, but it would be better if some things could be in place. “The six of you are my leaders, and need to know more about my plans. I am trusting you to tell no one else until absolutely necessary.” The six of them nodded and Voldemort continued. “We will attack the Ministry on the 20th, not Diagon Alley. Once Dumbledore and his fiery chickens have all flown to the rescue a ward will be cast trapping them, while others attack elsewhere. Several Death Eaters will be Polyjuiced to look like my strongest followers in order to lure Dumbledore to the Ministry. Smoke, I want you and your clan at the Ministry,” Voldemort said cringing at the stupid name of the werewolf leader. At least Smoke was angry and obedient.

Turning to the most unstable of the three vampire leaders, Voldemort continued. “Merrik, I want you at the ministry also. The two of you and your clans will increase the level of fear. Your strength and viciousness will be of great benefit. I will call everyone to me at five in the evening, but in fact we will not attack the Ministry until nine.”

“Those who spy on me will tell their masters about the attack on Diagon Alley in the early evening, and when it doesn’t happen they will not only be confused, they will also let their guard down.” Voldemort smiled as much as his snakelike face would allow. “Minister Fudge has a very important meeting with a foreign diplomat at 8:30 that evening in his office. After that the real attack will begin.”

As Voldemort continued to outline his plan Lucius smiled, as did the others. They had no doubt that as of December 21st the wizarding world would be theirs.

Sunday, December 1st. 10am
Dumbledore sighed heavily hoping to get Harry Potter to react to him. He knew that Voldemort would be attacking soon, and he needed to get the boy on his side. Fudge wanted to threaten Potter with imprisonment for casting an Unforgivable. Unfortunately, as they had demanded it of him, that wouldn’t work out very well. Hopefully he could reach Harry through more compassionate means.

“Mr. Dragonheart, I have just received some very disturbing news. Voldemort is planning on attacking Diagon Alley just before Christmas. This is a huge increase of activity for Voldemort; until now his activities have always been quiet and out of public view.” Looking sorrowfully at the stoic boy he continued. “We need to start training you. Both Minister Fudge and I have done as you asked, and now it’s time for you to hold up your part of the bargain.”
“Professor Dumbledore, I said that I would fight Voldemort, but I never agreed to train with you, or with Fudge.” The boy snorted rudely. “As for the payment for my services, you have been doing things to help unite the school, and I’m grateful for that; however Fudge has done very little. So little, in fact, that I have sent copies of all treaties with magical beings, which the wizarding world has broken, to all the Wizengamot members.”

Hiding his trembling hands under his desk, Dumbledore barely masked his fury. How dare the boy do this! “Mr. Dragonheart, I assure you that Minister Fudge is doing his best to get your requests met in the most efficient way possible.”

“I must disagree, and anyway that doesn’t matter, do you want me to fight Voldemort when he attacks next?”

“No, no my boy. We will begin training you once the winter break has begun.”

The boy actually sneered at him. “I don’t need or want your training!”

Letting his eyes become frosty Dumbledore gazed directly into Potter’s green eyes. “It would be a shame if something happened to your family, if you were unable to protect them, if Voldemort got hold of them.”

Oh, he’d finally gotten to the boy. Harry’s cheeks flushed with anger. “Don’t you dare threaten my family! I can and will protect them and defeat Voldemort.” Standing up he stormed to the door without asking permission to leave.

“Mr. Potter… Harry, we really need to work together.”

“My name is Gabriel Dragonheart. I don’t know who you want me to be, but this is who I am. And don’t ever threaten my family again!”

Dumbledore leaned back in his chair as he heard Potter stomp down the staircase. Hopefully the deaths of those in Diagon Alley would bring some sense to the boy. Harry’s cheeks flushed with anger. “Don’t you dare threaten my family! I can and will protect them and defeat Voldemort.” Standing up he stormed to the door without asking permission to leave.

“Mr. Potter… Harry, we really need to work together.”

“My name is Gabriel Dragonheart. I don’t know who you want me to be, but this is who I am. And don’t ever threaten my family again!”

Dumbledore leaned back in his chair as he heard Potter stomp down the staircase. Hopefully the deaths of those in Diagon Alley would bring some sense to the boy. He had to get rid of Potter’s family. Maybe one of his spies could Portkey them to Voldemort in order to gain greater favor. Yes, that sounded like a good idea. Popping a lemon drop into his mouth Dumbledore began to plan.

Gabriel pushed out of the doors of the great hall and strode in. He was still furious with Dumbledore and had spent the rest of the morning raging, throwing spells, and trying to figure out how to keep everyone safe. He didn’t want to be here, and didn’t want to get interrogated by Draco, who looked rather put out at the moment. However, letting Dumbles win was not okay, and so here he was, headphones in place, Aurora around his neck and his outfit screaming his mood for everyone to see. He was dressed in tight flat black boots, denims and a tee shirt. Nothing looked soft or inviting, and several students shifted away from him as he walked by their table. Sneering at those staring at him, Gabriel sat down next to Draco and filled his plate with sandwiches, which he slathered spicy mustard on. Before he could take a bite, the headmaster addressed him. “Mr. Dragonheart, I must confess to being quite curious as to what you listen to through your little device. Would you be willing to share your music?”

Gabriel dropped his sandwich and turned to glare at the Dumbledore. It took a moment before he realized the headmaster was trying to make things all right between them. He wanted to show that he cared and was interested in how Gabriel was. The old man was still playing games. Well, he wasn’t the only one capable of playing. With a bright smile that scared many Gabriel chirped, “I’d be happy to.”

Gabriel dropped his sandwich and turned to glare at the Dumbledore. It took a moment before he realized the headmaster was trying to make things all right between them. He wanted to show that he cared and was interested in how Gabriel was. The old man was still playing games. Well, he wasn’t the only one capable of playing. With a bright smile that scared many Gabriel chirped, “I’d be happy to.”

Setting down his headphones, Gabriel cast a spell on them so the whole hall could hear and turned back to his lunch. The first song was a haunting piece by the Russian band Theodor Bastard. Looking up to the head table, Gabriel saw McGonagall whispering to Dumbledore; obviously she didn’t think this was such a good idea. Turning, he saw Severus, whose brows furrowed as he recognized the song but couldn’t place it. Severus knew not all of Gabriel’s music was appropriate for children, and was probably hoping that this tape was all Russian music, but it wasn’t. In fact Gabriel called this particular mix ‘teen-angst’ and the songs were all rather angry.
Gabriel moved slightly with the music as he ate. Everyone followed his example and went back to their own lunch. Several songs had played with only one or two other people knowing what the lyrics were as they were all in other languages, but now came the American bit. Gabriel raised his eyes and winked at Severus who was glaring at him. Severus hated this tape and had just recognized what it was. Soft guitar filled the air as Metallica’s ‘Unforgiven’ began.

Out of the corner of his eye Gabriel watched the head table to see if the adults could even figure the lyrics out, and how they would take it. Remus seemed to understand what the song was saying and focused intently on his own meal. Gabriel could tell the lyrics expressed how the werewolf felt sometimes.

Gabriel stilled as Draco put a hand on his thigh, the fingers tightening as the lyrics spoke to him too. While Gabriel usually didn’t feel so trapped, others in this room felt like this every day, and had for years. Hopefully the next song, while validating, would lighten the mood. Placing his hand onto one of Draco’s Gabriel interlaced their fingers, offering comfort and support.

As a drum pounded Severus’ glare intensified and Seamus shouted in delight as ‘We’re Not Going To Take It’ played. Next several of the Muggle-borns, including Hermione, sung along with ‘Invincible’ by Pat Benatar.

As the song finished Gabriel leaned over and kissed Draco on the cheek. “I’ll see you later, all right?”

“Yes, and we will be discussing your current mood.” Draco raised a silver-white eyebrow as if asking if Gabriel would challenge him.

Wisely Gabriel answered, “Of course.”

As he stood to go, Seamus shouted, “Oi, Gabriel, let’s hear one more!”

Gabriel’s evil smile returned as he dug through his bag and pulled out a new tape. “This one is just for you, Seamus.”

A soft voice with a southern twang said, “This is how it feels to be alone at the top of the hill and trying to figure out why.”

“Bloody hell!” shouted Seamus. “I know this song!” Jumping up he walked towards Gabriel singing along. “Oh Lord, it’s hard to humble, when you’re perfect in every way.”

Gabriel laughed and joined Seamus in the middle of the Great Hall. Together they sang and acted out the words. The students gaped in shock, several of them blushing as Gabriel and Seamus flipped their hair and preened.

“To know me is to love me, I must be one hell of a man. Oh Lord, it’s hard to be humble but I’m doing the best that I can.”

The students began to giggle and tried to stifle them so they could still hear the song. Sirius sang along loudly and rather proudly. Remus’ eyes sparkled with amusement as he watched his lover. The other staff laughed at the antics of the students and Professor Black. Severus sat back looking smug and planning what Adonis would have to do to make up for having to put up with Gabriel.

Gabriel turned so his back was facing the tables and slowly bent over as he sung. “Some folks say I’m egotistical. Hell, I don’t even know what that means. I guess it has something to do with the way I fill out my skin-tight blue jeans.”

Seamus slapped Gabriel’s arse while he was bent over increasing the catcalls and laughter. When the song ended Gabriel and Seamus were laughing and holding each other up. “How did you know that song?”

“My Grandfather has always loved the wild west,” Seamus answered, blushing.

“That is the best song ever!” Sirius shouted from the head table.

“Thank you gentlemen,” Dumbledore said. “After this entertainment I am sure you will all be happy to hear that Gabriel and his family have set a date for the dance.” Dumbledore gestured for Gabriel to tell everyone.

“So as not to interfere with classes, we will be holding the dance on December the 20th, the last day of school before the winter break. The dance will start at 7pm and is open to all years. At 9pm it ends, and then begins again for the sixth and seventh years. Dress casually in wizard or Muggle
Gabriel felt perfectly content as he looked around the circle. He was having dinner with his family and tonight Severus and Draco were joining them. Adonis’ bracelet flashed in the firelight as he passed around bowls of food. Mudiwa had made a spicy groundnut stew tonight, and Gabriel was looking forward to the African dish.

Severus trailed his fingers along Adonis’ hand as he took the bowl from him. Gabriel smiled; everyone was pleased by their engagement and plans for their bonding ceremony were already being discussed, much to Severus’ displeasure. Gabriel had a bet going to see if Severus would be able to convince Adonis to elope with him.

“So, other than causing scenes during lunch, how is school going?” Soto asked, his amusement obvious.

Choosing to ignore the teasing, Gabriel just answered the question. “Really well. The fire crabs are thriving. Hagrid cried the other day when we found two nests with eggs. Hermione and I are working on a paper for Transfiguration on the Animagus spell. Ron is warming up to me, he has been sitting next to me in Charms, but I think it’s because he has a little crush on Pansy.”

Gabriel paused for a moment to take a bit of the spicy stew, moaning softly at the taste. “Our Herbology project with Neville is going really well. Neville and Draco are even getting along. Blaise and I have discovered that we both love music, he plays the cello.”

“They play in the common room, at least twice a week,” Draco explained with fond exasperation.

“I’m finding school to be rather fun. I get along with most of the other students and a fair number of the teachers,” Gabriel said, shrugging and taking more of the stiff corn paste to scoop up his stew. “I do miss traveling and performing though.”

“We worked that out at lunch,” Severus said rolling his eyes. “Dinner is very good, Mudiwa, thank you.”

“Yes,” Draco added remembering his manners. The gypsies were so relaxed that he easily forgot proper etiquette. “I’ve never had anything with this flavoring. I can taste the ginger, spicy pepper, onion, and maybe garlic; what am I missing?”

Mudiwa puffed with pride at his favorite uncle’s* dish being enjoyed so much. “You’re probably trying to place the groundnuts, or peanut butter.”

Severus and Draco’s eyebrows shot up. “I’ve never had peanut butter, Father said it was too Muggle.” Draco said with amazement.

“Indeed, I’ve learned a great deal from the Dragonheart clan,” Severus added. Adonis beamed wickedly, causing giggles and chuckles to erupt. Severus blushed. “That’s not what I meant!”

“We know,” Elena soothed as she rubbed her belly. “We have learned a lot from you too.”

“Thank you. How are you feeling?”

“Very well, thank you. I’m just beginning my fourth month and the morning sickness is much less.”

“If you need anything, please let me know.”

Elena smiled softly. “Thank you, Severus.”

Gabriel set his empty bowl down and leaned into Draco. So far he hadn’t had any luck in finding anything that could help him when he healed Voldemort’s soul. The thought of leaving everyone behind broke his heart, but he would fight to save them. He loved every one of his family members so much that he would willingly give his life for them. With a soft sigh Gabriel watched his family laugh and talk, soaking in every moment with them in the hopes that wherever he went when he died he could take his memories with him.

Gabriel was still feeling the need to take in every moment and every experience possible as he and Draco walked back to their dorm. Gabriel held tightly to his boyfriend’s hand, focusing on the comfort the warm soft touch gave him. Draco’s long fingers were wrapped around his, encasing
them in strength and protection. As they walked Draco would unconsciously tug and push Gabriel’s hand in order to guide him around rough stones. Gabriel found it adorable and snuggled closer to Draco as they walked.

Once back in the Slytherin common room they sat on the couch and talked to their friends. Gabriel had introduced several Muggle board games and soon they were into yet another heated game of Cluedo. Gabriel had always enjoyed Cluedo, but playing the game with Slytherins was an amazingly fun thing. They became quite vicious, constantly trying to mislead and hide what they had. Their sneakiness came to the forefront, and Gabriel decided that the rifts between Slytherin and the rest of the houses must have occurred in part due to the others losing horribly at games.

After Blaise had done a very enthusiastic victory dance around the common room, Draco insisted that they go to bed. Gabriel laughed at Draco’s sulking and happily said goodnight, as he was dragged to their dorm room.

Gabriel had continued to go to bed earlier than the others. Sometimes Draco would stay up and talk with his friends, especially when Blaise, Pansy and he would train with Severus or refine their plotting to get away from the Dark Lord. Sometimes Draco wanted time with his boyfriend, or time to read. More often than not Gabriel would fall asleep while Draco was engrossed in one of the Potions tomes from the Founder’s library.

Gabriel smiled softly while Draco got ready for bed and complained how Blaise obviously had been cheating the entire time. Once they lay down and pulled Draco’s silk sheet over them, Gabriel was met with a rather angry stare.

“What is going on with you tonight? You’ve been looking at everyone and everything as if you’re about to disappear and you don’t want to forget anything.” When Gabriel flushed and looked away not offering any answers, Draco was livid. “That's exactly what you’re doing, isn’t it!”

“Draco, I’m sorry. I was so happy at dinner having you and the rest of my family together, and I just don’t want to give any of it up,” Gabriel pleaded hoping Draco would understand.

“You’re not going to die!”

“I’m not giving up,” Gabriel said firmly. “I do, however, need to plan for every possibility.”

Draco’s brow furrowed in confusion. “Like what?”

“Well,” Gabriel began cautiously. “I might die. I might live and be fine. I could live and have no magic left. I could be physically disabled in some way. I could wind up in a coma. Who knows, but I want to have everything sorted out and ready for any of those possibilities.”

“Where do I fit into those plans?”

“I don’t know, as I don’t know what plans you have for your own future, or what kind of life you want to have. I cannot imagine living in the wizarding world if I have no magic.”

“I have no idea what I want. Right now my entire focus is on getting away from my parents and Voldemort.”

“What about Hydrus? I know you care about him, most of your letters to your mum are asking about how he's doing.”

“I don’t know. I’ve always kept it in the back of my mind that once I was safe and settled I would figure out how to get him.”

“I have no doubt that you will protect your brother and keep both of you safe. And if I’m here I will do everything I can to help.”

Draco snarled and rolled on top of his boyfriend. “You will still be here! Stop saying you won’t; don’t give up!”

Gabriel smiled up at his lover, his green eyes wet. “Draco Malfoy, I love you, and I will fight with all that I am to spend the rest of my life with you.”

Draco gasped, his own gray eyes suspiciously shiny. “I love you too. And you’d damned well better survive or I will never forgive you for leaving me.” Pressing their lips together Draco kissed his love fiercely, growling low in his throat as Gabriel submitted to him completely. Hands frantically removed pajama bottoms, and soon they were frotting against each other, moans disappearing as they kissed.

Gabriel grabbed Draco’s hips stilling his movements. “Wait,” he panted. He rubbed his fingers on
the pale hipbones and smirked as Draco shuddered in pleasure. “I want you inside of me.”
It took a moment for the words to penetrate Draco’s lust-fogged mind. “We haven’t done that yet.”
“I know.” Gabriel looked up at Draco through his fringe. “Do you need me to prepare myself?”
Draco gasped as his body tightened. “Merlin, don’t talk like that or I won’t be able to do anything!”
Blushing, Draco buried his face in his lover’s neck. “I’ve read about what to do, and I’ve tried it on
myself.”

Hearing Gabriel groan in desire emboldened Draco and he began kissing down his boyfriend’s body.
As he took a pink nipple into his mouth, he summoned the jar of lube. As Gabriel writhed beneath
him, Draco placed a slick finger against his entrance. Gabriel eagerly spread his legs, and tilted his
pelvis allowing Draco better access to his body.
Draco was torn between continuing his assault on Gabriel’s body with his mouth and watching him.
Finally deciding, he sat up and settled between golden, tanned thighs. Tendrils of inky black hair
were stuck to Gabriel’s face, his eyes were dark with passion and the lids fluttered as Draco’s finger
moved in and out of his body. His red lips were swollen and his cheeks flushed.
As Draco slid a second finger into Gabriel’s body; his breath hitched as he watched his fingers
disappear into the soft heat of his lover. Moaning he sped up the movement of his fingers, his prick
throbbed. Draco was mesmerized at the sight of their two bodies joining so intimately like this.
Adding some more lubricant, Draco added a third finger and carefully stretched his boyfriend.
Spreading and turning the fingers, Draco wondered if Gabriel was ready for him.
“Draco, I’m ready, please.”
Quickly, Draco spread the viscous cream on his cock and pressed the head against Gabriel’s slick
hole. He looked into green eyes, making sure his partner was ready. The lustful impatient look told
him all he needed to know. Slowly Draco pushed in, his body trembling at the tight heat which
surrounded him.
When his pelvis was flush against Gabriel’s arse Draco paused, trying to regain some sense of
control; he wanted this to last as long as possible. Part of him wanted to pound into his black-haired
lover, and yet for their first time it didn’t seem appropriate. Slowly he pulled out, and just as slowly
pushed back into the welcoming heat. Gabriel’s legs wrapped around his waist and together they
slowly made love. Every sigh, gasp, moan, twitch and thrust was fully experienced.

Gabriel felt completely loved and cherished as Draco made love to him slowly. However he couldn’t
take much more, every few strokes the head of Draco’s cock would rub along his prostate, bringing
him so close to coming, and yet the slowness of the movements wouldn’t let him. Reaching down he
grabbed Draco’s hips and rubbed his thumbs along the sensitive bones.
Draco arched, moaning loudly. Gray eyes became frantic as the last of his control was stripped from
him; forcefully he pounded into Gabriel’s willing hole, taking delight in the cries coming from his
lover.
Gabriel left one hand on Draco’s hip, the other wriggled between them and forcefully grabbed his
cock. It took only a few strokes and he was coming hotly between them. He could feel his arse
clamping around Draco’s thick cock. The blond screamed in pleasure, his body quivering as he filled
his boyfriend.
Sweaty and panting they lay entwined on the bed, holding each other tightly as if afraid each might
lose the other while they slept.
*The groundnut stew comes from this recipe from my dear bubba hugs It is very good.

Uncle Bubba’s Peanut Butter Soup

INGREDIENTS:

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 medium-size yellow onion, diced  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 or 2 hot or minced chillis, to your taste, seeded and chopped (I add more when it's just me)  
1 ½ teaspoons peeled and grated fresh ginger  
½ tablespoon light brown sugar  
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon ground cumin  
1 ½ pounds winter squash, such as butternut or Buttercup, seeded, peeled, and cut into bite-size cubes (about 3 ½ cups)  
1 ½ cups water  
¼ cup creamy natural peanut butter  
Salt and freshly-ground black pepper  
1 ½ cups cooled black-eyed peas or one 15-ounce can, drained and rinsed  
½ cup chopped unsalted roasted peanuts

METHOD:

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion. Cover and cook, stirring a few times until softened – about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic, chillis, ginger, brown sugar, cinnamon, and cumin and cook for 1 minute. Add the squash and stir to coat with the spices. Add 1 ¼ cup of the water and salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low.

2. Put the peanut butter into a small bowl and slowly add the remaining ¼ cup water, stirring until smooth.

3. Stir the peanut butter mixture into the stew. Cover and simmer until the vegetables are tender – about 30 minutes. Allow 10 minutes before the end of the cooking time and add the black-eyed peas and peanuts. Simmer until heated through. Before serving, taste to adjust the seasonings.

Doubles and triples beautifully.

Serves 6 as a first course and 3 or 4 as a meal.

• I know the full moon was on the 24th – but this works better for my story.
Chapter Seventy-eight

This is a Draco-centric chapter.

December 5th, 1996. Professor Snape’s quarters

Draco, Blaise and Pansy sat quietly in Severus’ living room, their bodies slumped against the deep green couch.

“That was the hardest workout yet,” Blaise moaned.

Pansy rolled her eyes. “You say that every time we train with Professor Snape.”

“And every time it’s true!”

Draco grinned at his friends. “We need to head back soon, but right now how are things going? All three of us are in the book club, and seem to have easily made friends from other houses, but what about the other clubs you’re in?”

“Granger and I are partners in the Latin club, and she’s been willing to partner with me in other classes,” Blaise said sounding a bit embarrassed.

“Blaise, you’re not some diseased creature who should be shocked at someone’s kindness!” Pansy snapped her eyes flashing.

“I know.” Blaise held his hands out in front of him to stop her attack. “However we all know that Slytherins have been treated as scum for centuries, and I’m shocked at how quickly that is changing.”

“Truly things have changed very quickly,” drawled Draco. “Between the clubs, and Gabriel bouncing around the school, one wouldn’t believe the rivalries we all expected to continue with this year.”

“I would have to say Granger has also been a huge influence. Being Muggle-born and so bookish and clever the rivalries never meant much to her, and now she’s a force of nature,” Pansy mused. “Granger approached me and several other purebloods asking for our help to create a Wizard Culture booklet.”

“What for?” Draco sneered.

“Apparently most Muggle-borns don’t know anything about things we take for granted.”

“Well that makes everything clear,” Draco snapped, irritated at Pansy’s half-answer.

“Shut-up, you poof.”

“Bitch.”

“Cock-sucker.”
“Whore.”

“Can we please get back to the discussion?” Blaise interrupted. Once, he had let them go just to see how long they could call each other names before repeating themselves, it had taken over thirty minutes.

Pansy fluffed her hair and turned so she faced Blaise. “As I was trying to explain, Muggle-borns, and those raised without benefit of our upbringing, have no idea about the language of flowers or courtships, ancient holidays and such.”

“Charlie Stilton,” Draco whispered. “He gave that one Muggle-born a bouquet of flowers and she blushed and thanked him, but never gave him permission to court her. He was devastated and she looked shocked when he didn’t approach her again.”

“Exactly,” Pansy squealed. “If she had known, they could be married right now!”

“I’ve always seen the Muggle world as a mystery, but never thought that Muggle-borns would see our world the same way.” Blaise ran a hand through his soft curls. “It’s almost curfew, Draco, how is the plan coming along?”

Draco sighed and his face became closed off. “Gabriel has a plan, and I’m trying to help him survive it; there’s far too much Gryffindor in him for his own good.”

Pansy placed a small, pale hand on his thigh. “Draco, what if he doesn’t succeed?”

Draco’s eyes turned to gray ice, his voice cold and factual. “It depends on how things go. I know of plenty of places to hide, and we have enough money and knowledge of the Muggle world to survive, if we need to. However, it might look like I’ve handed Gabriel to the Dark Lord on a silver platter, and if the Dark Lord wins I’ll be a hero.”

“I hate to ask,” Blaise began softly, “but what if Gabriel wins, and somehow dies?”

Draco stood and walked to the door. “Again, we have money and hiding places. However, it’s obvious to everyone, especially his family, how much I love him. I’m sure we’ll be protected. Anyway isn’t that part of the reason we’re all in the clubs?”

Pansy watched Draco leave, his robes snapping around him. “Good going, Blaise!”

“Draco admitted he loves him.”

“Boys are so stupid.” Pansy allowed herself a moment to feel sorry for herself being surrounded by the hapless creatures. Oh well, at least some of them were rather pretty to look at. Pansy walked to the Slytherin dorms with images of strong hands, wicked smiles and red hair fluttering through her mind.

“Mr. Zabini is there a reason you’re cluttering my sitting room?”

Startled, Blaise looked into the black eyes of his mentor. “Sorry, Professor Snape, I’m just… I’m an idiot.”

Snape blinked slowly, his lip twitching just a bit. “You’re a teenager, it’s expected.”

“I knew he wasn’t using Gabriel, or at least just using him.” Blaise muttered as if he hadn’t just been insulted. “But love, wow, I just didn’t see that coming.”
“Perhaps you have been too preoccupied with the demands of your own hormones.”

Blaise blushed and buried his face in his hands. “She’s too young, and I don’t really see her in a sexual way, I’m mean she’s lovely, but I don’t want to touch her like that.” His brown eyes pleaded with his professor to understand. A soft nod was all the encouragement he needed to continue. “I know in my heart that she is mine, that we belong together. That someday she will come and claim me and I will follow her to the ends of the earth.”

Severus’ lips twitched at the innocent declaration. “I shall let her parents know of your intentions.”

“Thank you, sir. Do you think, maybe, they would let me be her friend for now?”

“I will ask. Now go to bed.”

“Yes sir, thank you sir.” Blaise stumbled over his tongue and feet as he left Severus’ quarters.

Draco carefully pulled the drapes and sat on the bed staring at his boyfriend. Gabriel was sprawled on his stomach, his black curls spread against the green silk sheets. A tear slipped down Draco's soft white cheek… he couldn’t lose him. Draco slowly slid the sheet down the muscular back, exposing the tight round arse coved in orange pajama bottoms. Draco smiled; one of Gabriel’s siblings must have picked them out for him.

For a long while Draco just stared at the perfection before him. When he couldn’t stand it any longer Draco reached out and gently ran a finger over the firm swell of Gabriel arse. Merlin Draco loved his arse! They had made love every chance they'd got since their first time. Sometimes it was quick and rough and others gentle and slow, each touch conveying the depth of emotion they felt.

Draco had yet to bottom. Oh, he wanted to, there were times he would suck Gabriel's long, thick cock and imagine how it would feel sliding in his arse. He would reach down and wank himself, coming hard, as Gabriel spilled down his throat.

Draco's hand rubbed harder causing Gabriel to whimper and shift in his sleep. There had been several times he'd almost begged Gabriel to take him, like last night when Gabriel had licked and sucked at his hole until he’d come screaming, his cock untouched. But every time he held back; he just wasn’t ready to trust someone that much. He loved Gabriel and trusted him with so much, but that last step, being so vulnerable and exposed – Draco just couldn’t bring himself to cross that line.

Before he could delve deeper into these thoughts, Gabriel stirred. “You fuckin’ me?” Gabriel’s voice was rough and slurred as he was barely awake.

Draco chuckled. “I would like to think you wouldn’t have to ask if I was fucking you… or are you implying I’m small?”

Gabriel smiled, his eyes still closed, and wiggled his bum. “Invitation?”

“I think you need sleep more than sex.”

“Doesn’t make sense.”

Draco settled at the head of the bed and began running his fingers through his boyfriend's raven locks. Within seconds Gabriel was sound asleep. Grabbing the Russian Potions book from his night stand Draco continued to pet Gabriel while reading.
Hours later Draco froze, as he carefully re-read the page. He began to shake. Desperately he got a hold of himself and slid out of bed, and quietly left the dorm. Moments later he was banging on his godfather’s door. He didn’t know how long he’d knocked before the door flew open.

“What’s wrong?” Severus demanded.

“I think I can save him!”

Quick hands reached out and pulled Draco into the room. When the door shut, Severus sat Draco down on the couch. “Slowly explain why you had to wake me up in the middle of the night.”

“I was reading this potions text and I’ve found a potion that might keep Gabriel alive when he battles the Dark Lord.”

“Explain.”

“This is the journal of Bogdan, a Potions Master who lived around the time of the Founders. He traveled across Russia and into Siberia and met with many shamans. One of them used this potion to aid his ability to travel to the spirit world and heal broken souls. It takes two weeks to make, and I don’t know how much time we have before the Dark Lord attacks.”

Severus held out his hand. “Let me see that.”

Draco handed over the book, and nervously waited.

His black eyes boring into Draco’s, Severus said, “I have everything needed to make the potion, except Unicorn’s Breath, which needs to be used within minutes of harvesting.”

“I’m growing Unicorn’s Breath with Gabriel and Neville for Herbology. Do you think it will work?”

“Individually the ingredients all help with mental focus, clarity, and protection, however I have no idea what they will do once combined.”

“Can we start on it tomorrow?” Draco pleaded.

“Certainly.”

“I don’t want to tell Gabriel until we have it made. I don’t want him to get his hopes up or stop looking for other options.”

Severus considered this for a moment. “All right, however once the potion is finished you will tell him. Come here tomorrow, correction tonight, after dinner and we’ll get started.”

Draco jumped up from the chair and embraced his godfather enthusiastically. “Thank you so much, Uncle Severus.”

“You are quite welcome,” Severus answered hugging Draco tightly.

December 6th, 7am

Draco woke with a gasp, which bled into a groan. Merlin, he could wake up this way every day for the rest of his life. Reaching down he threaded his fingers into Gabriel’s damp hair. Slowly he opened his eyes and nearly came at the sight of the freshly showered gypsy bobbing up and down on his cock. Draco’s slender fingers flexed, tangling further into the wet curls as he tried not to force
Gabriel’s head down, and whimpering as Gabriel pulled off.

Draco opened his eyes as Gabriel chuckled darkly. “Don’t worry, I’m not stopping, I just wanted to let you know it’s okay if you fuck my mouth.”

Draco’s eyes widened and for a moment he froze. Before he could even consciously think about it he was reaching down with his other hand and forcing Gabriel to take his aching cock back in his mouth. Having done this before, Draco knew what his boyfriend could take and was soon thrusting into the wet heat, as Gabriel sucked and licked enthusiastically. As he got closer to coming Draco blushed; there was something about fucking Gabriel’s mouth that made him talk and he couldn’t stop himself.

“Your mouth is so hot and wet,” he whispered roughly. “Yes, Merlin, yes, lick my cock just like that. Your red lips look so good wrapped around me. You’re mine, made to suck my cock. Oh… yes…suck me…Gabriel… ohohoh!”

Draco arched off the bed plunging deep into Gabriel’s mouth and hitting the back of his throat as he came. Gabriel sucked and licked every last drop of come out of him. Thoroughly spent, Draco collapsed onto the bed.

Gabriel lay down beside him, green eyes sparkling with happiness. “Good morning.”

Draco arched an eyebrow. “Apparently.”

Gabriel beamed and reached out, running his fingers through the silvery blond locks. “I know you need more sleep, but I don’t think you want to miss breakfast.”

“What time is it?”

“Well, I started at six, so six-o-one?”

Gray eyes narrowed dangerously. “You should run.”

Gabriel laughed carelessly. “Please… as if you could move right now.” Leaning over Gabriel kissed his pink lips. The kiss was full of love and sweetness and Draco sighed in bliss as Gabriel pulled away. “I’m going to get dressed, you should get up.” With a flick of his fingers the silencing charm was removed and Gabriel stood.

Draco stretched, watching his lover get dressed, knowing that he was wearing a very proprietary look on his face. Oh yes, the fine specimen of wizard was his, and he had no intention of sharing.

“You have that look again.” Gabriel smiled indulgently as he finished buttoning up his robe.

Draco ignored him. “Where are you going so early?”

“I need to check on our Herbology project, and I wanted to see how Tatiana is doing, she was running a bit of a fever last night. I’ll see you in the Great Hall for breakfast.”

“Okay.”

As Gabriel left the room he called out. “It’s quarter to seven.”

“Bloody hell!” Draco cursed throwing back the covers and heading to the showers. An hour was barely enough to get ready!
December 6th, 9pm

Draco’s face was blank as he carefully shredded the mullein. The base of almond oil and lavender was simmering beside him and in precisely three minutes the mullein and mugwort would need to be added. The potion was very precise but not complicated. For the next hour Draco was completely focused on the Shaman’s Potion. Holding his breath Draco added the last ingredient. Translucent white petals floated into the cauldron and the potion swirled in a rainbow of colors.

“It looks exactly as the book described, well done.”

“Thank you, Uncle Severus.” Draco fastened a lid on top of the cauldron and set it up on the shelf. “It will be okay here? The instructions say to let it set undisturbed for fourteen days.”

Severus quirked an ebony eyebrow at his godson. “This is my private laboratory, of course it is safe.”

Checking his clock Severus wrote the time on a piece of parchment and set it in front of the cauldron. “At precisely ten in the evening on the twentieth your potion shall be done.”

“Do you think it will work?”

Severus sighed and pulled the scared boy into his arms. Sometimes he forgot how truly young they all were. “Yet again, I do not know. The potion looks like it will work to help stabilize and strengthen Gabriel as he heals the Dark Lord’s soul, but I really don’t know. I did make my own batch so we could have one to test.”

Draco relaxed in his godfather’s arms and for the moment allowed himself to feel safe and hopeful. Later he would begin to search again for anything that could help save his lover’s life.
Seventy-nine

Chapter Seventy-nine

Okay, I know there is a new character in this chapter; I'm sorry I tried to ignore her, but she’s loud and wouldn’t go away. In other news I think I will only need four or five more chapters and then it will be finished. Anyway, enjoy!

December 15th, 1996. Riddle Mansion

Marcy set down the case of wine and stepped back into the shadows. Her master, Devlin, the other vampire leader Samuel, Roberto the werewolf pack leader, Fenrir Greyback, Lucius Malfoy and Lord Voldemort sat around an antique table discussing the upcoming battle plans. They had been so careful to exclude everyone else; however, the prejudiced men overlooked the delicate vampire. Marcy smirked to herself, she knew most people underestimated her, and she had always encouraged it. Quietly she listened to their planning.

Her eyes grew wide and her body trembled as she listened to them plot and plan. She had only been a vampire for two years, and was just beginning to break free of her sire’s control. Devlin had turned all of the members of his clan. He was cruel and limited how much blood they drank in order to control them. He abused everyone, and now he was forcing them to fight in a war, against children.

Marcy had one thing going for her; she was good at hiding. The day Devlin had turned her, she was grieving for her friend who had just died, and wasn’t watching where she was walking. She had been grabbed, bitten and the next thing she remembered was waking up in a strange bed. It had taken weeks for her to recover from the change, but only days to realize that she needed Devlin, and he thought her weak. So, as the streetwise girl had done all her life, she pretended, and secretly studied and grew stronger.

Marcy had thought about running long ago, but without a place to run to she was afraid of ending up in another clan that could be even worse. So she’d waited, hoping to find a way to gain her freedom. A week ago she had been ready to risk an unknown future when she had found out they were going to be pawns in a war. However, fortune had smiled on her, and she’d heard Devlin, Merrik, and Samuel complaining about the ‘high and mighty’ Creature Counsel.

Not sure they would take in a stray vampire for no reason, Marcy had hung around trying to find useful information and hoping to buy her way into safety. Now she had it, and she waited patiently until the meeting ended and then sneaked out into the night. A few streets away from the old manor Marcy stopped and sat crossed-legged on the ground. Dropping into a trance she called on her mother as she always had since her death – Marcy had only been six when her mum died. Her mum's last words were a promise to always be there no matter what, whenever Marcy needed her. And she had been.

“Marcy,” her mum’s ethereal voice called. “I have missed you, my darling.”

“I missed you too, Mum, it hasn’t been safe for me to call on you.”

“I understand, dearest, and I know what you want. You need to get to Prague. Their home is outside of the city and it is protected. I can guide you close enough to gain their attention.”
A tear slipped down Marcy's pale cheek. “Thank you, Mum.”

“Hush now, baby, you need to get moving. I suggest an old-fashioned method of travel.”

Marcy rolled her eyes, but a few hours before dawn she was safely inside a coffin being shipped to Prague.*

December 17th, 7pm. Hogwarts grounds

Vincent eagerly opened the box. Reading the letter on top he grinned as relief filled him. Inside the box was the channeling crystal they would need, a pendant, and a candle to warn everyone.

“Is that from Freja?” Mudiwa asked as he walked into their tent.

“Yes, and everything is set. When the attack begins, we will light this candle, and the candles at my mum’s and in the village, with Lucas’ pack; in India with Ria’s family; in Italy with Luca and his family; in Japan with Soto’s family, and several other places will all light together. When that happens everyone will begin to pray and build energy, sending it through their channeling crystals to our crystal and finally the energy will go to this pendant.” Vincent held up the simple crystal point. “And so we will feed the energy into Gabriel.”

“Should we tell him?” Mudiwa asked sitting down next to his husband on the couch.

“No, if he thinks we're planning on staying here he’ll find a way to send us somewhere safe.”

“What about the children?”

“Gabriel gave Mum a set of earrings, they will go to her.”

Mudiwa framed his lover's face in his large hands. “This will work. He will survive.”

“Goddess,” Vincent gasped his voice breaking. “He has to, he's our little boy and he just has to make it. I don’t know what we’ll do if something goes wrong.”

Mudiwa pulled his lover onto his lap and held him close, both of them trying not to start crying.

“Baba, Dad, are you in here?”

Quickly they parted, wiping their eyes. “Yes, Gabriel, come on in.”

Gabriel’s smile quickly faded as he felt their sadness and saw their reddened eyes. “What’s wrong?” Hurriedly he crossed setting down into the place between his fathers.

Mudiwa, deciding that there were enough secrets in his family, answered. “We're not foolish enough to believe the stories you tell us. We know you expect to die when facing Voldemort.”

Gabriel's eyes widened and his mouth dropped open, he didn’t know what to say. Tears filled his eyes. “I’ve tried everything, Baba, and I can’t find anything that will help. I’m hoping my magical strength is greater than Helen’s, but I just don’t know.”

“We know you’re trying to find a way.” Vincent soothed as both men wrapped their arms around their son. “You've been very brave, but we both feel how stressed you are, and we want to be here for you.”
Gabriel stiffened and then began to cry. “I’m so scared. I don’t want to die, but I can’t destroy a human soul, I just can’t!” Reaching out he clutched the strong arms which held him. “Please don’t be angry. Please don’t hate me,” Gabriel pleaded his eyes shining with tears. “I don’t want to leave, and I'll do everything I can to stay. I'm so scared.”

His fathers wrapped him up in their arms as all three of them began to cry.

"We could never hate you. You're our angel, our Cherub." Vincent whispered through his tears.

"We're scared too, but it will all work out, I promise," Mudiwa said as he pulled his family closer to him. Together they sat holding onto each other, desperate never to be parted.

Gabriel choked trying to stifle a sob. "We're here, baby; let it go."

Clinging to his father Gabriel sobbed, his whole body shaking as he released his fear. He hadn't cried like this in years and when his tears stopped falling he felt embarrassed and exhausted. Flushing, he looked up into gray eyes.

"Go to sleep, I think we could all use a bit of a nap."

"I'm sorry."

"You have nothing to be sorry about, Gabriel. This is exactly what parents are for."

Turning back to them, Gabriel smiled half-heartedly. "I love you both so much, thank you."

"We love you too."

"So much."

Two kisses were pressed to his forehead as Gabriel fell asleep.

"It will work?" Vincent asked, his lavender eyes filled with sorrow.

"Without a doubt, there can be no other option." The certainty in Mudiwa's voice was comforting and strong. "Let's sleep."

Vincent nodded and got up, pulling the covers back on their bed while his husband carried their son. Soon the three men were sleeping peacefully.

At first Gabriel thought he was dreaming, which is why he didn't bother to open his eyes. He felt so light and warm. Warm bodies surrounded him; wait… his brow furrowed in confusion… bodies? Cautiously he opened his eyes, seeing his Baba's dark muscular arm he instantly relaxed. Remembering what had precipitated him sleeping in his parent’s bed had him blushing and burrowing into their warmth. Before he could fall back asleep twin squeals filled the air as Tatiana and Aubrey landed on top of them.

"Gabriel, help us!" Tatiana insisted.

"Tickle Daddy and Baba!" Aubrey explained as he burrowed under the blankets to attack sensitive toes.

Quickly the tent was filled with laughter and shrieks of delight. Everyone was smiling brightly and panting by the time Mudiwa and Vincent had their three children pinned to the bed.
"I don’t know why they keep trying to get us, they never win." Mudiwa commented lightly.

"It is rather confusing; I thought they were cleverer than this." Vincent replied.

"Hey," Gabriel squawked.

"Perhaps they think that someday they will win, foolish children."

"We will win, Baba. Just you wait!" Tatiana said looking as haughty as possible with her white-blond curls in total disarray.

"And what will you win?"

"Well," Aubrey began in his patiently explaining tone, "we will get to be in charge and do whatever we want."

Vincent laughed at the answer to his question. "And what will you do then?"

"Then," Gabriel cackled. "We will rule the world!" His siblings joined him with their best mad scientist cackle.

Mudiwa shook his head in amusement. "How about breakfast instead?"

"What kind of breakfast?" Tatiana asked a barely there eyebrow arched in suspicion of not getting her due.

"Chocolate chip pancakes, or we take over the world," Aubrey insisted with a firm nod of his head, his mocha chin jutting out, prepared to fight for what he wanted.

"You have heard our demands, you may confer amongst yourselves." Gabriel finished with his lips quirking as he held in his smile.

"You are too kind." Without letting them up Vincent leaned over and sucked his husband's earlobe into his mouth.

"Gross!!"

"Stop, we can have cold cereal, just stop!"

"I'm going to be ill."

Vincent rolled his eyes and let go of the soft lobe. "Your children are brats."

"Sorry, right now they're your children. I'll claim them when they're sleeping."

"Baba! Daddy!" the three siblings exclaimed.

"Come on; if you want chocolate chip pancakes you have to help."

"Yay!" Aubrey and Tatiana squirmed out from under their fathers and ran to get dressed and help make breakfast.

"Can you stay?"

"I should go to Charms, but chocolate chip pancakes sound great."

"Wonderful, you can flip," Vincent grinned content to have all his children together.
December 19th, 7pm. The Headmaster's office, Hogwarts

"Our sources tell us there will be an attack at the Ministry of Magic tomorrow evening," Kingsley announced. Waiting for the gasps of fear and shock to pass, he continued. "Professor Dumbledore's sources have confirmed this information. I have scheduled some extra training for the Aurors."

"My boys George and Fred will create an emergency which will keep me and several others at the office late," Arthur Weasley explained.

"Will that be enough?" Minerva asked worriedly.

"It should," Dumbledore said kindly. "The attack is set for five. As long as we keep people there until six with honest reasons it shouldn't warn Voldemort that we know of his plans. What about Minister Fudge?"

"He will be home getting ready for a late meeting with the Minister of Magic of Romania," Hestia Jones shared.

"Wonderful, well that should take care of everything. Everyone has their emergency Portkeys on them?"

"Headmaster, what about Gabriel?"

"Molly, at this time I have no intention of involving him in any battles." Putting on his patient yet disappointed face Dumbledore continued. "Young Mr. Dragonheart still feels that he doesn't need our help. I'm hoping the truth of how dangerous Voldemort is will become reality when he finds out about the attack on the Ministry. If all goes well we will start training Mr. Dragonheart next week."

"He is doing well in Defense," Remus felt compelled to say, hoping to ease everyone's mind.

Sirius beamed. "He's just like his father! A natural at Defense!"

"Not to get too far off topic, but why exactly do you have a nose like a pig?"

Sirius blushed and Remus, grinning, turned to Tonks. "Well, Gabriel seems to have his father's sense of humor and likes to prank."

"I hope you're giving as good as you get?" Tonks giggled.

"He did spend yesterday singing opera instead of speaking," Sirius grumbled.

Severus smirked. "The gypsies prank each other all the time; he's had a lot of practice." Instantly a few smiles fell, reminding them that Gabriel Dragonheart wasn't a carbon copy of their long-dead friends.

"Unfortunately I still have some paperwork to do, so unless anyone has anything else to bring up, please stay safe," Albus said before Sirius and Severus got into another argument.

As they said goodnight worried wishes of safety and of seeing one another again were passed on.

5am. The Magical Creatures Council
Lysander watched the young vampire hug herself as different council members asked her questions, about herself, Voldemort, and everything she heard and saw while she was around old snake-face. They knew she was telling the truth, and the information she gave them was invaluable, but they weren't sure if she was being used by her sire to spy on them. It was hard to tell the strength of a bond between a fledgling and their sire.

"Why should we care about a wizard's war?" the Veela representative demanded.

Marcy took a breath to steady herself. Lysander tilted his head – her hands were shaking and her skin looked waxy. How long had it been since she'd fed?

"I don't know why you should care about a wizarding war. However the vampires and werewolves joining with Voldemort could cause problems between the wizarding world and magical creatures, especially if Voldemort loses," Marcy said.

"What do you hope to gain by approaching us?" the Goblin sneered.

"My sire is cruel and controlling; I want a way out. I want to be safe, and to learn more about being a vampire, I have learned only what was of benefit to my sire, Devlin."

"Do you need a new sire?" Jaroslava asked.

"I don't know," Marcy said, her voice uncertain.

"Lysander, take Marcy to a guest suite, please."

"Yes, Counselman Voltaire."

Lysander nodded and standing up he walked towards the auburn haired vampire. Chocolate brown eyes narrowed as Marcy crossed her arms over her chest. Lysander smiled, this was just a front, no woman could resist him. He did not think this to brag, it was just a fact.

"Marcy, this way please."

She purposefully avoided his hand and walked past him. With a grin, Lysander walked behind her enjoying the sight of her cute arse swaying. "Turn left and it's the third door on the right," he directed.

Marcy opened the door partway and began to slip inside. "Thank you for your help."

"Don't you want a tour of the room?" Lysander asked with a frown.

"No, thank you."

"Are you hungry?"

Marcy's face lost the last of its color. "I've only ever fed from Devlin."

Lysander's eyes widened at the whispered confession. "Vampire blood isn't enough! You need to have fresh blood to be healthy and strong."

"He told us we wouldn't be able to control ourselves and we would kill anyone we fed off."
Lysander’s blue eyes were filled with sympathy. "Let me help you. We have blood donors living here. I can help you feed. I won’t let you kill anyone."

"I would appreciate that." Her body stayed closed off and her eyes full of suspicion as she stepped aside and let him in.

Even though he couldn’t tell Marcy how grateful he was for the information she brought to them, he knew it would enable them to help Gabriel, and for that he would treat her like a queen. Making a quick call over the intercom he asked for one of his favorite donors. Marcy would be feeling better soon.

Marcy looked around the guest rooms, while Lysander sat on the couch. A soft knock interrupted the uncomfortable silence. “Come in, Martin.” A petite young man walked into the room. He wore soft blue denims and a brown tee shirt. Lysander sat with his back against the arm of the couch. One leg was bent and pressed against the back of the couch while the other dropped loosely to the floor.

“Martin, this is Marcy. She has never fed on a mortal before; are you willing to be her donor for tonight?”

Martin looked between the two vampires. Seeing Lysander’s calmness and Marcy’s weariness he nodded. “Of course; what do you need me to do?”

“Come and sit between my legs, with your back against me.”

Once Martin was settled against him, Lysander beckoned Marcy forward. Slowly she sat on the couch, near them but not touching them.

“There is nothing to be worried about. I’m right here and will make sure both of you are safe.”

Lysander held Marcy’s gaze willing her to trust him, hoping he wouldn’t need to use any magic on her. “It isn’t much different than when you drank from Devlin.”

Marcy’s brown eyes were suspicious and she held back even as her body trembled with need. “My bite gave Devlin no pleasure; he assumed it was because I was weak.”

Lysander’s brow wrinkled in confusion. “Did you want to give him pleasure? Did you want to drink from him?”

Marcy’s lips thinned in anger. “No. I didn’t want anything from him.”

“Didn’t you choose to become a vampire?”

“No,” she said again. "I was walking down the street and grabbed. The next thing I knew I was in a strange bed tied to a power-hungry arsehole!"

“I’m sorry; it should never be like that. Okay, let’s focus on getting you fed first.” Once she nodded her assent Lysander continued. “Do you want to hurt Martin?”

“No, of course not.”

“Do you want to drink from him?”

Marcy swayed slightly. “He smells lovely.”

Lysander hummed his agreement. “Yes, he does. He comes to you willingly; can you offer him pleasure in exchange for his gift?”
Marcy blinked. “I’m not sure, he looks so young, and I’m not comfortable with being sexual with strangers.”

“It doesn’t have to be sexual, that is a common misconception; it can just be pleasure, like you get from a hot bath or a massage. You will have to control it, and honestly I don’t recommend trying it for your first feeding. Martin, are you all right with whatever pleasure she gives you?”

Martin smiled softly. “Yes.”

This was why he had chosen Martin, he was so quiet and really happy to do whatever anyone wanted. Cynthia, who took care of the donors, was very careful about who she let Martin go to so he wouldn’t be hurt.

“Marcy, come here, lie on top of us and drink from him.” Lysander said as he gently turned Martin’s head exposing his neck.

Marcy’s breath came in gasps as she tried to control herself. With painful slowness she crawled over to them and gently lay on top of Martin. Her hands gripped Lysander’s arms as she lowered her mouth to the creamy white neck. Her tongue licked over the throbbing pulse. She moaned and her fangs elongated. Her fingers dug into Lysander’s flesh in order to keep control of her actions. Martin gasped as her fangs pierced his skin. Marcy’s body quivered as the first drops of hot rich blood hit her tongue. Instantly she let go fully resting her body on Martin’s. Her hands relaxed and rubbed up and down Lysander’s shoulders and arms.

Both men moaned in pleasure. When a vampire fed they radiated pleasure from their entire body, not just their bite. Pleasure, delight, and life flowed over the three of them, as Marcy drank deeply of Martin’s blood.

Lysander reached up and stroked Marcy’s shoulder. “Can you stop now? I can get you another donor if you need one.”

At first Marcy growled in displeasure, but then she pulled back a bit, licking the bite to heal it. Martin was limp, a soft smile on his lips. “Umm, that was lovely.”

“Are you okay?” Lysander asked.

“I’m fabulous.” Martin sighed.

Lysander smirked. “I know. How about you, Marcy?”

Marcy looked down at her hands, her skin now a lovely milky white. “I have never felt better.” When she looked up her eyes glowed with happiness. “I feel strong and powerful and like I’m finally what I’m supposed to be.”

“You are. While biting each other can be pleasurable, it isn’t nutritious. Vampire blood has no life-force in it.”

“What can I go?” Martin interrupted.

“Are you all right? Did I hurt you? Did I take too much? Can I do anything to help?” Marcy said all at once.

“I feel wonderful. Other than a hard on, there is nothing that a blood replenisher and sleep won’t make better.”
Marcy blushed and buried her face in her hands.

Lysander chuckled. “Go ahead, Martin.”

“He’s gone.” Lysander chuckled. Sitting up he adjusted his jumper in order to hide his own erection. “I’m sure you have a million questions, but the sun will rise soon. Rest, and tomorrow take it easy. I’ll be back and we will talk.”

Marcy fidgeted then blurted out. “Are you going to help them?”

Lysander’s blue eyes flashed in dangerous eagerness. “Oh yes, we will join them in battle tomorrow night, and blood will flow. Good night, Marcy.”

Marcy stared at the door Lysander had just left through, hoping she had done the right thing.

Lysander knocked on the door of his parent’s apartments.

“Come in.”

“What’s the plan?”

Philip smirked at his son. “One would think you might develop patience at some point it time.”

Lysander huffed and slumped on the couch.

“Fine,” Philip continued. "Tomorrow night we will go to Hogwarts; we will stay hidden in the shadows and the forest until Voldemort arrives. Voltaire doesn’t want to scare Voldemort off.”

“Does he think this is the battle?”

“Yes, it is time for the Founders' Little Angel to shine.”

Lysander closed his eyes. “When will we be leaving?”

“An hour after sunset.”

“I’ll be ready.”

* This is how Dracula got from Romania to England in the Bram Stoker novel “Dracula”
Chapter Eighty

A/N: I graduated high school in 1992, so the songs I use will mostly be ones I remember dancing to. Also, I have not bothered to look up copyright dates on songs – if I think it could be anywhere close to 1996 and I like it, I’ll use it.

Mind to mind communication is in italics.

Parseltongue is in bold.

Friday, December 20th. 7am

“Thank you, Mbiriviri,” Gabriel said as he came out of meditation. Leaning back against a dark purple couch he gazed around the Founders' library hoping something from his meditation would make sense.

The phoenix stopped singing. “Were you able to find what you were looking for?”

“I was able to reach a deep level of meditation, but unfortunately there are simply too many voices out there, and too many secrets being kept.” Gabriel smiled softly relaxing in the emotionally clean space Mbiriviri had created with her song. “There are a lot of people planning on helping me. Whatever is coming, I won't be alone.”

“Of course not, silly child. Fawkes and I will be there with you. We know what you're planning on doing, we will be of help.”

“It gives me great hope knowing that you’ll be there.”

Mbiriviri gazed at her human lovingly. “As it should. No human has even gone to battle with one phoenix at their side, and you will have two. You cannot possibly lose.”

“I will be there too!” Aurora hissed not wanting to be left out.

“Yes, and I’m very grateful.”

“As you should be,” Aurora said then stretched out in a patch of sun, her black scales reflecting rainbows.

Fawkes flew into the room through the spelled window. “I know who the spy is! Dumbledore has asked some young boy named Thadwick to Portkey your family to Tom Riddle. It will ensure his place within the Death Eaters and make him a more effective spy. The boy can’t be more than eighteen years old; he's just a child!”

Gabriel didn’t think he had ever heard a phoenix sound unpleasant, but an angry Fawkes was not a nice sound. “When is he going to attack?”

“Your parents asked permission to take you to Hogsmeade on Monday, he will capture them there. Dumbledore doesn’t want it to happen on school grounds.”

“Okay, in that case I will decide what to do tomorrow. Today is the last day of classes and tonight
the dance, where I plan on having fun. I'll worry about everything else tomorrow.”

Gabriel stood to go when Mbiriviri called to him. “Angel, before you go, sometime today you must go and talk to the fairies and elementals of the forest. If they know what you want I’m sure they will help.”

“Why would they do that?”

“Because of all the sweets you leave for them. Now go so I can sleep!”

“Yes, Aurora, of course, Aurora anything you say, Aurora.” Gabriel laughed, bowing as he backed out of the Founders' rooms.

“And you said he could never be taught,” she hissed sleepily.

The trilling phoenix laughter infused Gabriel as he left, ensuring a happy morning.

Gabriel bounced around the castle, happily greeting everyone, and when he'd sat down he barely restrained from bouncing in his seat. The teachers all had looks of irritated indulgence on their faces, as they strived to teach on the last day before the holiday.

At lunch Gabriel plopped down next to his boyfriend and kissed him soundly before packing up food in a small basket.

“Hello, what’s going on?” Draco asked with a smirk.

“Have you ever heard a phoenix laugh? It’s like a drug. I have to go and talk to the fairies, but I’ll be back in time for class. I’m so excited about tonight! You will dance with me, won’t you? I’ve been helping Adonis and Dad pick music all week. I love you; I’ll see you later!”

Draco blinked, wondering if his boyfriend had taken a single breath the entire time he spoke.

“Well that was interesting,” Blaise snickered.

Pansy giggled. “Too bad we have class soon; he would be a lot of fun in bed right now.”

Draco glared at Pansy for thinking of Gabriel in bed, and then smirked at the thought. “Maybe I can get it to happen another day.”

Gabriel sat on a blanket in the Forbidden Forest. Fairies and elementals danced around him in a flutter of wings and lights. He was surrounded by sweets, and softly talked to the delicate creatures.

“I was hoping you would be willing to help me, and the children in the castle. A very mean man is planning on attacking me and I’m afraid he might come here. If Hogwarts is attacked I was hoping you would be able to protect anyone running away from Voldemort and his Death Eaters.”

Everything was quiet for a moment and then they began to hum and dance. Gabriel smiled at the swirls of color.

“I’ll take that as a yes. Thank you for your help.”

Laying back, Gabriel watched the leaves flutter in the wind.

6:50pm. The gypsies' tent.
Gabriel smiled as he looked around the tent. They had spent several days decorating it and it looked wonderful. There were long tables filled with food that the gypsies and the house elves had provided. Over the tables was a loft that covered half of the perimeter of the tent. They had put tables, chairs and couches up there so people could sit and watch the crowd dancing. It was an odd mix of a Muggle school dance and a club. Paper streamers in all the house colors were draped across the ceiling and fluttered in the breeze from the vents at the top of the tent.

“Are you ready?” Adonis asked. He was wearing pale blue denims and a white long-sleeved shirt that laced up the front. It was proper enough for the beginning of the dance, which all the years were allowed to attend. It was also sexy enough to tempt Severus, who would be chaperoning the dance.

“Yes, and you have the correct tapes ready?”

“Don’t worry, the tapes with all the nasty songs are sitting on top of my other outfit.”

Before Gabriel could get worried about the evil glint in Adonis’ golden eyes, the others showed up.

“Are we ready to open the tent?” Soto asked. “I can hear people outside already.”

“Go ahead, I’ll start the music.” Adonis went quickly to the tape player and pushed play.

“Welcome,” Vincent called as the tent flaps were opened.

Soft chanting could be heard as Agolo, a song by French singer Angélique Kidjo played. Most of the school was already outside and slowly entered the tent, not sure of what to expect.

Ria smiled in welcome, Talha perched on her hip. “There is food and drink on the back tables, and the loft has chairs and couches for those who wish to sit down and rest.”

The students wandered around the edge of the wooden dance floor, not sure what to do as unfamiliar music was played. Some got drinks, but most didn’t eat anything yet as they were still full from the large holiday tea that had been served earlier in the Great Hall. Gabriel greeted his friends, commenting on their choice of outfits. Most of those raised in the wizarding world wore robes, but they were different styles and colors than the school robes. Everyone else wore Muggle fashions, which was causing quite a stir.

“Hermione, you look lovely,” Gabriel exclaimed as he took his time looking the young witch over. She was wearing a turquoise blouse with a tight, short denim skirt.

“Thank you,” she said blushing. “As do you.”

Gabriel looked down at his black cotton slacks and black tunic with silver embroidery. “Thank you, it’s from India. Are you here with someone?”

Blushing again she nodded. “Yes, Justin Reynolds asked me.”

“He’s a seventh year Ravenclaw, right?” At her nod he continued, “He seems nice. I hope you have a good time tonight. Will you save me a dance?”

“Of course, I don’t know how many will dance though,” Hermione answered as a new song came on in yet another language.
“Oh, don’t worry, we have a plan.” Gabriel winked and went to greet others that had just arrived. Many had not bothered to get dates, as the dance was casual. Ginny and her friends had said they didn’t want to tie themselves down to just one person. When Gabriel saw Draco, Pansy, Blaise and the other upper year Slytherins enter the tent about ten minutes later, he made his way over to Kamala. The two siblings signaled Adonis, and when the song ended there was silence.

Kamala walked out onto the dance floor, her bright pink skirt and top flowed around her as the silver beads decorating them reflected the light. “Good evening, everyone, it’s now time to get the dancing started. Now I know this is unfamiliar music for a lot of you, so I’m going to ask the bravest of you to please come out and join us.” The Gryffindors present either puffed up or looked worried. “So ladies, please some out and show the boys how it’s done.”

Music began to play and Tatiana danced onto the floor, as did most of the Muggle-born girls. As the girls swayed and bopped along with ‘Girls Just Want to Have Fun’, Mudiwa walked behind the Slytherins, who were all sitting near each other in the loft area. “Please don’t tell me that none of you lovely ladies are going to dance.”

“We don’t know how,” pouted Ivy.

“It doesn’t look that hard,” said Teresa shyly.

“Go on, you can do it.” Mudiwa said encouragingly.

“Oh course they can! They’re Slytherins,” scoffed Daphne.

“So you’ll go with us?”

Daphne glared at the first year and then stood up. “Of course, we all will. Can’t let the boys think that Gryffindorks are their only dance partners.”

Pansy sneered, but got up. Several of the other Slytherin girls followed behind them. Mudiwa moved to the railing and watched as the dignified girls tried to figure out how to dance to Muggle pop music. Kamala danced towards them to help them out. As the song ended Mudiwa stepped back and turned to the Slytherin boys. “I expect to see all of you down there soon.”

Draco watched his boyfriend’s father walk down the stairs. As the music changed to a bouncy beat he watched the gypsies and several of the Muggle-born boys join the girls on the dance floor. Draco watched as Gabriel bounced as the music played, his arms swaying above his head.

*Baby don’t hurt me, don’t hurt me no more…*

“Only a Muggle male would beg a girl not to hurt him,” Theo snorted.

“Get over yourself, Nott,” Blaise snapped. “Maybe if you could get a girl to stay around you for more than a minute you would be begging her not to hurt you.”

Theo crossed his arms and pouted as the other boys laughed at him. They went back to watching the dancing. When Gabriel pulled a blushing Hermione onto the floor Theo sniggered. “Looks like your toy is cheating on you, Draco.”

“What are they doing?” Blaise asked as he leaned closer to the railing.

“Granger called it ‘the twist’,” Millicent gasped as she sat down. “Pansy wasn’t able to escape.” Pointing to the dance floor they saw Pansy being shown how to twist by an exuberant Tatiana. The young girl’s skirt was a riot of multi-colored ruffles and it seemed to fly as she moved.
The Slytherins enjoyed themselves immensely as they watched the gypsies and Muggle-borns ask, cajole, and pull defenseless wizards and witches onto the floor. Hermione’s date was trying to keep up with the dancing, while keeping himself between her and Gabriel. The third time he did this Gabriel cocked an eyebrow at Hermione, who promptly blushed.

Draco was amazed that none of the gypsies had left the floor; it was nearing eight and while he could see the sweat glistening off their skin none of them stopped, while everyone else had left to get drinks and rest from time to time.

As a song about some sort of Chameleon came to an end Gabriel, Kamala, Tatiana, Aubrey, Adonis and Vincent all moved to an empty part of the floor. As the music began the gypsies began a routine. Their movements were bouncy and quick. Talha wriggled out of his mother’s arms wanting to join them. Gabriel picked him up without missing a beat. Draco smiled, he couldn’t help himself. They were all laughing as they danced to the odd song.

“Draco, what can’t you touch?”

“I don’t know, Blaise, I don’t think Muggle music has a meaning.”

As the song continued, he noticed Gabriel and his family took on an air of superiority, even through their smiles. Draco gasped as Gabriel bent backwards with the other and popped back up somehow never losing his grip on Talha. Hips were thrust and circled, chests raised and dropped, and feet flew.

When the song ended, pleading gray and lavender eyes were turned to Vincent and Gabriel as each child held up one finger. Two quick nods brought whoops of joy, which ended quickly as the song began.

Blaise and Draco both wore puzzled frowns, as the gypsies would move from one pose to another. A few of the Muggle-born students were also doing the odd dance, however the gypsies took it to a completely different level. It didn’t take long before they were contorted into odd shapes. Tatiana and Aubrey were balancing off of their fathers. Gasps were heard over the music as Gabriel lifted Kamala over his head.

“They look like they’re posing for a picture,” Pansy commented in a breathy voice.

“You managed to escape?”

Pansy glared at her friend. “At least I wasn’t afraid to dance, Draco.”

“I’m not afraid,” he scoffed. “I’m waiting for the right song.”

“Of course, how could I be so mistaken?” Pansy snickered.

When the song ended, Draco once again saw Tatiana and Aubrey begging to stay, only this time it was Gabriel they were pleading with. Each of them held onto one of his hands pleading, Draco was sure they would be staying longer, then Gabriel picked them up. The squealing children held on tightly as he lifted them into the air, and then slung them over his shoulders walking out of the tent.

Gabriel's display of strength made Draco’s pulse quicken. “I need a drink.”

“Dobby is having drinks to pass out.”

Draco jumped a bit, not having seen any house-elves so far tonight. “Thanks, Dobby.”

“You is being welcome, Master Draco. Would Master Draco’s friends be liking punch?”
Draco gave the elf a faint grin. “I’m sure they would love some, Dobby.”

The other Slytherins took the offered drink and they all sat down chatting about the dance, and what everyone was wearing that evening.

“I have to say Granger looks really good. I think she’s brave to be wearing so little.”

“I agree, Millicent,” Pansy said. “And did you see how jealous Reynolds got when she was dancing with Gabriel? It was so funny to watch him trying to work out how to dance.”

“Yeah, but he's doing pretty well now,” Blaise commented pointing to the dance floor. The Ravenclaw was dancing with a very happy Hermione, and doing well if the way the others were dancing was any indication.

Draco searched the floor for Gabriel, and sighed when he didn’t see him. Turning back to his friend he rolled his eyes, as he yet again caught Blaise staring at someone on the dance floor.

“She’s beautiful, isn’t she,” Gabriel snarled just loudly enough for Draco to hear. Turning he saw Gabriel leaning over the back of Blaise’s chair. From the look on Blaise’s face he hadn’t realized Gabriel was behind him until he spoke.

“Yes, she is.” Blaise answered calmly.

“She’s ten,” Gabriel hissed.

Blaise nodded. “Yes, but one day she will be sixteen.”

“And until then?”

“Friends?”

“And you will wait until she’s sixteen before you do anything?”

Blaise took a deep breath and looked down at Kamala dancing, her black hair shining in the flashing lights. “I know we are meant to be together, and I don’t want anything to ruin that. I’ll wait.”

Gabriel said nothing for a long moment. “Okay.” Giving Blaise’s shoulder a squeeze Gabriel walked over to his boyfriend and sat in his lap. “Are you having fun?”

“Yes, what song is this?”

“*Keep on Dancing* by DJ BoBo. Why?”

“I just wanted to know the name of at least one song tonight,” Draco smirked.

“Will you dance with me?” Seeing the skeptical look on Draco’s face Gabriel quickly added, “Please, it will be so much fun, and I’ll get to rub myself all over you. And I’ll tell you the names of all the songs.”

“Well when you put it that way, I’d be happy to dance with you.”

When they got to the floor, the song changed. “This is *You Spin Me Round.*” Gabriel began to dance, his body flowing back and forth against Draco’s. Draco thought it looked a lot like having sex and decided to match his lover’s movements. Gabriel beamed in happiness and continued leading them.

Draco was startled when Gabriel’s hands grasped his hips and their bodies were pressed together.
Gabriel pushed his hips into Draco’s and soon their pelvises were circling together. Draco blushed hotly and was worried that they were making a spectacle of themselves when he saw Adonis and Gabriel’s fathers dancing together and then he felt a bit more comfortable.

Gabriel’s breath tickled his ear. “Do we need to stop?”

Draco thought about saying yes, his parents would certainly not approve, however he was having a lot of fun and no one seemed to mind how they were dancing. “No, I’m fine.”

“Good, I love having you in my arms.”

Draco smiled and loosened up allowing his body to flow more easily and a few times even guiding their movements. The next song was slower, and Gabriel quickly wrapped his arms around his boyfriend. Emerald eyes gazed into silver as Gabriel sung along.

Later Draco would venomously deny that he had a sappy grin on his face the whole time, or that his cheeks were pink from blushing – it was hot dancing!

“Witchcraft,” Gabriel whispered as he stepped back a few inches and began dancing in a slow sinuous way, which Draco found rather hypnotic. It took Draco a minute to realize that the Muggle song was about their version of witches. Draco’s gray eyes narrowed at his boyfriend.

Thankfully the next song had nothing to do with magic, and Draco joined in, bouncing wildly to Jump Around. After dancing to a few more songs Draco was tired and excused himself to rest with his friends. Gabriel let him go after a heated kiss.

“Have fun?”

“It was okay.”

Pansy’s grin brightened. “It looked like a lot of fun to me. Do you think Gabriel would dance with me like that?”

“I have no idea – it was just dancing so I don’t see why not.” Draco picked up his drink and sipped at it, hoping Pansy wouldn’t go and find out.

“I think I’ll go and find out,” Pansy said as she stood. Before Draco could speak she was gone.

“I have to see this,” Blaise snickered.

Draco’s hand tightened around his glass as he watched his supposed friend approach his boyfriend. Soon the two were dancing, at first they weren’t touching at all and then the song changed. Gabriel moved in closer placing one of his legs in between Pansy’s and then pulling her closer. They were grinding together their bodies moving as if they were fucking. Draco was fuming, and then his glass cracked.

“What is with these lyrics, ‘pour some sugar on me’? What does it mean?” Gregory pouted not realizing how pissed off Draco was.

“Pansy had better not pour anything on him.” Draco was just about to go down there and rip them apart, when Kamala saved the day. She tapped Gabriel on the shoulder and they stepped away from Pansy. Draco relaxed his grip on his drink, and was surprised when he felt punch trickling out of the glass. With a sigh he cast a whispered Reparo.

“What is she doing?” Ivy asked.
“I think she’s putting some kind of belt on him. See – it matches hers,” Blaise pointed out.

The next song had a decidedly Middle Eastern feel. Kamala and Gabriel began to dance, their hips snapping back and forth, the belt extenuating the movements. Draco and Blaise gazed longingly at the two siblings. Draco wanted to grab Gabriel and drag him to the nearest bed. He quickly hardened when Gabriel lifted up his shirt and his flat stomach moved like a wave through water.

When the song ended Draco held his breath hoping for more. He groaned when he got his wish. The siblings began to dance around each other, their shoulders doing a slow shimmy, their bodies moving more sensuously sliding along invisible lines.

“I’m surprised how many people are still dancing,” whispered Pansy. Draco grunted, he hadn’t actually noticed anyone else dancing.

“Okay everyone, sorry to say but this is the last song for the first half of the dance. When the song ends, please would everyone exit through the opening. Once everyone is gone, Professor Snape will cast an age line, and only those sixteen and older will be able to get back in. Thanks to everyone for joining us tonight.” Vincent set the microphone down and joined his family on the dance floor.

“Everybody dance now,” the woman sang. Almost all of the younger years jumped up and joined the gypsies in their wild gyrating dance. Draco smiled softly as Ivy, Rowan and Teresa flung themselves into the crowd. For a moment everyone was happy.

Pouting-yet-happy kids left the tent, the older ones staying just outside the entrance as the others trudged their way up to the castle.

“How long will I have to wait out here in the snow?” Draco demanded of his boyfriend.

“Well, once everyone leaves Professor Snape just needs to cast the age line and then you can come back in.”

“And what will you be doing while I’m out there?”

“Well,” Gabriel said his voice deep and rough. “This outfit was fine when there were young children around, but since they’re leaving I thought I would change into something more provocative.”

Draco barely kept from groaning at the images running through his head. What would Gabriel wear – a kilt, tight jeans, dress slacks, a fitted robe?

“I see the idea meets with your approval,” Gabriel said. ”You will dance with me some more, won’t you?”

Draco stared at the slightly pouting lip, wanting to suck on it. “If you insist… and make it worth my while.”

“Oh, don’t worry, I’ll make sure you enjoy every second of it. Now off you go so I can get changed.”

“Do you need any help?”

Gabriel just laughed and pushed Draco out into the night.
Chapter Eighty-one

9pm

Headmaster Dumbledore tugged on his beard as he contemplated the current situation. Voldemort and his Death Eaters had not attacked the Ministry, or anywhere else for that matter. He had sent everyone home at eight when nothing had happened. Molly had been overjoyed to know her husband and sons were coming home without having to fight.

Dumbledore's frown turned into a soft smile as his children spilled out from the gypsy’s tent. Their laughter reached his ears up in the tower. He watched as friends laughed and helped each other up the slippery path to the castle. Sweethearts kissed and held hands. Straightening his posture, Dumbledore knew he had to do whatever was necessary to ensure that his children were safe and would be free to live their lives without fear. Yes, sending the gypsies to Voldemort would not only ensure Gabriel’s compliance, but would also secure his spy's place at Voldemort’s side. It wouldn’t be too long, and hopefully there would not be too many more necessary sacrifices to rid the world of Voldemort and his followers.

The clock chimed the quarter hour and Dumbledore withdrew from the window, confident that Severus would find the groups of wayward children hiding behind the tent and dancing. He was just pouring a cup of tea when the fire blazed green.

“Professor Dumbledore! The ministry is under attack! They have vampires and werewolves with them.”

“I’m coming, Kingsley. Let me contact the Weasleys and I’ll be right along.”

“Yes, sir, tell them to use the storage room Floo, it’s secure.”

Dumbledore threw a pinch of Floo power into the fire. “The Burrow! Arthur, are the boys with you? The Ministry has been attacked. They've brought vampires and werewolves with them.”

Molly cried out as Arthur knelt in front of the fire. “Yes, Albus, we are all here. We’ll go to the Ministry directly.”

“Wait, Dad!” called Fred.

“We have some new toys to try out, we need to go to the shop first,” finished George.

“Very well. Percy, Bill and Charlie get your things. We’ll see you there, Headmaster.”

“Thank you, gentlemen. Molly, could you Floo the other Order members? We will need all the help we can get.”

“Yes, yes of course. What about the other teachers?”

“I’ll be asking Minerva and Filius to join me. Remus, Sirius and Severus are at the dance, I want the children to have this last night as it seems war is now fully upon us.”
Molly dabbed at her eyes with her pink handkerchief. “Yes, quite right, they deserve one more night of peace. Thank you, Headmaster.”

Dumbledore nodded and withdrew from the flames. When he arrived at the Ministry the storeroom was empty. He could hear the shouting and ran out to help. There was nothing but chaos: people screaming in pain and yelling for help. Bright flashes of spells lit up hallways, and Dumbledore could see that currently there were more Death Eaters than warriors for the Light.

The Weasleys, Minerva and Filius came up behind him, and joined in the fight. A few minutes later the twins showed up, and they cackled as they threw small, soft objects into the air. When they hit they exploded and liquid sprayed out covering those near them. The people were unharmed but the vampires and werewolves howled in pain and fury.

“Yes!” the twins shouted in triumph. They lobbed the colorful balls everywhere and soon the side of Light was gaining the upper hand.

More order members arrived. Dumbledore smiled, only those at the school weren’t here.

“We need to set up the wards!”

“Merrik, Samuel, cover us; it is time!”

Dumbledore rushed to stop them, trying to shout when a body fell, landing in the middle of the floor. Minister Fudge lay dead, his body broken and bloody. Cheers of victory and screams of horror filled the hall, making it impossible for Dumbledore to stop those casting the wards. The Headmaster could feel the pressure of the wards and knew that Apparating, either out or in, was now impossible.

“I challenge you, Lucius Malfoy!”

The blond paused for a moment and then turned in shock, as Dumbledore bore down upon him.

“I have heard Voldemort is here also; would he be brave enough to face me?”

Lucius snarled as the snake-like lord appeared at his side.

“Well, Tom, not looking too good,” Dumbledore quipped.

“Dumbledore, you’re a fool.”

Then both Death Eaters doubled over in pain. A moment later Flint and Crabbe senior stood there.


“Our lord will own your precious school by morning.” And before Dumbledore could respond he was hit in the back by the killing curse.

Minerva screeched in horror. Without thinking she sent the killing curse to the black-robed figure who had cast the curse at Dumbledore. Umbridge lay on the floor, her toad-like face frozen in surprise. Following their leader’s death, the members of the Order attacked with a viciousness never seen before from them.

Blood dripped from Merrik’s teeth. “I love it when my food is feisty.”

Smoke growled in happiness, not able to answer more in his wolf form.

“I think these creatures need to be dealt with once and for all, brother.”
“I agree, brother dearest.” Together the red-headed twins levitated all of their balloons spreading them out over the battle, and as one dropped them together. Liquid silver and trapped sunlight exploded over everyone. Inhuman screams filled the air, and the creatures collapsed onto the floor.

Only a handful of Death Eaters remained standing, and were easily captured.

“Fred! George! I’m so proud of you both.” Arthur said as he pulled his boys into a hug.

“Dad, you kicked arse! McNair never stood a chance!”

“Oh, well,” stammered their father as he blushed.

“Is everyone okay?” Fred asked.

“I don’t know yet. We need to set up one team to locate and stabilize the wounded, and another to work at breaking the wards so we can leave. Flint said Voldemort was going to attack Hogwarts, and if you look around none of his favorites are here.”

“Oh Merlin, the kids are having a dance; they aren’t even in the castle!” Tonks cried.

Arthur’s face hardened. “Very well; who here knows about wards? Those of you with your hands up, go with Filius and Bill.”

“Charlie, you know basic healing spells, does anyone else?” Only five others raised their hands. “Right then, the back hallway is relatively clear so we can use it as a temporary hospital.”

“I’ll organize people to look for survivors plus any supplies that could be useful.” Minerva offered through her tears.

“Thank you. Right, everyone, lets get to work!” As he heard a clock chime ten times, Arthur prayed they would get out in time to help protect Hogwarts.

9:10pm the dance

Draco entered the tent with the others and looked around, wondering what would happen next. The tent was much darker now; the lights had been turned down so everything was covered in a soft glow. You could see easily, but it would also be easy to hide a lot. Once everyone was settled Mudiwa came out onto the dance floor. He had changed and was now wearing a midnight black vest, which covered very little, and a pair of seemingly painted-on black slacks.

“Welcome back, I’m sure you’re all wondering what has changed besides the lighting. Well, the music is much more provocative,” Mudiwa's deep voice made everyone shiver as he spoke. “We thought about making you all wait, however, we are here to please.” Several of the girls squeaked as he said this. His resulting chuckle made many knees weak. “I hope none of you are disappointed. And please join us on the floor at any time.”

Vincent, Soto, Adonis, and Gabriel joined Mudiwa. All of them had changed into tight revealing clothing; at the moment it was Gabriel’s outfit that held Draco’s attention. Black leather encased his legs, and was laced up the sides leaving an inch-wide strip of bare skin visible from his feet all the way to his hips. His top was a see-through black tee shirt which left nothing hidden. The men on the dance floor froze, then a voice screamed and a thrumming beat started.

Together they moved in the most sinfully erotic way, switching movements between hard thrusts and
sinuous circles. They rubbed against each other in a way that had everyone blushing. Draco caught site of Severus and saw his wide eyes and flushed cheeks. Looking further he noticed Remus holding Sirius back, apparently he wasn’t as happy with the show as everyone else.

Turning back to the gypsies, Draco raised an eyebrow as the men separated and spread out strategically, placing Gabriel directly in Draco’s line of sight and Adonis in Severus’. Gabriel looked right into Draco's gray eyes as he brought his hand up to his neck and dragged it down his body, even as his body undulated.

“Let me show you baby I’m a talented boy.”

Draco’s breathing came in quick gasps as Gabriel continued to dance, each movement a perfect complement to the naughty lyrics. Draco felt drawn to his lover and it was only sheer force of will that kept him from going down there and fucking the brunette into submission.

As soon as that song ended another began this time the music was more bouncy and the gypsies reached out pulling people onto the floor. Draco growled as Gabriel returned to the floor with Longbottom. Neville seemed like he wanted to get away, so to prevent that Soto came up behind the boy. Soon the three of them were pressed together, Gabriel and Soto guiding Neville’s movements.

“Push it, push it real good.”

“Well those lyrics don’t leave any question as to what they mean, now do they,” Blaise quipped. “I’m going down there to see if I can get into Neville’s place for the next song, 'bye!’”

Draco turned to growl but only saw the back of Blaise’s shirt. Stomping to his chair Draco sat down and sipped on his butterbeer. He wasn’t worried; he didn’t need to see what was going on. The current song was much slower and the lyrics didn’t seem that provocative. Draco relaxed into the chair with a sigh.

“I want your sex.”

Draco shot up and looked over the railing where Blaise and Gabriel were wrapped around each other. Blaise is straight, for fuck's sake! Draco screamed in his head. It didn’t seem to be stopping him from putting his filthy hands all over Draco’s boyfriend!

“Instead of glaring at them as if you could make them die, why don’t you just go and dance with Gabriel,” Pansy advised.

“I’m sure they’re just fine. I’m not worried,” Draco answered unconvincingly.

“What’s your definition of dirty, baby? What do you call pornography? Don’t you know I love you till it hurts me, baby? Don’t you think it’s time you had sex with me?”

Pansy laughed as Draco rushed down the stairs and ripped Blaise away from Gabriel.

“Did you miss me?” Gabriel asked his voice filled with laughter.

“I don’t want anyone else dancing with you like that,” Draco snarled.

“Then you’ll just have to stay with me, won’t you?”

Determined to wipe that superior look off Gabriel’s face, Draco kissed him fiercely. Normally Gabriel would let him control their kisses, but not tonight. Gabriel thrust his tongue in Draco’s hot mouth claiming every part for himself. Draco melted under the passion of the kiss and eagerly let
Gabriel took charge. Draco didn’t even notice the song ending as they moved together and snogged.

“I don’t want to interrupt anything, however I do want to take a moment to thank Professors Snape, Lupin and Black for chaperoning this evening.” Soto led everyone in a round of applause. “This next song is for them.”

As the music began, Adonis snuck off to find Severus while Sirius dragged Remus onto the dance floor. The two men danced far more respectably than the kids around them.

“And I’m hungry like the wolf.”

Gabriel could see Remus blushing in the dim light. Sirius threw his head back and laughed, pulling his lover closer to him. Looking around, Gabriel didn’t see any sign of Adonis at all. Happily he returned his attention to Draco, running his hands up the blond’s sides as he sang along.

“I’m on the hunt I’m after you.”

Sweat dripped down his skin and his breath came in short pants. Gabriel closed his eyes for a moment, just enjoying the feel of his lover’s body against his. Draco had stayed with him, and they were both happily tired from dancing for so long. Gabriel wanted to dance to one more song with Draco and then he was going to drag him off to his bedroom.

“I can’t believe Muggles wrote a song about masturbation,” Draco whispered into his ear.

“Does that mean you don’t think about me when you touch yourself?”

Draco inhaled sharply, his erection growing even harder.

“I want to dance to one more song, and then take you to my bedroom,” Gabriel purred.

“And what will you do with me there?”

Gabriel chuckled. “Don’t you mean what will you do to me?”

Draco placed soft kisses on Gabriel’s neck. “No. I want you to make love to me. I want your hard cock in me. Fucking me. Making me scream.”

Gabriel’s body shuddered in pleasure. “Merlin, Draco, you drive me crazy. I want to take you away right now, but I’ve dreamed of you while listening to this song.”

“You have promised me one more dance. You’ll just have to control yourself.”

“That sounds like a challenge. Maybe it will be you who loses control.”

“Not likely,” Draco scoffed. “What’s the song anyway?”

“Closer, by Nine Inch Nails.”

Gabriel slowed his movements to the deep thumping rhythm. Running one hand down to Draco’s slim hip he grabbed it tightly, rubbing his thumb firmly over the sensitive ridge. Draco gasped just as Gabriel’s other hand reached into his hair and tugged. For a moment Draco thought about fighting the obvious domination, and then let go. Gabriel growled low in his throat as his lover’s body relaxed against his.

“You make me violate you.”
Gabriel slid a firm thigh between Draco’s legs, offering support and teasing stimulation. “Look at me,” Gabriel demanded.

Fluttering his eyes, Draco did as he was told. And just in time as Gabriel sang along with the song causing Draco’s insides to clench in desire:

“I wanna fuck you like an animal.
I wanna feel you from the inside.
I wanna fuck you like an animal.
My whole existence is flawed.
You bring me closer to God.”

Draco twisted his hands in Gabriel’s shirt, holding on as Gabriel controlled their movements. Leaning down, Draco licked the edge of the ear in front of him. “I’ve been dreaming about you taking me… what it will feel like to have you inside of me, to give myself to you… to feel that vulnerable, that open and exposed.”

Gabriel shuddered, and tightened his grip. Draco felt a twinge of pain as his hair was pulled, but the waves of pleasure from his hip made it delicious. Draco sucked on the lobe and worried it with his teeth. “Will you be gentle with me?” he whispered. "As if I’m made of porcelain… or will I get to feel all of the power within you? Will your magic wrap around me as your body forces its way into me? Will I tingle and ache afterwards? The next morning will I still feel your presence within me, or will it have faded away?”

Keeping his hands where they were, Gabriel lifted Draco up, causing the blond to squeak and wrap his long legs around his lover’s waist. Gabriel didn’t stop dancing, as he held Draco to him taking all of his weight. Their erections rubbed together, and both were on the edge of coming. Draco was just about to warn Gabriel that he was close when Gabriel released his magic and Draco cried out, coming hard. He could feel Gabriel everywhere as his lover’s magic surrounded and filled him. Without a spell being uttered or any sign of intention, Draco was cleaned.

“Oh, Merlin,” Draco whispered. Opening his eyes he looked down into glowing green. He could still feel the hardness of his lover’s cock and ground himself into it. Gabriel’s eyes darkened, and his hands tightened again. Draco couldn’t wait to see the bruises Gabriel’s fingers were making on his hip. “Are you going to take me to bed now?”

“I should throw you over the nearest surface and fuck you in front of everyone.” Gabriel said as he began walking towards his room. Suddenly he stopped. His magic went from passionately hot to cold in a second; the music stopped suddenly. “Everyone needs to get to the castle, Voldemort’s here.”

Draco could feel horror filling him. Fumbling for his wand he cast a Tempus while he got off of Gabriel. 9:45 – it wasn’t ready yet!

“Gabriel listen to me,” he pleaded. “I have a plan and I can get you close to the Dark Lord, but I need you to wait for me. Please promise me!”

“You should stay in the castle.”

“No, I won’t. Promise me!” Draco pleaded; his gray eyes locked to emerald green as if he could force the promise out of him with sheer will.

“Only if you promise to be safe and get away as soon as you can.”
“Yes, anything,” Draco lied.

“Then hurry! I will wait, but I don’t know that he will.”

“How long do we have?” Draco asked as he joined the crowd headed for the castle.

Gabriel closed his eyes. “They’re in the Forbidden Forest. Ten, fifteen minutes at the most.”

“I’ll be back, wait for me!” Draco called as he began to run, praying to anyone who would listen for just a few more minutes.

“I love you,” Gabriel called as he closed his eyes. His clothes were replaced with battle robes, and his sword was strapped to his back. Turning to his family he held his fathers tightly. “Go! Go now, I won’t be able to keep you safe. I love you, and thank you for everything.”

“We will see you soon,” Mudiwa grumbled.

“We love you, never forget that,” Vincent said as they moved away.

Gabriel took a deep breath steeling himself for what was to come. The last of the students had left and were close to the castle. Calmly he walked into the night, for the last time.
Lucius Malfoy snarled as his robe got tangled in yet another bush. They should have already been at
the castle, but the forest seemed to be fighting them for every step. Looking down at the clear path
before him, Lucius rushed forward. He could see the last of the children rushing towards the castle; if
he hurried he could catch a few. His foot caught in a tree root and he fell, landing solidly on the now
rocky ground. Waiting for his breath to return Lucius heard soft laughter in the trees. The groans of
pain from the other Death Eaters were the only thing that cheered him up. Thankfully their Lord was
not with them, he would Portkey in when Lucius let him know it was safe to arrive. Pulling himself
up, Lucius carefully walked forward, seething as he saw the children had disappeared into the castle.

His lungs burned as he ran through the castle. He had to get to the Potions lab. Sliding to a stop, his
shoulder painfully connected with the heavy wooden door. Whispering the password, Draco burst
into the room, slamming the door behind him. Looking at the clock, he groaned: 9:55. Looking at his
clothes Draco ran off to his room to change.

At 10pm Draco ran back into the lab, his dark gray battle robes swirling around him. The potion
hadn’t changed color! Rainbow colors still swirled through the thick liquid. He had failed, oh Merlin!
Draco’s body began to shake with fear. The clock began to strike the hour. Draco froze, his eyes
fixed firmly on the potion; he didn’t breathe, didn’t blink, nothing moved as he waited, all his hope
and faith in the swirling liquid. As the ninth chime sounded the potion darkened and then turned
midnight blue with iridescent white flecks.

“YES!” Draco shouted. Grabbing the potion off the shelf, Draco ran.

“Draco!” Blaise and Pansy shouted as they saw him. “Where are you going?”

The blond didn’t answer. He didn’t have time; he had to get to Gabriel. Rushing outside he could
already see the Death Eaters emerging out of the forest. There was a blue glow around Hogwarts,
and several students were transported out onto the lawn. When he saw Gabriel and his father talking
Draco thought his heart would stop. There was no turning back now.

“I want to stay!” Tatiana demanded as she stomped her foot.

“We need you to be safe.” Vincent insisted as he hugged her goodbye.

“We can help,” Aubrey sniffed his large lavender eyes pleading.

“And you will,” Mudiwa said as he kissed his cheek. “At Oma’s you and the others will sit down
and focus all your love into the crystal and we will send that energy to Gabriel.” Aubrey nodded,
obviously not happy, but knowing nothing was going to change.

“Come on,” Ria said, holding Talha in one arm and reaching out to the others.

“We need to go so we can call everyone together as quickly as possible.” Elena kissed Soto. “I’ll see
you soon."

"Yes, as soon as is possible."

With tears in their eyes the Portkey activated.

"Now that the women and children are gone, what should we do first?" Adonis asked.

Vincent blinked. "I didn’t realize we had sent away all the women, I didn’t think of it like that. Anyway, we need to sit in a circle with me in the middle; I’ll be the connection between the other groups and Gabriel."

Quickly they all got into position. Clearing their minds they connected to Vincent, with their strength and energy ready to be sent to their Cherub.

The trees rustled, and shouts were heard. A werewolf howled. And Gabriel began to speak. Vincent took a deep breath, not letting his fear cloud his thoughts. He could feel glimmers of the other groups, but there wasn’t a true connection yet. Splitting his focus, Vincent touched the edge of Gabriel’s aura ready to send the energy on to him, but not wanting to distract his son.

Gabriel walked out of the tent into the crisp night air. The full moon hung low in the sky and lit the snowy ground in its soft light. Stars twinkled in the clear sky. It didn't look as if a battle was about to happen, as if evil itself was about to descend upon the school. Gabriel closed his eyes, feeling for where the Death Eaters were coming from, before walking out to where they would be emerging from the forest. Smoothly he knelt on the ground mindless of the cold.

"Hogwarts, please I need your help," Gabriel whispered as he connected with the wards. “Evil men are coming and hoping to take over the school. Please, I need your help to engage the ward allowing only those who mean no harm into the school.” The castle's magic and sentience answered with a reassuring hum and together they pulled one of the oldest wards out of the very ground itself. It was a ward set up by Salazar Slytherin with the help of druids. It would block anyone, magical or Muggle, from approaching the castle. Slowly the ancient spell was brought to life; it pulsed and shuddered then burst forth only a few feet from the castle edge creating a sphere of protection around the school.

Worried that there could already be supporters of the Dark Lord in the castle, Gabriel directed the spell to scan Hogwarts. It wasn't long before several students appeared at the edge of the Forbidden Forest, ejected by the magic. After sending the castle his thanks Gabriel stood. Curses could be heard along with painful crashes. The trees sparkled with multi-colored lights as the fairies slowed the Death Eaters down. The students expelled from the castle gathered closely and glared at Gabriel while whispering furiously, too afraid to actually do anything just yet. Just as he saw figures in the trees Gabriel heard footsteps behind him. Turning, he gasped. There stood Hermione, Ron, Seamus, Luna, Justin, Dean, Neville and several other students who were in Hermione’s defense group.

"What’s going on? What are you doing out here?"

"This is our world too, and we want to help protect it." Ron said his voice strong yet uncertain.

"You do understand that Death Eaters are coming and that I fully expect to see Voldemort himself soon?" The angry howl of a werewolf echoed through the night. "That was a werewolf; please go back inside where it's safe."

"No," Hermione stuttered. "We are going to help."
Black robed figures broke through the foliage; it was too late.

"The castle and the forest are the safest places to go if you need any help. Stay behind me and don't attack until they do," Gabriel ordered the students. Getting nods of agreement he turned to the approaching Death Eaters. There were at least a hundred led by Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange. "Good evening, can I be of any help?" Gabriel asked as he walked forward.

"You foolish brat!" Lucius snarled. "You will fall this night."

"Well, you can certainly try."

"You stupid boy, how can we fail?" the mad witch cackled. "The Dark Lord's most powerful followers are before you, and behind us hungry vampires and werewolves."

As if summoned the dark creatures walked out of the forest stepping into the pale moonlight. Several of the students cried out in fear, and the creatures responded with cruel smiles, showing their fangs.

It was time. Reaching into his shirt Gabriel pulled out the amulet and lengthened the chain enough to hold it above his head. Walking forward he called out, "I am a member of the Magical Creatures Council, if you attack me, you attack them."

Lucius was unaware that the dark creatures had begun backing up, as out of the shadows the council began to appear, Lysander and his team coming behind the group, swords drawn ready for battle. The surface of the lake rippled, and Selkie warriors emerged from the dark water, their magic swirling around their hands, black eyes cold and calculating.

Hermione gasped and looked around. "Ron, look!" Turing to the roof of the castle Ron and the others saw dozens of vampires waiting, silhouetted in the moonlight.

"Your necklace means nothing, boy. And if you think for one minute that we're afraid of you and your little friends, you're sorely mistaken."

As one the Death Eaters raised their wands. "Crucio!"

Gabriel threw up a shield protecting everyone standing behind him, As the spells ended Gabriel fell to the ground with a gasp.

"Children shouldn't do such power spells, aw… poor ikkle baby," Bellatrix crooned.

"Gabriel!" Draco called, falling to his knees next to his lover. "Baby, are you okay?" Taking his limp boyfriend in his arms, Draco made eye contact with his father and gave a slight nod. "Love, I need you to drink this for me, okay? It will help, but it will take a while to take effect." With a trembling hand Draco pressed the vial to Gabriel's red lips and watched the potions disappear.

Lifting his hand to his mouth Lucius spoke into his ring. "It is safe, my Lord."

The students screamed as Voldemort appeared before them, his gray skin even more ghastly in the moonlight and his red eyes glowing. Walking towards the black-haired boy he grinned triumphantly. "It is time this is ended. You and your little friends can do nothing! Congratulations, young Malfoy, you shall be properly rewarded for your help."

"You lying snake!" Ron yelled.

"Lucius, Bellatrix, please take care of these insolent children, and clear the way into Hogwarts for me. I'll take care of Potter."
Gabriel gasped and forced his body into a kneeling position, he desperately wanted to meet Tom on his feet.

"No, don’t bother getting up," Voldemort sneered as he walked closer. Gabriel heard his classmates call out spells as the Death Eaters advanced on them. Reaching over his shoulder, Gabriel pulled his sword out of its scabbard with a groan. The metal rang as it hit the ground. "Don't worry, boy, when I re-tell this story I’ll make sure to say how you fought until the very end."

Black robes swirled in front of him, and Gabriel looked up.

"You have great strength, and no control. I've recently come across a spell to remove a person’s magical core; you will stay still while I try it out on you. Draco, hold him."

Draco’s arms wrapped around Gabriel as a skeletal hand reached down and touched his forehead. As soon as the cold finger touched his skin, Gabriel leapt into action. Pushing off the ground he drove the katana through Voldemort's body. The razor sharp steel cut through his body like it was nothing, the silver tip bursting out his back. In that moment a hundred different things happened. Gabriel began to chant the ancient incantation. Fawkes and Mbiriviri appeared, dropping Aurora onto the Dark Lord. Aurora bit the madman, injecting him with poison. Instantly his nervous system began to shut down, and a huge amount of Voldemort's magic went into fighting the poison rather than Gabriel.

The two phoenixes circled around them creating a circle of protection, which no one could enter. They began singing and a glow surrounded the Dark Lord's body as his soul was called forth.

Draco prayed the potion would work. His wand was drawn and he was ready to help when he could. His father pounded on the barrier, glaring at him, and Draco knew his father would try and kill him as soon as he got the chance.

A voice called out over the battle. "I am Voltaire, head of the Magical Creatures Council. Those of you who would like protection sit down now and we will see to you after the battle; for those of you who choose to fight, we will kill you." Pausing a moment Voltaire waited to see if anyone would sit down. He was happy when several vampires and werewolves sat right where they were. "Attack!"

The vampires swooped down from the roof of the castle. Surrounding the students they fought against the Death Eaters. Voltaire smiled as the children sent out curses from between them.

The Selkies surged forward, calling to the water inside those who would hurt them. Jaime closed his eyes as he took all the water from an enraged werewolf. Hurrying he tried to get to his friend.

Lysander grinned as the call to attack was heard. Ruthlessly he cut down those in front of him, his sword whistling as it sliced through the night. One of the other vampires yelled: "Merrik!" A tall, vicious-looking vampire came forward.

"I was hoping I would meet you tonight," Lysander snarled.

"Do you want to join me?"

"No, I seek vengeance."

"For whom?"

"Marcy."

Merrik’s eyes widened. He attacked. Before he even touched Lysander his body was in two pieces.
on the forest floor. Merrik blinked up at the angry warrior.

"You will not hurt anyone else ever again!" With one fluid stroke Lysander severed the vampire's head from his body. Lysander allowed himself a brief second of satisfaction before turning back to the battle. More than half of the remaining vampires were now sitting down.

A blinding explosion of light had the vampires shying away. Neville was separated from the group.

"Poor wittle baby, are you lost?"

For a moment he was caught between fear and anger, then he stood up, his back straight and head held high. Turning he faced the woman who took his parents from him.

"What's the little baby going to do?" Bellatrix cooed at him as she raised her wand.

Strength and power flowed into Neville; he raised his wand and a green light shot from it and the insane witch fell to the ground.

Gabriel, meanwhile, was shaking with effort. Energetically he followed the sword into Tom's body and then began looking for his soul. At first he couldn't find it, and then the potion Draco had fed him started to take effect. Suddenly he could see the wispy fragment of Tom's soul. Everything else slipped away and Gabriel's focus was sharp and clear. It wasn't as hard to work with the spiritual world as he'd feared it would be, especially with a battle going on all around him.

As he chanted, cobweb-thin strands went out from the shard of soul. As he continued to chant Gabriel sent his magic into the soul fragment and down the strands; it took longer than he'd expected for his magic to reach the different pieces of Voldemort's soul. Gabriel took a raspy breath. He felt as if he couldn't breathe, his body, magic and life-force were all stretched to their very limits. Focusing on the soul energy Gabriel began to pull the pieces together. Merlin, it was hard; he wasn't sure he could do it. Slowly he pulled on the pieces of soul, trying desperately to loosen them from their prison.

Vincent was becoming desperate; the energy wasn't any greater than when he'd felt the first spark. He gasped as his son's aura shrank almost to nothing. They needed to do something soon! Gabriel’s life-force flickered. “No, please no!” Vincent cried in his mind. The spark began to grow. Slowly at first, then in a rush of magic, love and power. Instantly the gypsies added their own and sent it to Gabriel. They breathed as one keeping the connection open, sending their beloved Cherub everything they could.

Gabriel screamed as his body was flooded with even more power. Groaning he pulled again, and the soul began to draw together. He could feel his family with him. As the energy kept coming, the different parts of the soul moved closer and closer together. Throwing everything he had into Tom's soul, Gabriel finished the incantation. The soul fragments and magic combined, swirling together until the pieces were once again together, and whole.

Gabriel laid back against Draco. His face and lips were colorless and his breath was coming in shallow pants. Voldemort's body was lifeless beside them and Tom Marvolo Riddle hovered above them. He was a handsome teenager once again. Transparent tears fell down his cheeks. "Thank you, Gabriel Alec Dragonheart."

Tom disappeared into a soft golden light as Gabriel collapsed.

"NO! Merlin, Gabriel, please no!" Draco screamed tears filling his eyes. The two phoenixes landed on Gabriel’s still body and began to cry.
"Gabriel!"

Draco turned and saw his lover's family rushing from the tents.

Despite the fall of their leader the Death Eaters didn't stop fighting. Adonis saw Severus fighting against a man with a pug nose and black hair. Behind him a troll-like man came up and pointed his wand at Severus' back. Running with everything he had Adonis rushed to save his lover, throwing himself the last few feet. Adonis screamed as his leg was sliced open, the force of the intercepted curse breaking his bone.

"You are no longer protected, Draco."

Lucius stepped closer to his son. Draco's arms were filled with his lover and two crying phoenixes. "Thank goodness I have your brother as my heir."

A flash of silver flew through the air as a throwing star sank deeply into Lucius' wrist. Before he could react he felt a sharp burning in his leg. Looking down he saw a black, iridescent snake slithering away towards his son. Lucius couldn't even say a word before he fell to the ground.

"Are you okay? How is he?" Vincent asked Draco as he fell to his knees.

"I don't know. I can feel him breathing but each breath shakes his whole body, and he's so pale."

"If you can clear a path I can carry him to the hospital wing."

"Yes," Draco answered, "let's go."

As they turned towards the castle they saw all the Death Eaters had been taken care of. Mudiwa was carrying a very bloody Adonis as Severus guided him through the crowds. Naveen and Soto were helping the injured. Feeling a tug on his robes, Draco looked down and picked up Aurora. "Thank you for killing him. Let's go, we don't want to miss it when he wakes up."

Draco felt his heart falter as Gabriel's limp body swayed with his father's movements. He just had to be okay.
Eighty-three

Chapter Eighty-three

A/N Okay here is the final chapter of *Gypsy Caravan*. Thank you all so much for your reviews, support and sticking with me! I owe a huge thank you to Rakina who has not only beta-ed the same type of mistakes in every chapter squishes Rakina but through this process has made me a better writer and become a dear and trusted friend.

There are a few clichés – sorry, but I wanted happiness. And right now I’m not planning on writing a sequel- I hope to have it all wrapped up in this chapter.

Much love, Witchdragon

Gabriel’s hands clutched at the katana piercing the Dark Lord’s body. His magic, energy and life force were stretched to the brink. He could feel the presence of his family, and was deeply thankful for their help as the pieces of Tom Riddle's soul slowly came together. He could hear the battle going on around him, and could feel Draco behind him, but Gabriel was removed from all of it. The potion Draco had fed him had successfully pulled him into the spirit world so he could do his work. Gabriel continued to chant the incantation as he forced the pieces together. They were so close, almost touching. Gabriel could feel that they wanted to join, but just couldn’t. Taking a deep breath, Gabriel forced everything he was and everything he was being given into the fragments.

Light and magic swirled as Tom Riddle’s soul became whole once again. Gabriel felt his body fall back onto Draco, as the last of Voldemort’s life drifted away. Gabriel stayed kneeling, shivering as he separated from his body. Looking up he saw a handsome teenager. Tom thanked him and then floated away into a warm golden light. Gabriel felt draw to the light. Then he heard Draco and Vincent calling to him. “I don’t want to go. I need a way back into my body,” Gabriel thought and instantly was sucked back into his body, as Draco’s potion did its final task and faded from his body.

Gabriel didn’t know where he was. The bed was firm and the air smelled of potions and nothing else, like it had been cleaned so deeply that nothing existed in it. He could faintly hear the song Mbiriviri would sing to protect him from others' emotions. A cool hand held his. Gabriel wanted to turn his head and open his eyes, but he couldn’t. He felt as if he was too deep inside his body, as if he had to come closer to the surface to get control over himself again.

“Your school is very interesting; I hope you get up soon so you can show me around,” Jaime said to him. “Your friend, Luna, has been showing me around. She’s been telling me all about rare magical creatures. Have you ever seen a blibbering humdinger?”

Gabriel drifted off happily listening to Jaime talking.

“I hate him,” Draco sneered softly, as if he didn’t want anyone else to hear him. “I know he’s your friend, but he’s been more than just a friend. I can tell by the way he touches you. Merlin, earlier today he was running his fingers though your hair! Then he laid next to you talking about everything, and I wanted to throw his aquatic arse out the bloody window! You’re mine, and I want you to wake up right now and tell him so!” Gabriel heard Draco stomp his foot.
The bed shifted and a warm body was pressed against his. “Please, Gabriel, please come back. I miss you so much.” Draco’s voice hitched with a soft sob. “Please, I need you.”

Gabriel fought to get closer to the surface, cursing the blackness as it took him again.

Tatiana and Aubrey were dancing on his bed. Music filled the room, and his father’s voice could be heard singing along.

“Are you sure he’s going to wake up, Baba?” Aubrey asked as he bounced over his brother’s sleeping form.

“Of course, he just needs an incentive to wake up.”

“Like triple ginger biscuits?” Tatiana squealed.

“Yes, shall we have some?” Dad said.

Gabriel felt them sit down around him, and the sterile smell was replaced with the scent of fresh sweet ginger. Gabriel’s nose twitched as he rose to the surface before fading away again.

“I love him, and I wouldn’t do anything differently, but still, my leg,” Adonis cried softly whispering his confession. “I can walk, but I have a limp. I’ll never be able to be part of our performances again. I don’t even know that I’ll travel with the troupe again. I want to be with Severus and was planning on talking with him about what we would do, but now what will I do? Cook, clean, help cut ingredients for his potions?”

Gabriel felt Adonis grasp his hand holding on tightly. “I want to do those things and I want to help him, but I can’t see that being all I do, or all that my life is.”

Gabriel surged forward as much as possible and squeezed Adonis’ hand. He blacked out even before he heard Adonis’ shocked gasp.

Hard heels clicked rhythmically against the stone floor. “I should have protected him. I should have kept him safe. Instead he almost died. Gabriel, he was so pale. Madam Pomfrey had to start his heart twice because of how much blood he’d lost. And I’m so happy that he is with me, it’s all I really care about. He has lost significant use of his leg. And I don’t know if I can keep him happy. He’s used to traveling. How will I keep him happy?” Severus sat down with a sigh.

“Speaking of unhappiness, you need to wake up soon; my godson is driving me insane with his moping. He keeps glaring at Jaime who I think winds him up just for fun, or to keep his mind off of you.”

“Gabriel,” Kamala sniffed, her face buried in his chest. “Tomorrow is Christmas. There’s a big tree, and we haven’t opened our Solstice gifts yet. The adults said we would open them tomorrow, but all I want is you.”

Kamala cried as she clutched his top. He could feel the dampness of her tears. His fingers twitched;
he wanted to comfort his sister. His hand moved and darkness enveloped him again.

He woke to the sound of cheerful chatter, the morning light banishing the darkness behind his eyes. The rich smell of sticky buns and eggs filled the air.

“Okay everyone, gather round and we’ll start opening presents,” Ria called out. “We’ll go youngest to oldest, so Talha will go first.”

Gabriel could hear the paper tearing, and Talha shriek with delight.

“Guess what, he loves the paper! Who would have guessed,” laughed Soto.

Gabriel smiled softly before returning his focus to waking up. The bed dipped. “I’ll tell you what everyone gets, okay,” Kamala said.

Kamala described each present as Talha, Aubrey and then Tatiana opened their gifts. Gabriel received hugs and kisses as thanks for his gifts.

“It’s my turn now.” Kamala moved to stand up when a hand gripped her wrist. Gabriel forced his eyes open, smiling up into her chocolate brown eyes. “Gabriel!”

Everyone rushed to the bed, and slowly he made eye contact with them all, except Talha who was busy chewing on wrapping paper. Gabriel tried to say something, ‘I love you,’ or ‘Merry Christmas’, anything at all, but instead his eyes fluttered closed and he fell asleep.

“Everyone else is in the Great Hall having Christmas dinner, but I wanted to come and spend some time with you.”

Gabriel could tell that he wasn’t going to actually reach consciousness and instead faded back into sleep as his godfather explained in great detail about the Weasley twins’ great victory at the Ministry of Magic.

“I could make him orgasm, that should wake him up,” Lysander offered casually.

“What!” Draco yelled.

“Well, he responds really well to my bite. So I could drink from him, and he could have another powerful, amazing orgasm, which I’m sure would wake him up.”

Gabriel could feel Draco seething, and by the sound of his footsteps he was advancing on the vampire. This was not good.

“Draco,” Gabriel breathed softly. He wasn’t sure anyone would hear him, but then the room went completely silent. Suddenly a potion vial was pressed against his lips. Gabriel recognized the spicy taste of Pepperup Potion and felt steam come out of his ears. It was much milder than he was used to and his expression must have shown his confusion.

“It’s a version of Pepperup used for small children when they are sick,” Severus explained. “Madam Pomfrey insisted that you needed to stay awake for a while. She has been giving you potions, but only in small doses, and you need to eat something.”
“Okay,” Gabriel rasped. Blinking rapidly he tried to adjust his eyes to the light. Thankfully someone noticed and turned them down. A large figure swam into view. Before Gabriel could focus on who it was he was wrapped up in strong arms. Inhaling, he breathed in the scent of his Baba.

“Cherub, we were so worried!” Mudiwa said softly as he helped his son sit up.

Vincent adjusted his pillows and took Gabriel into his arms. “Never again can you scare us like that, do you understand me, young man?”

“Never again, I promise, Dad.”

“Are you feeling okay?” Ria asked, worry marring her brow.

Pausing before he answered Gabriel shrugged his shoulders. “I’m achy from lying down for so long, but other than that I feel fine. What time is it?”

“Eight-thirty,” Adonis answered limping into view. “The little ones are going to be so angry that they missed seeing you awake. Soto and Naveen put them to bed, but they should be back soon.”

Tears filled Gabriel's emerald eyes. “I’m so sorry about your leg. I should have…”

“No! No, don’t you dare!” Adonis choked hobbling to Gabriel’s bedside. “You did enough, more than enough. And yes my life will change, but I wouldn’t do anything differently. Not a single thing, do you hear me.”

Gabriel sniffed and nodded, burying his face into golden curls as Adonis held him tightly.

“I’d better let you go, there are others waiting to say hello.”

As Adonis stood up Lysander flung himself on top of Gabriel with a wicked grin on his face. “Your boyfriend is rather easy to wind up.”

Gabriel smiled and looked over Lysander’s shoulder to see a very annoyed Draco. “He’s coming over here.”

“Well then, I’ll have to do this quickly.” And with that Lysander leaned down and pressed a quick kiss to his lips before leaping off the bed like a cat and landing safely away from striking distance.

With grace and dignity Draco took a clean washcloth from the bedside table and with a quick spell had it warm and damp. Carefully he wiped Gabriel’s lips. “I wouldn’t want to catch anything,” he sneered before leaning down and kissing Gabriel softly.

“I love you,” Gabriel sighed as Draco sat up.

“I love you too.”

“Sorry to end the sweetness, but I have some potions and soup for Gabriel,” Elena said as she placed a tray over Gabriel’s lap.

“Thank you.” Gabriel looked over the potions and took the nutrient and strengthening potions before eating, leaving the magic stabilizing potion for later. “While I eat can anyone tell me how long I’ve been asleep and what has happened?”

Gabriel took a spoonful of the rich smelling pumpkin soup and hummed happily. Everyone smiled as their fears of Gabriel not returning to them dissipated.
“You have been asleep for four days. Today is Christmas Day.” Vincent told him.

“Madam Pomfrey said that other than being exhausted, physically and magically, there was nothing wrong with you,” Severus explained, his arms wrapped around his fiancé.

Gabriel set his spoon down as if was going to speak, when Ria interrupted him. “Oh no you don’t! You go right back to eating! We can wait to hear you part of the story. We have already shared ours. Draco and Severus told us about the potion. Draco also shared his experience during the battle. Your family and friends from all over the world meditated and sent you energy. Did you feel it?”

Gabriel nodded, not willing to try speaking again.

“Perfect. The Magical Creatures Council came and helped. We would have lost so many if they hadn’t been here. Most of them have gone home, but Lysander, as you know, is still here.” Ria gave Gabriel a sly look. “How did you keep your innocence while training with him all those years?”

Gabriel blushed and before he, Lysander or Draco could comment, Mudiwa took up the conversation. “Jacob, Miriam, Jaime and Shawn are also still here.”

Draco snarled.

“Before they attacked here, Death Eaters were sent to the Ministry. Unfortunately many people died, including Dumbledore, but no one else you knew,” Vincent explained trying to divert attention away from his son’s ex-lovers. “Voltaire and the other council members have been working closely with the new Ministry officials. Things are changing quickly. You should be very proud.”

Gabriel blushed and focused more intently on his soup.

The next few days were spent reconnecting with everyone and slowly regaining his strength. The Ministry held a ball in his honor, which Gabriel attended under protest. However, in his speech he listed everything everyone had ever done to help him, and expressed his gratitude for all the good work the Ministry was now doing. Orders of Merlin were presented to everyone who had helped. Gabriel beamed with happiness as so many of his friends and family were presented with the coveted awards. This was the first time that magical creatures and Squibs had been awarded the Order of Merlin.

Narcissa Malfoy attended the party with Hydras. She cried when she saw Draco, holding him closely to her and praising him for the man he had become.

Later that night Draco had cried for the loss of his father, and for his mother’s words. Gabriel held him tightly through it all.

July 14th, 1997. Oma’s Farm, Switzerland

Gabriel took a deep breath of the fresh, flower-scented air. The sun had just begun to set and the sky was washed in soft colors. Adonis and Severus stood before Oma. They were getting bonded today and everyone had come. Draco and Blaise sat next to Gabriel, with Hydras, Aubrey and Tatiana crawling all over the three of them. Gabriel hugged Hydras to him, as Severus began to say his vows. His deep voice was rough with emotion. Adonis beamed in happiness as his eyes filled with tears. As the newly bonded pair kissed Draco laced his fingers through Gabriel’s. Gabriel leaned over and kissed Draco’s soft cheek, with turned pink with embarrassment.
This was what Gabriel had fought and been willing to die for. Looking around he saw all of his family and friends: Ria’s family from India; Jaime and his family; Dario and Luca; and Philip, Freja and Lucas with their family and pack were all at the farm. Lysander and his girlfriend Marcy would be arriving at dark for the party. And of course there were the gypsies Gabriel had lived with since he was five, plus Soto and Elena’s new baby boy, Riku.

Everything was working out. Severus didn’t want to stay at Hogwarts. Instead, he would be making potions for those who ordered them. He already had orders from St. Mungo’s and the Hogwarts infirmary. Severus also wanted to collect a lot of the ingredients himself, so he and Adonis planned to travel frequently to collect top quality fresh ingredients. For their honeymoon they were going to Costa Rica, a place Adonis had never been.

Adonis was going to focus on his artwork for now. He still hadn’t decided what he was going to do with his time. Severus said he would need to find something to occupy his time soon, because apparently the golden man got horny when he was bored, and Severus couldn’t get any work done.

Draco and Hydras were spending the summer traveling with the Dragonheart clan. Gabriel was thrilled to be able to spend his summer with them. Mrs. Malfoy was convicted of being an accessory to Death Eater crimes, and was confined to her house. She was currently writing her memoirs and Draco thought she would be back at the top of the social circles in no time.

“Are you going to sit here all night grinning like a loon, or shall we join the party?” Draco drawled, amused at his lover’s behavior.

“Do you want to get married someday?”

Draco raised an elegant silvery eyebrow at the uncouth emerald-eyed man. “Yes, someday I would like to get married and have a family. But until then, I think I would like to see the world. Do you know any way I could travel around Europe and Asia learning about the people and cultures? Eating new foods and buying exotic clothes and trinkets, perhaps? Or maybe you know a place where my baby brother could come along too?”

Gabriel grabbed Draco and kissed him fiercely. “With me, you can come with me, and I’ll show you everything!”

The end!!
I know a lot of you are hoping for a sequel, but this is just a quick little one-shot. I wanted to give you all something to say thank you for your support and reviews. For the past few years I’ve been working on original stories, YA currently but I plan on writing m/m in the future. ANYWAY, while my editor was busy I snuck away and wrote this before starting on another novel. Without all of you I would never have been brave enough to try writing my own stories. As I got rejections and chapter that bleed with red ink, your reviews and favorite notifications of my story kept me going and kept me believing in myself. So here is a little peak into the lives of some of my Gypsy Caravan character five years after the battle at Hogwarts. I hope you enjoy it. And again, thank you so much for everything!!!!!!

If you would like to follow my original fiction career and check out my book go to my website www (dot) alicamckennajohnson (dot) com and you can follow my blog and/or sign up for my newsletter.

A HUGE thank you to Badia for the beta read

Hugs and Kisses

Witchdragon

Five Years Later

Severus was scared, which made him angry, and even the sight of Adonis’ fine arse couldn’t fix his mood. Of course the fact that Adonis and his arse were half way up a fifty foot tall tree might have something to do with it.

His husband was currently climbing said tree in order to get an orchid. A rare orchid and the reason they had traveled to South America to begin with. Severus sighed, why did Adonis have to do this? “Senor,” asked the guide. “Do you need the climbers to get ready?”

Severus’ jaw clenched as he looked at the group of men he’d hired to climb the tree and get the orchid for him. Yes, he’s been complaining that they probably didn’t know what they were doing. Yes, he’d muttered about them being heavy handed and clumsy. But Adonis should know by now that was just him being nervous and never did he mean for HIS husband, to climb such a high and therefore dangerous tree. “Ask them to wait in case they are needed, and assure them they will get their full pay.”

“Si, Senor, is your friend going to be okay?”

“He better be.” Severus stared up at Adonis’ arse willing his lover to be careful. “Bloody hell,” Adonis yelled as he slipped his bad leg slamming into the tree. Severus stopped breathing.

Adonis pulled himself up and massaged his thigh. Cold guilt settled in Severus’ stomach. Adonis’s thigh had been cut and the bone broken jumping in front of a curse that had been meant for him. And now here he was thirty feet in the air trying to prove himself or some such stupid thing.

“Get down here,” Severus said in a voice that would have made his students shake with fear as they rush to obey him.

Adonis smiled down at him. “I’m almost there. Be down in a minute.”

Severus crossed his arms, and for the record, didn’t pout. “I’m not rubbing ointment into your leg.” Adonis’ chuckles floated down through the thick green canopy. They both knew it was a lie, Severus would always take care of him.

Adonis coaxed each delicate root off the branch then placed the orchid in the protective bag. Careful to not bruise any of the dark blue petals Adonis packed moss around the roots and sprayed them with water. Looking down he smiled at Severus. He could feel his husband’s glare, which was silly
because he was using a rope and harness the climbers had set up earlier. Oh, well Severus was always fun in bed when he was testy and worried. Leaning back he repelled down the tree and in a minute was being manhandled by long potion stained hands.

“I will tie you up next time.”

Undoing the harness he smiled. “Love, I’m fine.” Adonis winced as Severus pressed on his thigh. Growling Severus wrapped an arm around his waist and led him to their tent. The orange gypsy tent stood out in the rainforest, probably the only thing that could. The tent had been Adonis’ when he had traveled with the Dragon Heart Gypsies, back when his leg was strong and he could perform in the circus. Severus had added a few essentials, books and potion brewing equipment, but it stayed mostly the same, oriental rugs, the white couch and bedding. Severus loved to look at his husband framed by the white fabric, his gold skin and hair so rich it seemed to glow. That afternoon Severus was too mad to enjoy the toned golden body he uncovered as he stripped Adonis checking for injuries. A large bruise was forming over the thick pink scar. Adonis sighed. “Love it’s not as bad as it looks. I used to get bruises all the time when I was in the circus.”

“You weren’t mine to take care of then,” Severus snarled storming off to the bathroom to get a healing ointment.

Adonis closed his eyes and tapped into his inner diplomat, a skill he was glad he’d perfected before marrying Professor Snape. “Love I am grateful for all you do for me, but you don’t have to take care of me. I don’t want to be a burden. I am strong enough to help. I want to help.”

Severus pushed Adonis back onto the bed kneeling next to his injured leg. “You are not a burden. You are mine. My husband. My lover. My best friend. Mine. And when I see you dangling in the air for a stupid plant, my heart …” Severus choked and began to rub the ointment into the muscular thigh.

“Honey,” Adonis said rubbing his hand against Severus cheek. “They aren’t stupid plants. They are rare plants which help you create amazing potions. Gabriel knew the value of getting you potions ingredients when he was six.”

“I didn’t have to watch that brat child risk himself to get them.”

“Okay I will let the incompetent buffoons collect your delicate plants. And just sit around and draw or take pictures.”

Severus huffed. “You don’t just sit around, you are an artist, you have a gift. And if the five galleries which show and sell your work on a daily basis, plus all of the prints the gypsies sell can’t convince you then I have no idea what will.”

Adonis smiled. “How about letting me be in your book?”

“What?” Severus asked screwing the lid back on the jar and wiping his hands on a towel.

Adonis rolled over and grabbed a sketch pad from his nightstand and handed it to Severus. “I know you are writing a potions book for first and second year students. So I thought some sketches might help.”

Severus frowned as he looked at the drawings. After reading the potions books Salazar Slytherin wrote, Severus had realized that basic information was not only missing from the text books Hogwarts used but also from their curriculum. “Do you think my descriptions aren’t good enough?”

Adonis huffed, took the pad from Severus and straddled his lap. “Your descriptions are wonderful, and I used the details of them to do my drawing of the difference between chopped, diced, minced and all of the other specific procedures. It isn’t about you, it’s about the students who are more visual, or have difficulty reading.”

Severus ran his hands down Adonis’ back his fingers cupping Adonis’ firm round arse. “You’re very smart my husband.”

Adonis grinned as he undid the buttons on Severus’ shirt. “Is it my brains that first drew you too me?”

Summoning the lube, Severus slicked a finger and began teasing his husband’s entrance. “I believe it was the adorable way you blushed every time you saw me.”

Adonis’ eyelids fluttered as a finger slid into him. “I … oh yes …I didn’t blush every time.”
“Liar,” Severus said. His other hand sliding into Adonis’ gold hair, bringing him closer their lips met. Oh yes.

Adonis groaned and rolled his hips as a second slick finger entered him opening his body. He shivered as those wickedly talented fingers found his prostate and pleasure coursed through him. Sucking on Severus’ tongue Adonis finished unbuttoning his shirt and pushed it off exposing cream white shoulders and chest.

Adonis ran his hands down the sleek firm muscles stopping to tease pink nipples. Severus groaned and pressed them closer together Adonis ran his hands over his husbands’ flat stomach and undid his trousers. Growling when he couldn’t get them down. Breaking the kiss Adonis pushed Severus back on the bed and stripped off the rest of his clothes.

Severus held his breath as Adonis crawled over him, stopping when his mouth hovered over his cock. Adonis slowly lowered his mouth. Severus gasped as Adonis licked him. His hot wet mouth slid over him, Severus fingers clenched in the sheets so he didn’t grab Adonis’ head and thrust into his mouth.

Adonis moaned, loving the way Severus stomach fluttered in response. Sucking the crown as he licked along the edge, his own cock aching as his husband moaned and arched. Licking along the veins as he took his husband deep into his throat Adonis relaxed, his nose buried in the black curls. “Adonis,” Severus gasped. “Please, oh Merlin, please.”

Adonis slid his mouth off giving the long thin cock a kiss before straddling Severus. Reaching behind him Adonis grabbed Severus cock and slid down on it.

Severus grabbed Adonis’ hips his fingers digging into the round muscles as he was surrounded by tight heat. “You feel so good.”

“As do you, my love.” Leaning down Adonis kissed Severus, ignoring the twinge in his thigh as he began rolling his hips as he moved up and down.

Severus gasped into his husband’s mouth clutched his hips tighter and began to thrust. How, after five years of being together, did this man still manage to undo him and drive him into pleasured madness every time they touched?

Adonis sat up so he could have more control and shifted until Severus was hitting, oh yes, that spot. Adonis gasped and moaned as his prostate was rubbed and stimulated.

Severus wrapped his hand around Adonis’ thick cock and began to stroke.

“Yes, Severus, yes.” Adonis’ head hung forward his face covered by his hair. His fingers dug into Severus’ chest as his body trembled. “So close, oh please so close.”

“Yes, come all over me,” Severus said, sweat beading on his forehead as he tried to hold back his own orgasm. His balls tightened with every moan from his lovers pink lips. “Fuck, Adonis come all over me.”

Adonis shook as his body let go. “Severus,” he cried as hot come splashed over his husbands’ stomach.

“Yes,” Severus growled thrusting into Adonis clenching channel. Arching as his release spilled into his husband.

Adonis gasped and lay on top of him.

Severus smiled and stroked his sweaty skin.

Groaning Adonis stretched out his leg, sighing in relief as the muscles relaxed.

“Did you hurt your leg?” Severus asked a half-hearted tone of anger in the question.

“If we argue about me taking care of my leg I’ll have to do some other deliciously wicked thing to you to prove I can handle it.”

Severus blinked. “Was that supposed to be a threat?”

Propping up on an elbow Adonis looked at his husband. “I love you. Yes, my leg aches, but the pleasure was so much more than the twinge of discomfort. I love that you want to take care of me, but I do know my limits.”

Severus arched an eyebrow.

Adonis grinned and kissed the tip of his large nose. “How about I stop climbing trees …”

“And cliffs,” Severus interrupted.
“And cliffs, if you trust me to know my body well enough while we have sex.” Severus sniffed. “I’m not rubbing ointment into your thigh because you want to do kinky acrobatics in bed.”

Adonis laughed. “Of course you will. Because it usually leads to more kinky bedroom activities.” “Do you need ointment, are you hurting?” Severus asked. “No, now that my leg is relaxed I feel wonderful.” “I do my best,” Severus said with a grin.

Adonis kissed him before laying down resting his head on Severus’ chest. “And you always succeed. Now hush, I want to nap before we leave it’ll be a busy afternoon unpacking and then we have dinner tonight with everyone.” Severus groaned. “Is that tonight? Do we have to go?”

Adonis pinched him. “You are such a brat. You love our monthly dinners as much as everyone else. And tonight we’ll find out what Gabriel and Draco have decided to do.” Severus’ dark eyes closed, he hoped the boys had figured out a way to make everything work. He waved his hand the mess clean and the duvet covering them. “Hmmm yes, should be interesting.” Adonis huffed in his sleep.

* * *

Gabriel grinned as he watched Draco pacing and talking to himself. Poor Draco, Gabriel knew this was coming. They need to have a ‘talk’ about their future. After they graduated from Hogwarts, Draco at the top of his class, they had taken Hydrus for a summer and toured with Gabriel’s family. After that they moved into the Malfoy Manor and Draco started his apprenticeship with Severus. During that time Gabriel would apparate and visit with his family, study in the founders library at Hogwarts (he still hadn’t told Headmaster McGonagall about it), and work with the Magical Creatures Council.

A month ago Draco started receiving mysterious letters, ones he would hide to read later. Gabriel wasn’t concerned, he could feel how much Draco loved him, but something was worrying the blond and by the frantic hand gestures he could see through the window Gabriel guessed Draco was trying to build up the courage to finally tell him. “What is Draco doing?” Hydrus asked.

Gabriel smiled and helped the four year old into his chair. “Draco has something important to tell us, but he’s worried about how we’ll react, so he’s practicing.”

Hydrus shook his head and sighed. “Well, that’s just silly.”

Gabriel managed to hide his grin. “Yes, it is, but sometimes even Draco gets nervous.” Plates appeared on the table. Hydrus grabbed a toast soldier and broke his egg yolk with it. “Well, he best hurry or breakfast will get cold.”

Gabriel fluffed Hydrus’ hair laughing when he scrunched his nose. “I’ll go and get him.”

Opening the door Gabriel breathed in the scent of spring flowers on the crisp morning air. “Draco.”

Gabriel blinked as his boyfriend jumped and screamed. “Breakfast is ready.”

“Don’t sneak up on me like that.” Draco ran his fingers through his fine white blond hair which fell just past his shoulders. He kissed Gabriel’s cheek. “Morning sweetheart, have you been up long?”

“No, not long,” Gabriel answered, grinning at Draco’s fake composure.

Draco kissed Hydrus’ forehead, the only part not smeared with food. He’d only eaten part of a toast soldier, how had he gotten so messy? Sitting down he noticed Gabriel’s tea cup, his almost empty tea cup. “You’ve been watching me.”

“I like watching you.” Gabriel hummed as he took a bite of the mushroom and Swiss cheese omelet. “Do you feel prepared to tell us whatever has been on your mind for the past few weeks?”

Draco sighed in defeat. “Why do I even bother trying to hide things from you?”

Gabriel shrugged but kept quiet.

“Oh has my eldest son finally gathered his courage?” Narcissa asked sitting down. “I must admit I’ve been curious for weeks now.”
Groaning Draco set down his tea. “How did father ever keep secrets in this house?”
“We looked away,” Narcissa said. “It was always better than knowing the truth.”
Gabriel’s gut clenched at the sadness that fell over the Malfoy’s. “Draco, love, tell us your news.”
Draco sat up and squared his shoulders. “I have gotten several offers from other potions masters to study with them.”
“Are things not going well with Severus?” Narcissa asked.
“Things are wonderful mother, but he’s been teaching me since I was a small child and while I still have a lot to learn, studying with other masters would be beneficial. I have talked to Severus about it, and he agrees.” Draco didn’t pause to catch his breath. “There are three potions masters I’d like to study with, each of them have agreed to teach me for a year.”
“Well,” said Narcissa. “Of course they want to teach you. When do you start?”
“I leave in three weeks,” Draco said looking at his plate.
Gabriel’s breath caught. I leave in three weeks. Not we, I.
“But you’ll still live here?” Hydrus asked. “And read me my bed time story?”
Draco shook his head. “No the first apprenticeship is in America. I’ll be studying with a Navaho potions master.”
“But you can apparate home,” Hydrus said tears filling his big blue eyes.
Draco rubbed his brother’s cheek. “I’m sorry baby it’s too far away.”
“But we can go and visit,” Narcissa said. “It’ll be a fun adventure. Where else are you going?”
Draco sighed. “The next year will be Egypt and the third Australia.”
“I don’t want you to go,” Hydrus wailed reaching his messy hands out for his brother.
Draco picked him up and held him close. “I don’t want to leave you either, but I’ll visit whenever I can, and like Mum said you can always come and visit me. You like traveling.”
Gabriel pushed back from the table and walked outside. The emotions at the table combined with his own fear and sadness were making him feel sick. Was this the end of them? Trying to not let his thoughts get away from him, Gabriel breathed and attempted to ground himself.
“You were pretty quiet,” Draco said.
Gabriel turned and smiled. “This is an amazing opportunity. I’ve listened to enough conversations between you and Severus to know how training in different styles can expand your knowledge and skills. I’m happy for you and so very proud of you.”
“Thank you.” Draco tugged on his shirt cuffs. “But?”
Gabriel closed his eyes. “But you said ‘I’. Am I not allowed to go? Or do you not want me to go with you?”
“No,” Draco darted forward hugging his boyfriend.
Gabriel wrapped his arms around Draco’s waist and buried his face in Draco’s neck.
“No, I wasn’t sure if you would want to go, or if you could,” Draco said. “And I didn’t want to pressure you or make you feel like you had to follow me. I feel bad enough keeping you from your family as much as I already do. And what about when I’m crazy busy? Or making a potion that takes days of focus? I don’t want to neglect you?”
“Draco, I want to be with you. I can get an international portkey to go to council meetings and when you have to focus on a potion I can go and visit my family for a few days.” Gabriel kissed Draco’s neck. “I’ve never been to America, or Australia.”
“Are you sure? I don’t want you to regret coming with me,” Draco said as he tilted his head giving Gabriel more access to his neck.
Gabriel licked the milk pale skin grinning as his lover shivered. “Very sure, we can tell my dad’s tonight at dinner.”
Draco groaned. “Kamala, Talha, Tatiana, and Aubrey are going to kill me for taking you away from them.”
“Don’t worry I won’t let them hurt you much.” Gabriel kissed Draco, their tongues entwining in a familiar and erotic dance. Gabriel moaned as he buried his hand in Draco’s silky hair, his other grabbing his arse.
Cold water washed over them.
“Bloody hell,” Draco yelled turning to glare at his mum. Narcissa arched an eyebrow and Hydrus waved at them.
“She did warn us about making out in-front of Hydrus,” Gabriel said. With a thought they were dry. Draco shivered as Gabriel’s magic washed over him. “Let’s go upstairs.”
Gabriel laughed. “Love aren’t you supposed to be at Severus in fifteen minutes?”
“Shit, I have to go.”
Gabriel kissed his cheek. “Go on, I’ll see you later.”
“What are you doing today?”
Gabriel shrugged. “Taking Hyrus to the zoo. Your mum has a meeting with her publisher.”
“Another reason to leave,” Draco said. “I don’t want to be anywhere near England once her stupid memories are published.”
“Where will we be? America’s a big place,” Gabriel asked.
“Northern Arizona.”
“The wild west?”
“I’m planning on buying you chaps and boots as soon as we get there.”
Gabriel laughed as Draco left.

* * *

“When are they going to get here?” Aubrey pointed to the sun beginning to set over the ocean. “You said sun set.”
Mudiwa picked up his son. “Soon, is your room clean?”
“Yes, baba.” Aubrey climbed onto his dad’s back and pushed up into a handstand on his shoulders. “And I folded my clothes all nice and neat. I’m nine now not a baby, I take care of my stuff.”
Vincent snorted. “That’s not how it looked this morning.” Reaching up he grabbed Aubrey and flipped him over setting him on his feet. “Tatiana is cutting vegetables for dinner, why don’t you go and help.”
Aubrey huffed. “Fine, but she better not be listening to Justin Bieber again.”
Vincent shook his head, his lavender eyes sparkling. “How did we fail so badly as parents?”
“It’s not our fault love,” Mudiwa placed his midnight black hand on Vincent’s tan cheek. “It was those girls she befriended when we spent last summer in Paris. We couldn’t have known our lovely Tatiana would be corrupted so.”
“I blame you,” Naveen said. “Kamala listens to him too.”
“It’s not so bad,” Ria said her belly rounded with their third baby.
“He sucks,” Talha said his little nose scrunching up. “When will they be here?”
“How about now squirt?” Gabriel said scooping Talha up.
“Gabriel,” he squealed.
The adults stepped back as Gabriel was pounced on by the kids. Kamala walked over, her brown eyes sparkling. She wanted to jump on her big brother too but being fifteen she was too grown-up for such behavior.
“Hello Kamala.”
“Hi Draco.”
“Not joining in the pile?” he asked watching his boyfriend wrestle with his siblings. Aurora slid around his neck. He always let the snake ride on his shoulders when they visited the family so she didn’t get squished when the kids attacked.
“No, I don’t want to get all messy.”
Draco nodded. He wanted to give the kids hugs but would wait until the fray was over. “How was Hogwarts?”
Kamal shrugged. “Good, I keep getting asked about ‘Harry Potter’ and do I really know him and could he come and talk to the class, and can I get his autograph?”
Draco frowned. “Gabriel didn’t say anything about that.”
“I didn’t tell him.” Flipping her braid off her shoulder she sighed. Her black hair falling below her
waist. “I got asked out several times.”
“What?” Gabriel asked Talha hanging by his legs from Gabriel’s arm, Tatiana had him around the neck, and Aubrey clinging to his waist. “Who asked you out?”
“Just some boys, no one important,” Kamala said. “Anyway either they wanted to get an ‘in’ with ‘the Harry Potter defeater of Voldy’ or once they found out I was his little sister were too scared to date me.”
Gabriel smiled. “Good they should fear me. Maybe I should come visit you at school.”
Kamala rolled her eyes but loved her brother’s protectiveness. “Actually you should; Fawkes and Mbiriviri eggs will be hatching in October and I know they want you there.”
Gabriel thought of the beautiful gold and white phoenix, he would miss her when they left but she would need to stay at the school with Fawkes and their babies. Phoenix chicks grow very slowly and needed both parents. “I’ll make sure to be there. I’m glad she talks to you.”
Kamala nodded. “It’s not easy and if we talk for too long I get a headache, but she’s helped me a lot. One boy I liked, who I thought liked me, really was just trying to win a bet. She let me know.”
Gabriel hugged his sister, kissing her forehead, where years before his kiss and promise to protect her had left a mark, that looked like a kiss mark made from lip gloss. “Do I need to hurt him?”
Kamala laughed and hugged her brother tight. “No, I’m fine, anyway it’s not like you didn’t teach me things. I made him pay.”
“What did you do?” Draco asked.
“Well, I found a spell with Mbiriviri’s help and whenever he gets aroused he has to tell the truth. He’s wound up with several black eyes.”
Gabriel spun her around. “That’s my girl.”
The kids soon stood in-front of Draco, who pulled out his wand and cast cleaning charms on them before giving them all hugs and kisses.
“Me too, me too,” Riku said letting go of his parents hands as he ran to Draco.
Gabriel went over and hugged Soto and Elena. “I’ve missed you.”
“We’ve missed you too,” Soto said wrapping his muscular arms around Gabriel and picking him up. “Soto, Gabriel is taller than you now, maybe you shouldn’t be picking him up.” Elena said.
“Are you saying I’m weak?” Soto’s thin dark eyes sparkled. Transferring Gabriel to his left arm he scooped his wife into his right arm.
Elena squealed.
Gabriel rolled his eyes smiling.
“Riku would like a hug,” Draco said carrying the four year old over to them.
Riku rubbed his amber brown cheek against Draco’s chest.
Gabriel wrapped his arms around both of them kissing Riku’s cheek. “I doubt he wants to let go of you.”
“Draco’s soft,” Riku said tangling his fingers in Draco’s hair.
Soto chuckled. “I’ve tried buying silk shirts, but Riku prefers yours.”
Draco shrugged, but his gray eyes showed how pleased he was. “I’ll buy you some.”
Elena chuckled stroking Riku dark brown hair. “Somehow I doubt it’ll change anything.”
Riku stared at her until she backed away, then relaxed secure no one was going to take him from his Draco.

* * *

Jaime floated watching his friends standing around a fire talking. It took a moment for his brain to sort out the human voices, for the past six months he’d stayed in his seal form and he needed a moment for his brain to sort the sounds into words.
Sliding out of his skin Jaime stretched and walked towards his friends.
Draco’s eyes narrowed. “Your friend is here.”
Gabriel smiled and turned grabbing the blanket they had waiting. “Jaime it’s so good to see you.”
Jaime held out his arms hugging Gabriel close, then kissed him, maybe a bit longer than a friend should.
“Here,” Gabriel said shaking his head as he wrapped his friend in the fire warmed blanket. “Where’s your family?”

“They’ll be here tomorrow. I have a new baby sister so they are swimming a bit slower.”

“I can’t wait to meet her. Dad and Baba have your clothes in their tent,” Gabriel said. “We weren’t sure when you’d get here.”

“Great I’ll go and get dressed,” Jaime said. “Hey Draco, how are you?”

“Jaime, fine thank you. And yourself?” Draco said.

Gabriel grinned at his lover’s obvious jealousy.

“Draco,” Jaime said walking closer and tucking the blanket under his arms. “I think we got off on the wrong flipper. We should be friends.”

Draco arched an eyebrow at the pun. The selkie came closer, he didn’t move.

Jaime moved in to give Draco a hug and turned kissing him on the lips.

Draco squeaked, then allowed the overly friendly kiss. A lovely meeting of lips.

Jaime smiled as they broke the kiss. “See now we are friends.”

Gabriel chuckled.

“Did I make you jealous?” Jaime asked.

“No, but that’s probably because I can feel what you’re feeling,” Gabriel said. “Now stop molesting my boyfriend and go and get dressed.”

“Yes sir,” Jaime said saluting sharply before walking down the trail to the tents.

“I hope he didn’t upset you,” Gabriel whispered as he slid an arm around Draco’s waist.

Draco shook his head. “No, in fact I think I feel more comfortable with you kissing him now. It was sweet but not…”

“An offer of sex?” Gabriel suggested.

“Yes, that’s a good way to put it. Not an offer of sex.”

“Dinner’s ready,” Ria called out.

The little ones cheered and ran down the path. Gabriel waved his hand and the fire went out and the logs were cold.

“We’re just in time,” Adonis said flopping down on some pillows his hair damp and a bruise peeking out from under the collar of his shirt.

Severus accepted hugs and smacking kisses from the kids then he settled next to his husband.

Soon Gabriel’s happy food hum was the only noise as everyone dug into the Indian feast Ria, Naveen, and Kamala had prepared.

Jaime did a little dance in his seat whenever he ate something spicy. His tongue never got used to the heat of human food, but it was so good he couldn’t stop eating.

“So,” Mudiwa said. “You have something to tell us.”

Gabriel laughed. “Baba you know me too well. I have some very exciting news. Draco got three different offers to study with potions masters.”

“It’s an amazing opportunity,” Severus said tearing off a piece of garlic naan. “All three of them are unsurpassed masters in their fields.”

“But,” Vincent said.

“But, I will have to stay with each of them for a year. First America, then Egypt, and last Australia. I’ve asked Gabriel to come with me.” Draco said.

“And I agreed,” Gabriel said. “When Draco gets time off we’ll come and visit, and when he is going to be too busy making potions to leave the lab for days at a time, I’ll come and visit by myself.”

Draco’s flushed pink. “I feel bad taking him away from his family. So, well,” Draco pulled a blue velvet box from his pocket. “Gabriel, I am hoping you’ll agree to marry me. I know I can’t replace your family, but I would dearly like to become part of it.”

Gabriel flung himself at Draco. “You already are family, and yes of course I’ll marry you.”

Draco hugged him back, ignoring the sniffs, cooing, and camera clicks coming from their family.

“You didn’t even look at the rings.”

“I’m marrying you, not a piece of jewelry,” Gabriel said.

Severus and Adonis smiled at each other.
“Anyway if you picked them out I’m sure they are beautiful.”
Draco grinned. “They are and I can’t wait to see you wearing my ring on your finger.”
“I get to be a bridesmaid,” Kamala called, ending the sweet moment.
“Me too,” said Tatiana.
“Let Gabriel look at his ring before you start planning their wedding,” Ria teased.
Keeping one arm around his fiancé, Gabriel smiled, braided yellow and white gold framed a band of opal. “They’re beautiful.”
Draco smiled and slid the ring onto Gabriel’s finger. “I love you.”
Gabriel’s fingers shook as he placed the other ring on Draco’s finger. “I love you.”
The little ones scrunched their noses and looked away as the couple kissed.
“Now can we talk about a wedding?” Kamal asked. “I think Athena should design my dress.”
“Athena,” Riku yelled.
Gabriel held up his hands. “Everyone calm down. Let’s remember that Draco is from an old wizarding family and I am sure there are traditions and things that will need to be considered.”
“Actually,” Draco said clearing his throat, “most people will assume that I am only marrying you because you’re Harry Potter, so I say let’s have a family wedding at your Grandmother’s farm. We’ll invite the people we actually like and not worry about what I ‘should’ do as Lord Malfoy.”
“Are you sure?” Gabriel asked frowning. “I know how hard you and your mum have worked to repair the Malfoy name.”
“Yes, I’m sure. I even spoke to my mum about it and she agreed. Making a big media production with all the ‘proper people’ will not only ruin our day, but won’t help us at all. What is best for us, being with family and friends and enjoying our day, is more important than sucking up to idiots in the Ministry or foreign royalty. I want to marry you, not improve my image.”
Gabriel kissed his fiancé, pulling their bodies tightly together. Licking along Draco’s bottom lip he moaned when the blond opened for him. Draco whimpered as he sucked on his tongue. Gabriel apparated them into their tent and on the middle of their bed.
Aurora hissed. “Stupid boys always mating.” And slid away.
Gabriel pulled back from the kiss. “Sorry,” he hissed.
Draco shuddered and his eyes became glossy.
“You do like it when I speak snake,” Gabriel said as he kissed Draco’s neck.
“Gabriel,” Draco moaned arching his neck shivering as Gabriel sucked where his neck and shoulder met.
Gabriel sighed, using his magic to removed their clothes leaving them neatly folding at the end on the bed. Rubbing his hard cock against Draco’s their pre-come mixing and allowing their hard flesh to glide against each other. “Merlin I love you,” Gabriel said licking and sucking Draco’s pale pink nipple. “You are so sexy. Touching you drives me crazy with desire,” he hissed rubbing his hands over his lover’s silky soft skin.
Draco wrapped his legs around Gabriel’s waist. Pressing closer and rolling his hips. “Yes, please.”
Gabriel summoned the lube. Slicking his fingers he teased Draco’s entrance.
Draco squirmed and whimpered arching his hips and piercing himself on Gabriel’s fingers. Sighing in relief as at least some part of his lover was inside of him. “Hurry, I can’t wait.”
Gabriel stretched his lover kissing him as Draco moaned and panted. Gabriel shivered as his balls tightened. Shifting he rubbed the lube on himself cooling it a little hoping to last long enough to bring Draco as much pleasure as possible.
“Are you ready?” Gabriel hissed in his lover’s ear.
Draco tightened his legs trying to pull Gabriel closer. Parseltongue drove him mad. The words felt like they slithered over his skin, the warm deep tones caressing him all over.
Draco closed his eyes as Gabriel pressed himself against his slick entrance. Tilting he relaxed and welcomed Gabriel inside of him. The bonding ring warming against his finger. “What?” Draco murmured.
Gabriel’s cock rubbed along his prostate. Draco screamed in ecstasy. His fingers dug into muscular shoulders. Holding on and letting Gabriel do whatever he wanted.
“Yes,” Gabriel hissed. “That’s it, let go, give yourself to me.” Feeling his lovers surrender, and the pleasure that washed through him Gabriel tried to focus. Thrusting into Draco, hitting his prostate as often as possible. His ring heated up. Gabriel saw their magic, their energy, swirling around them, entwining, connecting as their bodies were. Their hearts connecting by a golden pink ribbon of light and power.

“God Draco,” Gabriel gasped thrusting and feeling their bond forming between them. “Can you feel that?”

“Feel, you,” he panted. “All of you. Merlin, so close.”

“Yes,” Gabriel thrust faster. “Yes, I want to feel you come.”

Toes curled, balls tighten, cocks throbbed. Their energy connected and they came together. Screaming each other’s names.

Gabriel collapsed on top of Draco, kissing his sweaty skin as pleasure continued to pulse through his body.

Draco relaxed his legs and let them fall onto the bed, running his hand over his bonded’s back.


Gabriel sighed pushing himself to the side, used a cleaning charm and moved the duvet from under them to on top of them. “Well our energy usually connects when we have sex, but tonight, maybe it’s our commitment to each other, or the rings that made it more, much more.”

Draco ran his fingers over Gabriel’s cheek, his stubble rough. “So we’re bonded?”

Gabriel nodded. “Is that okay? I’m not sure it can be undone. I’m not even completely sure what we just did.”

“Good, now you’re mine forever.” Draco lay his head on Gabriel’s chest and closed his eyes.

Gabriel wrapped his arms around Draco. “I already was. The only difference is now you can feel it too.”

“Hoot,” Hedwig said landing on the headboard and looking down at her human.

“Hey girl what’s up?”

She held out her leg.

Gabriel reached up and took the scroll. Reading it he groaned. “We have to get up?”

“No,” Draco said.

“Apparently it is too early to go to bed even after wild sex and they want us to come watch a movie with them.”

Draco pulled the duvet up higher.

“We have twenty minutes before the kids come in to get us,” Gabriel added.

“Bloody hell, what muggle idiocy are you making me watch this time?” Draco asked throwing back the covers and stomping off to the bathroom.

“Spirited Away,” Gabriel said grabbing pajama pants and tee shirts for both of them.

“Sounds silly,” Draco said as he washed up.

Gabriel smiled breathing in the spicy citrus scent of Draco’s body wash. He knew better than to point out that Draco loved watching movies.

“There will be popcorn and biscuits.”

Draco sighed as Gabriel wrapped his arms around him. “I do like popcorn.”

“I know, now do dry off before the kids come to find us.”

Draco turned in Gabriel arms and leaned down to kiss his, their bond humming as they kissed.

“Well, that’s fun.”

“I agree, now shoo before I forget my innocent brothers and sisters will be rushing in here soon.”

* * *

“Gabriel,” Lysander shouted scooping him up into a hug as soon as they step into the tent. “I missed you.”

“You saw me three days ago,” Gabriel said.

Lysander pressed his face into Gabriel’s neck. “You smell so good.”
Gabriel sighed. “Why must you wind up Draco?”

Peeking over Gabriel’s shoulder he looked at Draco. His gray eyes hard and his cheeks flushed in anger. “He’s so pretty when he’s angry and I can smell his blood better, which smells almost as good as yours.”

Draco sneered at the vampire and turned to his companion. “Marcy, I have no idea how such a lovely woman as yourself puts up with that foul creature.”

Marcy sighed. “Well, if I could have you I might be tempted away, but as you’re already taken I had to settle for what was available.”

“Hey,” Lysander said.

Gabriel rolled his eyes. “You brought this on yourself. I warned you not to keep messing with Draco.”

“You poor dear,” Draco said enveloping Marcy in a hug. “I am so sorry, if my heart wasn’t already taken I would court you with all the pageantry a lady of your beauty and intelligence deserves. And while I understand you have to settle for less than myself, I know you can do better than Lysander. Allow me to try and help you arrange a better match.”

Giggling Marcy let Draco guide her to couch where he asked about what she wants in a man and relationship.

Lysander grinned. It had taken the better part of a year for Marcy to heal from what her sire, Merrick, had done to her. She had learned about her new vampire abilities and limits with a fierceness that took his breath away and saddened him. Lysander could tell that she didn’t trust them, that she expected to be sent away or mistreated at any time.

He learned to move slowly around her, giving her time to move away if she wanted. Lysander had ached to hold her, but kept his distance. Nineteen months after she moved in, a group of them were watching a movie and she sat down next to him on the couch. There had been other spots free, even a few chairs so she wouldn’t have to be next to anyone, but she had chosen to sit next to him.

He’d asked her out the next day. He’d wanted to formally court her, but she was young, very young, and he wasn’t sure she’d enjoy the ritual behind being courted.

“When Draco’s done she’s going to want the fairy tale courting,” Gabriel said.

Lysander smiled. “I would do that in a heartbeat, but I’m not sure that she wants to bond with me. Or that she’ll appreciate me proving I can take care of her or support her. She’s very independent.”

Gabriel smiled. “I think, if you make sure that you’re showing her strength so she knows she can count on you and not because you think she’s weak, it’ll be fine.”

“How do I do that?” Lysander asked with a snort.

“Take her places and give her gifts that also show you see how strong and powerful she is. Don’t make it all about how you can support her,” Gabriel suggested.

“She does know how to skateboard, which I haven’t ever done. I could ask her to teach me,” Lysander said his eyes focused on Marcy as she laughed with Draco.

“I think that would be an excellent idea,” Gabriel said.

“It’s time to start the movie,” Tatiana said, her tone not allowing for arguments. “Everyone be quiet and sit down.”

Quiet chuckles came from the adults who did as she demanded.

“Tatiana is so like you,” Gabriel said as he sat next to Draco.

Draco grinned. “She is perfect isn’t she?”

Gabriel laughed as Tatiana shushed them. Sighing he cuddled with Draco as the movie started. He would miss this as he and Draco started their new adventure. Draco’s fingers slid between his, holding him tightly. They would both miss this, but they would be together and that made all the difference.

* * *

Gabriel took a drink of water, the Arizona desert was so dry. Draco spent half his time making sunscreen potions to protect their skin from the harsh sun. Today Draco was collecting plants and
herbs with David Whitefeather, so Gabriel was on his own. Clearing out the rocks in a flat area
Gabriel began to work out. Turning on the radio to a pop station he began to warm up with push-
ups, jumping jacks, then some kata, he began doing flips, cartwheels and martial arts moves.
Grinning, Gabriel marveled at the ability of children to turn up out of no-where as soon as something
interesting was going on. “Do you guys want to try?” he asked the group of five little kids hiding
behind a bush.
Two little girls and three boys came out. It didn’t take long for Gabriel to teach them basic acrobatic
moves and soon they were doing somersaults and cartwheels all over the meadow.
One of the boys came over to him, his big brown eyes untrusting. He pulled on his braid, his long
hair so dark it had blue highlights. “Can you teach me how to flip?”
Gabriel knelt down and smiled. “I’m Gabriel Dragonheart. What’s your name?”
“John Chee.”
Gabriel held out his hand wrapping his tanned fingers around the boy’s dark golden brown ones.
“How old are you John?”
“Five.”
“Hmmm. Hold your hands up,” Gabriel said.
John frowned but did as he asked. The boy’s fingers came only an inch above his head.
“Well, your arms aren’t long enough to do a regular flip, you need to grow a bit more but we could
practice a different kind.” Gabriel stood up and jumped doing a somersault in the air and landing on
his feet. “Will that be okay?”
John’s brown eyes were wide. “Yes, please.”
Just as his dad and baba had done with him Gabriel held the boy flipping him around.
“I did it.” John said grinning, showing a missing front teeth.
“You did very well,” Gabriel said. “Again?”
“Yes.” John said moving closer.
“Me too.” said a little girl.
John frowned and stomped his foot.
She opened her mouth and no sound came out. Her light brown eyes widened with fear.
“The freak did it again,” yelled the other boy. “I’m going to tell on you.”
Gabriel gasped his stomach clenching.
“I didn’t do it,” John yelled his eyes filling with tears.
“You’re a witch a Skinwalker,” yelled another girl.
Gabriel waved his hand the giving the girl back her voice and placed his hand on John’s shoulder.
“Skinwalker,” the girl yelled and turned running home.
“I didn’t …” John began tears filling his eyes.
Gabriel knelt down and wrapped his arms around the little boy. “Shush, I’ve got you. It’s okay. Do
things happen around you?”
John nodding his little hands, gripping Gabriel’s shirt.
“Thing like that happened to me too when I was younger. Then I learned to control what happened.”
“How?” John mumbled his face pressed into Gabriel’s chest.
“I was taught,” Gabriel said.
“Are you a Skinwalker?” John asked his voice fearful but he didn’t let go of Gabriel’s shirt.
“I don’t know what that is?” Gabriel said.
John pulled back. “A Skinwalker is someone magical who uses their magic to hurt people.”
“Then no, I’m not,” said Gabriel. “I don’t use my magic to hurt anyone.”
Gabriel kept his face blank as John looked him over. Gabriel could feel the boy’s confusion as he
decided if he was going to trust Gabriel or not.
“No one wants me,” John said. “My mom, she used drugs and didn’t fight when child protective
services came and got me. She gave me up, and doesn’t know who my dad is. I’ve moved around to
foster homes, Martha and Peter are going to get rid of me after this, I know they will.”
Gabriel held him. “I’ll fix it, don’t worry. Let me see what I can do.”
“Can your magic make everything all better?” John asked.
“No, but it can make things easier. Plus I’m very very stubborn.”
John laughed.
“Take me to your house, I’ll ask if you can come and have dinner with us.”
“Gabriel,” Draco snapped as he jumped out of the truck. “What are you doing?”
John’s moved behind Gabriel’s leg and stared at the ground.
Gabriel could feel his fear and disappointment. Reaching around he placed his hand on John’s head.
“I’ve made a friend, how was your day?”
“Your husband has a gift with plants,” David Whitefeather said hopping out of the truck, his brown cowboy boots stirring up dust. “Hello young man.”
John gasped and clutched at Gabriel’s jeans.
Draco raised an eyebrow his pale skin pink from the heat and sun, his long white hair hung in a braid over his shoulder. “What have you done now?” He kissed Gabriel and knelt down. “Hello I’m Draco, Gabriel’s fiancé.”
“You are the whitest person I have ever seen.”
Gabriel laughed. “This is John, he kept me company while you were training with Master Whitefeather.”
“I’ve told you to call me David,” The older Navajo man said. “Ajo, John, thank you for watching out for Gabriel today. I’ve heard he can cause trouble when bored.”
“Hey,” Gabriel said with a smile. “enough about me, we were just going to visit with his foster parents, I’m afraid there was an accident earlier.”
“What happened?” Draco asked. “John are you okay?”
“I’m fine, I got upset and Julie lost her voice, and they called me a Skinwalker and a freak.”
Draco reached up and took Gabriel’s hand his gray eyes filled his sadness and anger. “I’m sorry, we’ll get this settled right now.”
“Let me drive,” David said. “John can tell me the way.”
John scuffed the toe of his shoe in the dirt then nodded. They piled into the 4x4 pick up. John speaking just loud enough for David to hear him.
They pulled in front of a one story brickhouse. A woman coming out as they drove up. “I’ve already called your caseworker to come and get you. I told you if you did any more of that freakish behavior you were gone.”
John sniffed.
“I’ve packed your stuff he should be here soon.”
“What is the name of the caseworker?” David asked his eyes hard.
“Mr. Whitefeather,” she gasped. “I haven’t seen you since you helped my grandmother.”
David nodded. “His name.”
“Larry Nez.”
“Good, we’ll wait.”
The foster mom went into the house and came out with glasses of lemonade. Gabriel cringed at her mix of fear and respect she was emanating. John had walked off and sat under a tree. Gabriel squeezed Draco’s shoulder and went to sit with John.
“I’m sorry this is happening.”
John shrugged.
“When I was a little boy I lived with my aunt and uncle. They hated me because I would do freaky things,” Gabriel said looking up through the branches of the tree into the blue sky. “I didn’t even know my name, they only called me boy or freak. Then one day gypsies came into town.”
John’s eyes were wide as Gabriel told his story. He didn’t even notice when his caseworker came and David and Draco argued, cajoled, and a certain tired overheated blond used a spell to get what he wanted.
“Let’s go,” Draco snapped.
John jumped.
“Don’t worry, he gets like that when he’s upset, but he’s all bark with those he cares about.” Gabriel stood up and offered his hand.
“I called Callie,” David said. “She’ll have dinner ready and the other room made up.”
“Sounds good to me,” Gabriel said. “She’s a great cook.”
John took Gabriel’s hand and walked to the truck.

* * *

“So what do you want to do?” Draco asked as they lay in bed.
Gabriel sighed not even pretending not to understand. “He needs a home, a home that understands his magic and how to help him.”
“And you want to give him that home?” Draco said rolling on his side.
Turning to look into his lovers gray eyes he smiled softly. “I do, but I don’t want to take him from his people or his culture.”
“I talked to David and Callie, they can probably find him magical parents and maybe even someone willing to take him who is Native American, but he can’t guarantee Navajo,” Draco said.
“Do you think he’d want to come with us?” Gabriel asked his brow furrowed.
Draco snorted. “I think he’ll want to come with you, I’ll have to get to know him better.”
“Are we ready for this? I mean you’ll be busy with your mastery, and we don’t have a home.”
Draco leaned over and kissed him.
Gabriel moaned.
“Let’s all get to know each other. Then we can ask him.” Draco moved to lie on top of Gabriel. “I’d be thrilled to start our family. Right now let’s have some fun.”
Grabbing his fiancé’s arse massaging the firm round muscle. “Don’t worry I put up a silencing charm, you can scream all you want.”
Draco arched a pale blond eyebrow. “You think you can make me scream.”
Gabriel laughed. “Oh yes, yes I can.”

* * *

John’s eyes widened as he opened his last Solstice gift from Draco and Gabriel. He trained his fingers over the braided metal, it looked just like the bracelet Gabriel and Draco wore. Their family bracelet, the one Gabriel’s dad and baba had given him when they asked him to be their son.
“You want me to be part of your family?” John asked.
“Yes, very much so,” Gabriel said. “If that would make you happy?”
John bit his lip and looked at Draco.
“Indeed, John, we would very much like for you to become our son and travel the world with us,” Draco said.
Gabriel tried not to smile at Draco’s formal speech. He always talked like that when nervous.
“And I would be yours forever?” John asked picking up the bracelet.
Gabriel knelt on the floor and kissed his forehead. “Forever.”
“And ever,” Draco added wrapping his arms around them.
John smiled and slid the bracelet on his wrist.

I know many of you have limited reading time and are devoted to the Harry Potter fandom, BUT if you’re interested my first novel is up on Amazon, Smashwords, Barnes and Nobles, Kobo, and it should be up soon at other places. Here is the blurb just to tempt you and its only 0.99!!! It’s a Young Adult urban fantasy, there is circus, and in later books a gay romance between supporting characters. I do have plans to write m/m romances in the future, so join my newsletter or follow my blog to keep up with new releases!

Phoenix Child
Book One in the Children of Fire Series
Sara is just another group home kid. She’s given up on being part of a family and has planned out her life as a child of the system.

Then she wakes on her fifteenth birthday, with ruby red streaks through her now midnight black hair and strange powers she did not know she possessed.

Enrolling in classes at the San Francisco Center for the Circus Arts, she meets strangers with frightening powers who say they are family, with a four thousand year old god as a common ancestor.

As Sara struggles with powers that overwhelm her, she must decide whether to turn her back on this new life or embrace her identity as Sapphire the Phoenix Child. The lives of hundreds of magical creatures rest on her decision.

Sometimes great things are thrust upon a girl. Sara wishes hers didn’t include a new name, unicorns, and fire.

Works inspired by this one: [Gypsy Caravan Cover [FAN ART]](https://www.fanart.tv/series/117458) by Levinson

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