The Games They Play

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Summary

Thirty-Four year old Harry Potter travels back in time, adopting the name of Blake Slytherin - he interferes with his own trial and messes with Dumbledore's perfectly laid plans. What happens afterwards? will Blake have bitten off more than he can chew? Will it be left to Harry to do what needs to be done?
Chapter 1

The thirty-four-year old Blake Slytherin or better known as Harry Potter stalked down the halls of the Ministry of Magic as if he owned the place. His magic flaring every time he felt the stomach twisting fury when he thought about what was happening at this precise moment. The farce of a trial they were putting Harry through, now that thought did make his magic flare in annoyance once more: round about now his younger self would be sitting down, facing the intimidating presence of the Wizengamot for a simple usage of underage magic. They were not going to know what hit them, thought Harry viciously. He felt a familiar-feeling magic coming down the corridor: Dumbledore. Great, he had hoped to get there well before the old fool showed his face. He hastened his pace, ignoring everyone who was looking at him as he rushed along, pureblood’s didn’t do that after all, and he did have the pureblood look down to a T. Long dark hair that reached down passed his shoulder blades, sharp aristocratic features, clearly showing his green eyes and pursed lips. On the name badge he wore it said Blake Slytherin, a name he had adopted when he ended up back in time. He had been too weak to move for a week; whatever had happened had taken everything out of him.

Just as he opened the door he heard Fudge finishing stating his address. He'd never thought of it then, but his address must have been a matter of public record. How he had not been attacked was anyone's guess, not that they would have been able to get in... not until he turned seventeen. He did idly wonder what exactly would have happened to anyone that tried, would they have suffered the same fate as those who tried to get through Hogwarts' wards before they were torn down? Or worse, end up like Quirrell? Either fate wasn't nice at all, both had been disintegrated into naught but ash.

Blake opened the door letting it bang - not caring to make an unobtrusive entrance. He observed that Dumbledore had yet to make his entrance, and he felt a smidgen of relief that he could get everything done before he showed.

"Who are you?" Fudge demanded, glaring at the intruder— he was trying to run a courtroom here.

"Do not mind me, I am simply a witness for the defence; name's Blake Slytherin," 'Blake' smirked smoothly at them, just begging them to accuse him of lying.

'Hem-hem' coughed Dolores, sitting forward with a sugary sweet smile on her face, gazing up at the extremely tall, impeccably dressed, powerful wizard before her. If only he had not been trying to help Harry Potter, she thought to herself, he was very handsome and she wouldn't have minded someone like him around. "Do you really expect us to believe you—"

"Ah, Dolores, nice to see you," Blake said, eyes twinkling deviously, "How are your mother and brother? Well, I hope?" He watched her inhale sharply, disbelief crossing her face. Yes, being from the future was fantastic, he knew things that nobody could understand how he did. He'd found out, due to the fact her nephew had come to Hogwarts, that Umbridge's brother had a magical child, Robert Umbridge, quite a powerful boy too…at least for the time he'd been alive. Umbridge had come under fire for the death, and her entire sordid past unravelled quickly.
"Yes, yes, very well indeed," Dolores murmured, sitting back without so much as another word, looking as though she wasn't interested any longer. She couldn't believe this person knew that much about her. It was a thinly veiled warning, that much she knew and if she wanted to keep her secrets she would have to do what it took until she got some dirt on Blake Slytherin as well to level the scales. She inwardly shuddered at those eyes, it was as if he knew what she was thinking and it amused him.

"Indeed," Blake echoed, moving towards Harry, standing in front of his younger self. Fucking hell, had he really been that terrified? Knowing he couldn't actually say what he needed to, he crouched down; fuck, he was bloody tiny too. He definitely needed fattening up, and quickly. "Look at me," he demanded, ignoring the suspicion on Harry's face. It was understandable, since they both knew Voldemort was the only Slytherin left. Well, they thought he was at this point; he was really giving himself a headache. Once familiar green eyes met his, he expanded his magic and thrust a memory into Harry's mind, one of him talking to a mirror in case he needed to do this. After a few seconds, ignoring the irritation behind him, he watched Harry's eyes widen in disbelief.

"Impossible!" Harry muttered, gaping; was he truly expected to believe this was him from the future? But they had the same eyes, the same hair; other than that, though, they were nothing alike... well, not really. This man was tall, imposing, and well, scary; more intimidating than the Wizengamot, and that was saying something.

Blake showed off his arms, showing both the scarring from where the basilisk had bit him and the one Pettigrew had sliced into him. Once he saw realization dawning on Harry, he nodded grimly, pressing his fingers to his lips telling Harry to keep quiet if he knew what was good for him without saying a word.

"Give me the memory of the graveyard, and the one with the attack," Blake whispered, two vials waiting already. "Just think about them and I will do the rest." Pressing his wand to Harry's temple, he removed both memories in a timely fashion. Luckily there was nobody in front of him; they were all at the back of him, and unable to see or hear what they were doing. Slipping the vials into his pocket he winked at Harry before standing up; having done his piece, he moved over to the side. He would intervene only when necessary; he actually wanted to make them feel like shit.

"Interrogators: Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister for Magic; Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement; Dolores Jane Umbridge, Senior Undersecretary to the Minster. Court Scribe, Percy Ignatius Weasley—"

"Witness for the defence, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore," added a voice, as he entered the courtroom as well.

Blake watched everyone. The Wizengamot were quite divided; a lot of them were annoyed at Dumbledore's appearance, others appeared quite apprehensive, and a few even waved in welcome. They were supposed to be the peace keepers of their world? Yet they believed everything they heard and acted with their bloody hearts, not their minds. How was it they could be so damn idiotic? Really, there was no other word for it. They were all old; it meant they should know better, but apparently that was asking for too much.

"Ah," Fudge uttered, "Dumbledore. Yes, You— er — got our — er message that the time and er— place of the hearing had been changed, then?"

Had the meeting truly been this boring? thought Blake as he glanced at the time. If he remembered correctly, and he knew he did, the list of his so-called crimes had to be detailed as well. Sitting through this once had been enough, he belatedly realized. Still, this had to be done; there was no alternative. He was brought out of his thoughts by Fudge's incessant whining. Belatedly he realized
he had been so lost in thought, he'd actually missed quite a bit of the trial.

"It's not a question of how impressive the magic was," Fudge said testily, "In fact, the more impressive, the worst it is, I would have thought, given that the boy did it in plain view of a Muggle!"

"True," Blake mused, rubbing his chin thoughtfully as he stared at them all, they were nodding and agreeing with the Minister. "You are aware that the Muggle was in fact his cousin, are you not? And he had seen Harry use accidental magic in the past? As far as I am aware, the decree of underage sorcery does not in fact apply to family." He ignored Harry's confused and betrayed look, but Harry turned back to face everyone. He knew it was coming... oh this was going to be so much fun. He could see why Dumbledore liked letting everyone talk before actually speaking himself.

"I did it because of the Dementors!" Harry yelled loudly.

"Dementors?" asked Madam Bones, "What do you mean, boy?"

"I mean there were two Dementors down that alleyway and they went for me and my cousin!"

"Ah," Fudge said again, "Yes. Yes. I thought we would be hearing something like this."

"Dementors in Little Whinging?" Madam Bones said in surprise. "I don't understand—"

"Don't you, Amelia?" Fudge said smirking. "Let me explain. He's been thinking it through and decided Dementors would make a very nice little cover story, very nice indeed. Muggles can't see Dementors, can they, boy? Highly convenient, highly convenient...so it's just your word and no witnesses..."

"I'm not lying!" Harry protested angrily.

"We, do, in fact, have a witness to the presence of the Dementors in that alleyway," Albus said, "Other than Dudley Dursley, I mean."

"We haven't got time to listen to more tarradiddles, I'm afraid, Dumbledore. I want this dealt with quickly," Fudge said dismissively.

"Then you will make time, Cornelius Fudge, or are you saying you are above the law? A law that states that a suspect is allowed to give evidence which proves their innocence?" boomed Blake, stalking forward. "After convening a full hearing of the Wizengamot to deal with an instance of underage magic? The fact all of you went ahead with it is quite frankly disgusting. Is this what the wizarding world resorts to now? Presuming everyone guilty? Even when they have proof of their innocence?"

"I — er — very well," Fudge said clearly flustered.

"Since you are so keen on getting this farce over with," Blake stated calmly, not rising to Fudge's incoherent indignant spluttering. "Then let it be so." Turning around, he removed the vial from his pocket and muttered above it "Pensieve Maximus!" watching as the memory was projected over the vial he was holding. The white wall now projected the images within, starting with the argument between Harry and Dudley. Blake had the light in the room dimmed so they could properly see, although it would be pretty much completely dark in the alley with the Dementors.

As soon as the image appeared every single person in the room quieted completely, Fudge had gone pasty white. Umbridge looked green, as she sunk into her seat unseen.
Harry watched with them, his neck protesting at the moment but he didn't want to miss out on anything. Watching the scene as a bystander was seriously weird. Seeing himself and Dudley fighting, then it getting cold, the lights going out, hearing Dudley freaking out about it... thinking it was him using magic. Then the attack, how the Dementor was leaning over his cousin to administer the Dementor's kiss, and then his stag glowing brightly in the room charging against the Dementors. In awe, Harry heard everyone gasp in shock, but he wasn't sure why — the Dementors? No, it was his patronus, he realized, they were going on about his fully-fledged patronus ... but they already knew... Harry's heart sank; they thought he was lying about everything, even being able to cast a Patronus.

Everyone was still speaking so loudly that they missed hearing Blake muttering the spell yet again at the other vial, causing the projection to light up again; this time it was during the third task. Blake watched as himself and Cedric stumbled, thinking and asking if it was part of the tournament.

"Kill the spare!" was hissed. "Avada Kedavra!" The green light sped towards the screen causing everyone to scream.

"What is this?" Fudge protested loudly.

"No!" cried a few voices when Pettigrew was put in full view of the projection. Apparently he was still recognisable, even after all the years he'd been living as a rat.

"It can't be!" they muttered, horrified by what they were seeing.

Then they sat and watched the most terrifying thing they'd ever seen for ten minutes as the Dark Lord Voldemort was returned to human form using a ritual to achieve his goals, the conversation he had with the fourteen-year-old… then of course when he called his Death Eaters using Pettigrew.

Bones' lips had disappeared, her monocle had fallen off, as she watched Death Eaters who had been let off after the last war bow and scrape to the evil wizard. Including one that they did not even need to hear to know: Lucius Malfoy. His hair gave him away like a shining white beacon.

Fudge stared at the screen, realizing he was ruined, utterly ruined, at the image of Minerva McGonagall indignantly telling Albus Dumbledore about Crouch Junior being kissed before being questioned. He might as well go and pack his things; that office would not be his come tomorrow. His head fell into his hands; it had all backfired so spectacularly. He was back, You-Know-Who was truly back; he could scarcely believe it. Part of him had known it was true but he hadn't wanted it to be. He could feel the eyes boring into him as he slumped further down.

He hadn't wanted it to be true, not after last time… and back then he had been on the front lines as an Auror.

Blake turned to look at them as he lights came back on, momentarily blinding them; it was the wake-up call they all needed. Perhaps now they would have an actual chance of defeating Voldemort before his grip became so strong that the next generation was just as damaged. "You were saying something about it being highly convenient? Minister Fudge?" Blake enquired harshly, gazing at him in disgust before his face moved to the ashamed yet horrified looks the Wizengamot were still supporting. "When was that? Was it when you had a wizard kissed without first getting permission to do so? A wizard you had no idea was out of Azkaban… a wizard who had long been since declared dead? Instead of investigating HOW he got out of Azkaban, you decided to cover it up. If it happened to save your own ass and allowed you to bury your head in the sand at the same time, who's to argue?" He could just see Fudge's heartbeat shooting through
"And you, Albus Dumbledore, shame on you. You could have had this done years ago; you could have had Sirius Black freed and Pettigrew wanted all over the world. If you had just acted, Voldemort might not have had the opportunity to come back," Blake spat bitterly, turning his ire on the old fool.

Harry froze in his seat, watching his older self… and Dumbledore, who hadn't spoken other than to say that he had a witness. He had been wondering why nobody had asked him to do it… in three separate instances that he could think of. When he had realized his godfather Sirius Black was innocent, then after the tournament, and of course after the Dementor attack. Could Dumbledore have done this? If that was the case, why hadn't he? Why had he allowed his name to be besmirched and him to go through everything he had? He didn't understand it at all, and he felt the anger beginning to build up in him again.

"Who might you be?" Albus enquired, his twinkle absent as he gazed at this powerful wizard. He knew too much, and that concerned him a great deal. He stood up facing the wizard, not intimidated and determined to show it.

"Blake Slytherin," he stated calmly, watching dread and suspicion flash on Albus' face. He'd known his name would cause everyone to have suspicions, but he couldn't care less. He'd had to use a surname from his line; Potter and Peverell were too well known, so Slytherin had been his choice. "Harry Potter's magical guardian."

"We must speak privately," Albus stated immediately. Harry couldn't be removed from his family; the Dursleys were the only real protection Harry had against the Death Eaters and Voldemort. He couldn't believe Slytherin had successfully gotten custody of him under his nose; it had to be a ruse, otherwise he didn't know what he would do. He must get to the Dursleys as soon as possible and find out what had happened; if they were dead, well, the protection was already gone, and he had failed.

"I assume this power play is now over with, and that Harry is free to go with all charges dropped?" Blake said expectantly, scorn dripping from each word. Oh, he knew very well what this trial was all about. Power games; Fudge had liked to think he was winning for quite a while, until the end of the year and he saw Voldemort's presence himself. He'd been surrounded by people so that he had no possible way of denying it or playing the 'you've been confounded' part.

"Yes — er — yes, of course," Fudge croaked brokenly. The silence was extremely daunting... especially with fifty wizards and witches surrounding him on all sides.

"Harry, come," Blake stated sharply. This was the moment of truth: whether Harry would think for himself or continue to rely on Dumbledore, despite knowing only a margin of the truth. It didn't matter whether he came willingly or not, the boy would be going with him.

"You cannot take him," Dumbledore said, his voice dangerously low, almost threateningly but not quite. It was as if he was trying to contain himself and not outright alienate Blake.

"You'll find it has absolutely nothing to do with you, Albus Dumbledore. You are his headmaster, nothing more. I do not want to see you trying to be more, otherwise I will involve the authorities and have you arrested for kidnapping." Blake made no attempt to lower his voice as he pulled Harry close, not wanting to risk any sudden attempts to stymie him. Dumbledore would do anything it took; he above all others knew that. As would Harry, as soon as he gained his trust, but the fact he had come to him spoke volumes — he knew himself better than anyone else, after all.
Albus stared stunned, his blue eyes without their customary twinkle. Hearing the voices of various Wizengamot members, he belatedly realizing where it was they were; he would have to tread lightly. They were all listening in curiosity, wanting to know exactly what was going on. How did he do this? Albus wondered; he'd never been in this tight a position for such a long time. Harry couldn't leave with this wizard. Then he realized what he could do, nobody could blame him for being concerned, after all.

"I am merely concerned, how do we know that you are not a Death Eater? I cannot let my pupils be harmed; as a Headmaster I would be failing in my duties if I did so," Albus told Blake, his tone condescending.

"And of course, anyone that doesn't agree with you right away is considered evil or a Death Eater, right?" Blake quipped, sneering at the wizard in his pathetic attempt at trying to make it sound like the entire Wizengamot was agreeing with him. As far as he remembered, Dumbledore had already been removed as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot. He was barely retaining his position as Headmaster as it was.

"Of course not," Albus said, his eyes wide in a feigned display of shock.

Blake snorted in derision, not buying anything the old fool said. In one swift movement he had both his arms bared for the old fool, showing his tanned, unmarked arms for all to see. "Does this satisfy your concern?" Blake asked, scorn dripping from the word concern. Dumbledore didn't do that word - unless it was on a grander scale, such as the worry about the entire magical population.

"Harry is protected by his family; you must understand that, as long as he calls it home, he's safe," Albus told him. It didn't pacify him for even a second that the man wasn't a Death Eater. Not all Death Eaters were branded with the Dark Mark, Fenrir Greyback and his ilk were proof of that.

"That is irrelevant, it's already been done," Blake spoke harshly, "Now move aside, I have other things to do - and none of them are speaking to you, Dumbledore."

Harry felt like he was being torn in two. What had happened to make him hate Headmaster Dumbledore so much? Sure, he had done things wrong, but was he so bad? What had happened in the future to make himself so... Snape-like? It was the only way he could explain it; he was so impassive, angry even and sarcastic. He wasn't dressed fully in black, though... maybe it was just Dumbledore that brought it out in him? The thought of learning everything excited him; he couldn't wait until he could ask his questions and finally get answers.

Albus froze for a few seconds, not wanting Harry out of his reach for even a moment — yet he couldn't stop him. Not in front of the entire Wizengamot at any rate; he would need to play this carefully. With great reluctance he stepped aside. For the first time he looked at Harry, but the boy wasn't looking at him at all. He was staring at the floor, unable to meet his gaze. Gritting his teeth in frustration, he watched them step past him — Blake Slytherin was a little too smug about that — he had chosen his choice of confrontation well, he belatedly realized. He would need to be extremely cautious, yes, he would indeed.

Blake didn't even spare Dumbledore a second glance. He headed for the door before stopping short; turning to face Umbridge he stalked forward, keeping his grip on Harry meanwhile. He leaned down until he was choked on the disgusting woman's perfume and hideous pink jumper. "Try anything further with my ward...and you'll find out just why you do not want to make an enemy of me. Stay out of Hogwarts, otherwise your past will pale in comparison to what I reveal... it will no doubt lead to the Dementor's kiss. Now that would be justice, since that's what you tried to wish upon a fifteen-year-old boy," Blake whispered coldly into her ear. He didn't even need to withdraw completely to know she had paled drastically. "Is that understood?" he added, his icicle
green eyes boring into her terrified ones.

"Yes," Umbridge managed to squeak softly, swallowing thickly; he knew! Blake Slytherin knew what she'd done! How the hell did he know what she had done? How could he? Nobody else did, yet the evidence was irrefutable: somehow he knew she had sent the Dementors after Potter. It was as if he could see into her soul, even she hadn't suggested planting herself into Hogwarts with Cornelius yet. She shivered in fear of this wizard; those eyes told her suffer no delusions… that he would kill her. Even as he backed away her heart thumped painfully in her ribcage as she tried to contain her fear not wanting others to see her so…vulnerable. How could she not be? When this wizard had laid her bare? Threatened her with exposure? She had spent so long climbing up the ministry, hiding her dirty secret — with one word from Blake Slytherin, it would all crumble to dust.

"It was nice seeing you again, Dolores," Blake said, a small smirk playing across his face, before he swiftly exited the courtroom, not waiting on her reply. That small smirk turned full once he was in the Atrium; he had done it. Despite the fact he had not planned on coming here, or wanted to be here, he was beginning to realize the extent of the things he could change. Plans were already in motion, with 'sheer dumb luck' he would succeed in all ways. He wasn’t a child anymore after all and he knew how to play the games better than most.
Chapter 2

"Where are we going?" Harry asked, eager for information as he tried to keep up with ‘Blake’s’ long quick strides. He was as eager to get out of the Ministry as he was to get information it seemed.

"Keep quiet until we get somewhere safe," Blake said, giving Harry a look, trying not to be too annoyed; it wasn't exactly his fault that he knew next to nothing or that the portraits were nosy buggers that told Dumbledore everything. Although truthfully, not all of them did, just a select few that were in the Headmaster's office and had adjoining ones in the Ministry. "Hold on," he warned, grasping a better hold of the teenager before he Apparated both of them out of the Ministry. He could sense Dumbledore close by despite the fact he couldn't see him with the naked eye, which meant he was trying to spy on them already. Not spy, follow them and find out where they were.

Harry gasped in awe when he finally felt his feet touch down on solid land. He was surrounded by nothing but cliffs, trees, and grass as far as the eye could see. He could hear the waves clashing against the side of the cliffs; the smell of water, salt, burnt wood, smoke, and grass permeated the air. Directly in front of them was a two story cottage. Smoke was billowing out of a chimney; that explained the smoky smell. It was very peaceful; turning to face Blake, he saw that the older wizard was staring at the serenity in front of him as if it was something new. "Where are we?"

Harry asked. He almost wished he hadn't spoken since they began moving immediately afterwards. The seagulls were making noise as they glided through the air above the water, swooping occasionally; their loud piercing cries made Harry look up. He'd never been out very often, so it wasn't a big surprise, nor was it that he couldn't figure out where they were - he'd never had the chance to take geography or learn things by visiting places.

"Come in," Blake said smoothly, opening the door with his magic before getting both of them over the threshold and closing the door, feeling the wards ripple over them — protecting them. Only then did Blake relax. As fun as it had been…it had also been rather tense; he couldn't have been sure if it would work in his favour or not. Oh, but Umbridge's face had been worth the effort.

"What happened to me?" Harry asked, gazing at Blake pensively, finding it strange just how quickly he had gotten accustomed to the idea. "Why aren't I going mad? Mione said that if we ever saw ourselves, then we would go mad." He then watched in shock as Blake removed his cloak and a large assortment of weapons, daggers, knives... a sword? And two wands; one was still up the sleeve of his shirt too. One was his... er... well, is, right now... his holly wand. The other looked familiar but he couldn't for the life of him figure out which one it was. There was a place for each item, as if he had made them personally. "How long have you been here? In the past I mean?"

Blake removed his potions pouch and placed it on the table before turning to face the teenager with an frown on his face. Merlin, had he really been that irritating at this age? At least he was asking the questions, he had to concede to himself silently. Maybe he should have left him to the Order for a month more, at the very least; he had so much to do but with a time-table he would be able to keep up. He arched an eyebrow at the wide-eyed look; the boy almost put Dobby to shame — like he had never seen a weapon before.

"Dobby?" Blake shouted, removing his dragon hide gloves and placing them on the table next to the potions bag. He turned to face the pop that indicated the House-elf had appeared. "Make us a
something to eat, pasta preferably." He had to fatten Harry up; he looked like a bloody stick, and that was unacceptable.

"Dobby!" Harry gaped, staring between them shocked. He had been at Hogwarts the last time he saw him, so why was he here now?

"Yes, Sir," Dobby exclaimed excitedly; giving Harry a beaming smile he left without saying another word.

"Come, I'll show you around," Blake stated moving quickly, not even pausing to ensure that Harry was following him.

"Living room, kitchen through there," Blake gestured bluntly as he left the living room and moved into the hall way. "Potions lab," and up the stairs they went. The doors were open so that he could see inside them. "Training room, my bedroom, my office, library, guest sitting room, and your bedroom is down the hall; the others bedrooms are of course empty." Stalking forward, he opened Harry's bedroom fully, letting him see it.

"What about my stuff?" Harry cried as he remembered Hedwig and the precious items stashed away in his trunk. Turning to face Blake he almost gasped at the look on his face. He didn't know what caused it and quite frankly he didn't think he wanted to.

"I will buy you some new things, no doubt Hedwig will be with you soon enough," Blake replied, thinking about his beautiful snowy owl, his first and only familiar. Even now the pain caused his heart to feel as though it was being crushed; they had bonded together she and him, not just through her being the only one he could talk to, but through magic itself. He had refused to buy another, no matter who tried to coax him; he never wanted to feel that kind of pain again. Of course, he had felt similar pain a lot over the years; he tried to tell himself it didn't matter, but it did. She would never be his again, but perhaps seeing her here would heal the heartache he'd lived with for so many years.

"How can you buy me things?" Harry queried. How did he have money? Wasn't it his right now? Merlin, he hoped not. "You can't use the money for school!" he protested quickly and firmly. He had to finish school…Blake wasn't going to stop him attending, was he? His heart sank at the thought. "Wait... did I get expelled in the… er... well, before, I mean if you didn't show up?"

"Very eloquent," Blake muttered, his lips twitching in amusement as if against his will. Turning swiftly he began making his way back down the stairs two steps at a time as if he was running from something or someone.

Harry watched him going, wondering how and when he'd gotten so big and tall and how the hell it was possible. Muttering under his breath, he tried to catch up with him, deeply confused; it hadn't escaped his notice that he hadn't revealed anything yet. His worries, fears, and apprehension were beginning to make him feel sick to his stomach. As he reached the bottom step the smell of food wafted through the air. It smelt so good, and he hadn't eaten anything... well, not much, since he'd been terrified that he would be expelled.

"You didn't answer my questions!" Harry protested, staring at Blake who had taken a seat at the left hand side corner of the room, with a large table and selection of chairs - a dining table. A dining table in the living room? Well that was new, he'd only ever seen them in the kitchen… maybe it wasn't big enough?

Blake glanced at Harry. "We are in Scotland, nowhere near the castle, before you ask. The reason that nothing happened is because I am not using a time-turner. And unless I'm very much
mistaken, I look nothing like you, hence there is no reason to think you're seeing yourself and thus go mad," Blake explained quickly and efficiently. "I have been in the past for three weeks, nearly four, but it's taken this amount of time to regain my former strength and get everything I would need to survive." Well, Dobby had done most of that, truth be told, while he had been unable to perform the most basics of tasks alone.

"As for your last questions, no, I have no intention of using the Potter fortune, which by the way is far greater than you know. And incidentally, no, you did not get expelled, the entire display in the courtroom was a power play between Dumbledore and Fudge, and the fact it scared you was just a bonus for both Fudge and Umbridge. There was never any chance of you being expelled; even if you did, it would have only forced Dumbledore to show his hand sooner than expected in the same manner as I did. And no, that is not what happened; do you remember the woman at the side of the courtroom door?" Blake explained, his eyes dark as he thought on it. Blake didn't even wait on Harry nodding his head. "That was Arabella Figg; that was his witness, a batty old squib, as I think you liked to call her at the moment."

"What… what happens to us… you in the future?" Harry asked warily. What turned him into this angry, bitter man before him? Although it wasn't all bad; he looked great, he really did. He'd never imagined himself looking like this… a skinner version of his dad, James Potter maybe, but shorter.

"Now that you are here, there will be a few ground rules," Blake stated, completely ignoring Harry's question. His own question… but he didn't ever remember having this conversation with his younger self; did that mean the future was completely changed? That this wasn't meant to happen? That it wasn't some sort of paradox?

"Food for Master Slytherin and Harry," Dobby announced; he knew very well who Blake Slytherin was— he'd called upon him and the special bond between them was still there. He'd realized almost at once that this older wizard was in fact his Harry Potter from the future. Harry had saved him, saved his life, and he in turn had saved him from his old Master Malfoy. He had hoped to one day bond with Harry Potter, but instead he was bonded to an older version of him... and he didn't have to wait until he graduated and got a house of his own. House-elves couldn't go to Muggle places, it was strictly forbidden; he had broken the rules to save him once but he didn't want to end up beheaded now.

"Eat," Blake demanded, "All of it." He couldn't tolerate wasted food — especially not with the way his younger self looked; he needed all the help he could get at this point. Harry, feeling extremely awkward, sat down opposite himself and began to eat the spaghetti Bolognese. All of it? He doubted very much he could, but judging by the look on Blake's face he knew that if he didn't, he'd end up scolded again. He didn't know why but the way Blake looked at him made him feel two feet tall. The first bite was heaven. Dobby had always been a good cook, but this? It was amazing, and before long he was digging in, not even realizing he had cleared his plate until the last of it was gone. He caught Blake looking at him with amused eyes. He liked when he was amused, much better than when he looked as if he was hurting, or worse, really angry.

"Exquisite as always, Dobby, well done." Blake told the House-elf as he popped in to remove the empty plates; the red flush encompassed the House-elf's entire face as he disappeared with the used utensils and plates.

"Am I returning to Hogwarts?" Harry asked quietly, peering up at Blake cautiously.

"Yes," Blake told him immediately. If he didn't, he knew Harry would find a way to do just that. "Against my better wishes, but you will be returning to me every break." He gave him a pointed
look that told him he was very serious about it too. "As for the rules: do not ask questions regarding the future. Do not go beyond the boundaries of the wards without me." His other thoughts were redundant since Harry didn't know where they were they were exactly... only that they were in Scotland. "You may ask any other question you like." he added realising how much he sounded like the Dursley’s and that left a bitter taste in his mouth.

"Where are the Dursleys?" Harry then asked, relieved beyond belief that he was getting to go back to Hogwarts. As angry as he was at his friends, he didn't want to remain here while they were at school.

"Probably out of the country by now; nobody magical will be able to find them." Blake snorted in amusement, remembering the look on Petunia's face. Oh, it wouldn't be a sight he'd forget in a hurry. He'd basically told her to sign the documents, accept the money, and run, otherwise he would hunt them down and kill them and save everyone the trouble of having to protect their ungrateful, disgusting backsides. He'd even warned her against letting Vernon continue to eat the way he was, otherwise in a few years he would succumb to a heart attack; a stroke would follow leaving him nothing more than a vegetable until his body just packed it in. That had the desired effect on her, since he knew her father (his grandfather) had also had a stroke, and he'd been healthy... or as healthy as one could be and still have a stroke.

"I'll bet Uncle Vernon loved that," Harry said grinning widely. He wished he had been there to see it: his Uncle cowed. He imagined it was similar to the experience when Moody had warned him. Not that it had worked much, his uncle wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer...neither was Dudley.

"He is not our uncle, he's merely a disgusting man who Petunia married," Blake spat bitterly, breathing deeply before standing up, afraid that if he stayed he would say something he shouldn't. He walked out of the room without looking back. "I'll be in my study if you need me. Get Dobby to show you around properly outside." That would take up a few hours of his time, the wards expanded for miles. That way if something were to happen, he would have ample time to react and get everything set.

'Merlin, what had he become?' Harry wondered, utterly horrified, not sure if it was a reflect on what Blake was now or his situation that he still didn't know...

Blake stalked towards his study and slid inside, sitting down and pinching the bridge of his nose. He could see Harry’s reaction every time he was even the slightest bit bitter when he spoke. Harry had no idea what had happened in the future for him to be this way, and even if told he truly wouldn’t understand either. His life had not been easy to say the least, and he hoped to prevent Harry from ever experiencing it.

He would need to try and stop himself snapping every time Harry asked something that felt a bitter taste in his mouth. He wanted the teenager to trust him, but by Merlin the boy was so naïve, it was such a strange experience seeing himself like that again, then again was it any easier for Harry seeing himself older and bitter? Probably not. Being here and experiencing everything he was, his magic couldn’t be contained not even with his impenetrable occlumency walls. He hoped in time it would get better, but right now he had so much to do and it felt as though he had little time to accomplish it.
Chapter 3

The Games They Play

Chapter 3

Blake made his way upstairs and into the training room—it was purely Muggle in nature. Heading straight for the punching bag, he began to pulverise it, trying to calm his anger to some semblance of normalcy. He was always angry, unfortunately; he didn't have much to be happy about. All that was heard for what seemed like hours was the rapid thuds of his fists colliding with the bag. Occasionally a leg kick would join in, but his leg was still delicate from the last injury it sustained over two months ago. He put it through its paces, but he also knew by now that too much strain just hindered his healing—even with magic.

Grunting, he ceased his punching and moved away to grab a towel and wipe his face; it was completely plastered in sweat. Just seeing Dumbledore had opened up the half closed can of worms he'd managed to shut... even if only a little. Breathing deeply, he stared absently at his red knuckles. They would be blistered tomorrow morning if he didn't put a salve on them. He clenched his left hand tightly, there was so much he wanted to spit at Dumbledore; more than that he wanted to kick his arse in a duel—let the old fool see what he had become thanks to his interference.

Closing his eyes, he shook his head no. He couldn't even think like that—he just couldn't. Blake slowly made his way out of the training room; closing the door behind him. He ignored the shaking of his body after being put through such strain; after all, he was still recovering from his abrupt time-travel. Blake slid into his bedroom, which was close to the training room, since he'd known he'd use it late at night most days. Discarding his sweat soaked clothes, he reminded himself firmly to next time put his damn training sweat pants on—he didn't want to ruin his good clothes.

Stepping into the shower cubical, he turned the water on, keeping out of range of the spray until it heated up; only then did he allow himself to be soaked by the water. Planting his head against the wall, he let the water run down his back and neck. He couldn't keep snapping at Harry, it would make him no better than Dumbledore; unfortunately, it wasn't going to be easy either. The boy was so fucking clueless, unaware of what could happen in the future... how quickly his life was going to turn to shit. He wanted to protect Harry, stop the boy from ending up like him, stop... no, he thought viciously, just no.

Grabbing a cloth and the shower gel, he began to scrub himself, removing all trace of sweat before letting the foam wash away. He needed to think of some way to explain everything; he didn't want to show the boy, it was unbearable in his own mind without burdening his fifteen-year-old self with the memories. Exitng the bathroom, he grabbed some loose fitting clothes to wear, since he wasn't leaving the property tonight. Sliding a pair of boxers and jogging bottoms on he exited the room, a t-shirt in his hands.

"You've got tattoos?!!" a voice cried out in surprise. His green eyes observed the ones he could see on the front of Blake (his older self) it was still so odd to think.

Blake had many tattoos all over his body, there was a phoenix on his right arm but it was in both red and green, with ashes under it. He got it to represent both sides of him, his Gryffindor and Slytherin side that had rose from the ashes after everything Dumbledore had done to him. On his heart or rather where it was, he had a stag, a doe wrapped together like a yin-yang with a wolf print
and paw print inside of it instead of circles. All in representation of the parents and family lost to him. On his back was a large Hungarian horntail curled around a sword with the Hogwarts saying under it, never poke a sleeping dragon. A reminder of Hogwarts his first home, the dragon represented all the obstacles he had to overcome to go back home and the sword…well the sword represented the man he had become, the warrior he had to be to save their world. He had a snitch on his right arm, he’d gotten that in a very nostalgic moment.

Blake yanked the t-shirt over his head and stared at Harry smirking in devious amusement; yeah, he wouldn't have thought he would find himself like this at fifteen. "Did you get shown around?" Blake asked; how long had he been in that training room? It should have taken at least an hour or two to see it all.

"Um, yeah," Harry admitted slowly, he had just made Dobby think he wasn't feeling well half way through it; not a big exaggeration since he did feel sick to his stomach. Seeing what had become of him, it was a huge blow to everything he had hoped to be in future… although his body and no nonsense attitude… if that's what he had to look forward to, he would take it.

If only he knew.

"Follow me," Blake stated, moving down the stairs and into his office, which was more like a second library to be honest. Wandlessly conjuring a chair, he silently gestured for Harry to sit down as he took his seat. This was going to be difficult but he had to do it. "I apologize for my earlier…outburst." Merlin, this was difficult; he could barely apologise to himself. "I am not used to being hounded with questions, never mind answering them… you are extremely naïve… despite the fact I knew that, it's still overwhelming to see it again."

Harry opened his mouth to protest, he wasn't naïve! He had faced Death Eaters and Voldemort.

"Don't," Blake said quietly, his tone haunted. "Believe me, Harry, you've been sheltered and lied to more than you can fathom." He sighed in relief when his younger self's mouth snapped shut and confusion as well as hurt gleamed in his eyes. "I'm going to do my best to rectify that. Now ask your questions, as long as it's not directly about the future." He would have to give Harry information if he wanted his trust... and to prevent the future from happening all over again.

"Why is the Order protecting me?" Harry asked after some deliberation.

"What makes you think they are?" Blake replied bluntly, gazing at Harry shrewdly, knowing exactly what he was thinking at this point.

"Well, Hermione and Ron said the Order was protecting someone… guarding them," Harry told him; he knew it was him.

"The problem with listening in on parts of conversations is, you end up drawing many wrong conclusions," Blake said, sighing in agitation as he remembered all his own mistakes. "It has to stop, Harry, the consequences will not be good." Otherwise you just continue to do it and blame everyone else until you have to face the bitter reality that it's your fault. "They are guarding something, yes; something, not someone."

"What are they guarding? And why?" Harry asked eagerly, grateful that someone was sharing information. Although half an hour ago he had assumed that he would be stuck here without answers, just like he had been in Grimmauld Place… just like at the Dursleys', too. They all thought he was a child that should be protected and he wasn't.

"They are guarding an orb, in the Ministry of Magic, preventing the Dark Lord from getting it,"
Blake revealed.

Harry froze, leaping away from Blake with suspicion written clearly across his face. "You called him THAT! Only his followers call him that!" Harry yelped, denial crossing his face.

"I did," Blake mused, uncaring about Harry's reaction. "Habit, I am afraid, Voldemort will soon put a Geas on his name; anyone that is brave or foolish enough to say his name will be quickly dispatched by the Death Eaters or Voldemort himself. The Geas works through the strongest of wards, nothing can keep them away if you do slip up. Many of the safe houses set up were found this way… a lot of people died because of it too," he stated grimly, "What he told you in the chamber becomes not a threat but reality." That everyone would be one day too afraid to say his name, when he became the most powerful wizard in the magical world.

"Oh," Harry said very sheepishly as he reclaimed his seat.

"And you will find your statement inaccurate; Crouch Junior called him by his name, not title," Blake corrected bluntly. "We seem to continue to get largely off topic, it is very disconcerting," he admitted a frown plastering across his face. Was he getting complacent here? And so soon? No, he didn't like to think so. He was still adjusting to the fact he was here; the other suggestion was intolerable.

"What is the orb?" Harry asked, taking pity and putting them on the right conversation again. He noticed Blake was more liable to give information if he wasn't feeling railroaded. That and he genuinely wanted to know what on earth was going on, and what they were guarding in the Ministry. Even if it did mean acknowledging he was wrong; he'd assumed they were guarding him, but obviously that wasn't the case.

"It's a prophecy," Blake confessed darkly, "It's the reason that Voldemort went after us in the first place."

"Us?" Harry echoed in surprise; other than the memories, it was the first time he'd realized they truly were the same person, but with Blake having more memories than him. Blake Slytherin... he wondered why he had chosen that name out of all the ones he could have. It had certainly never been one he'd heard in his life... well, Blake that is, not the Slytherin one.

"Yes, although they had a target on their back without the prophecy. Our parents defied Voldemort three times while they were in the Order," Blake informed him. "This information is known, especially within this," Blake said, removing a shiny white orb that was swirling.

Harry's jaw dropped as he began to understand, "But... but... but how... how did you manage it? They're protecting it!" Harry was incapable of proper speech right now. He was in awe; it was amazing, he could scarcely believe this was happening. He had been taken from all he knew, by his older self no less! Although taken might be a bit of a strong word; he had gone willingly enough. He'd left everything other than his wand behind: his owl, his trunk, and his treasured possessions. "Wait, does that mean you're against the Order?" His voice was filled with worry that he couldn't suppress.

"I am not against them," Blake cried out in frustration, placing the orb carefully on his desk before carding his hand through his long hair in agitation. He moved his chair forward, so he was face to face with Harry. "Here's how it is: I refuse to rely on anyone for anything, especially not Dumbledore or the Order. If you know what's good for you... you'll do the same. I will teach you everything you need to know to survive; number one on that list is Occlumency and Legilimency. It's an obscure branch of magic, that protects your mind from being read and allows you to read other people's minds to gauge whether they were being truthful or not, or actually view their
memories. But be warned: they will know if you delve too deeply. You have the summer to learn it before you return to Hogwarts. Whether you succeed or not, Dumbledore will try and have Se… Professor Snape teach you." Standing up, he moved towards his bookcase and retrieved a book from its confines.

Harry screwed up his face in disgust at the thought of the greasy git teaching him anything.

"Read the first five chapters, it will give you a rudimentary understanding of the subject. If you understand it, then continues reading it; if not, come to me and I’ll clear up any confusion you have," Blake said, pressing the book into his hand, frowning at the look on his face and refraining from rolling his eyes. Of course, he didn't like reading. "Stop looking to others to find information for you; get off your ass and do it yourself!" he said with deceptive mildness.

Harry stared in bewilderment; what had he done now?

"The orb is a prophecy, a prediction told by Trelawney, her first one. You heard her second one so you know, despite the fact she seems like a fraud, she is in fact the real deal," Blake said smugly, picking up the orb again. "This is what Dumbledore doesn't want you to hear."

"Why?" Harry asked plainly.

"I don't know; he will insist that he wanted you to enjoy your childhood," Blake replied with sarcasm lacing every word.

For once Harry didn't wonder what was going on, he understood all too well; he and Blake both knew it was the biggest lie in the world. Enjoy a childhood; neither of them had been children since their parents died. He had… no, they had been nothing but a servant… a slave to a family who hated their guts. Blake was right; Vernon wasn't their uncle any more than Petunia was aunt material.

"So what does it say?" Harry queried curiously, feeling himself relaxing further despite the conversation they were having. Blake had only snapped twice so far; as long as he wasn't being so cold, Harry found himself enjoying his company — and he really didn't want to think on THAT for long, considering it was himself he was sitting talking to, which reminded him he had no idea what age he was. He looked around late thirties, maybe early forties.

"Here, drop it when you are ready," Blake said. He had no desire to hear it — he knew it word for word, had known for years. Still, he knew how confused he had been when first hearing it... admittedly, he had just seen his godfather die, and that probably played a large part in it.

"Drop it?" Harry echoed, "You mean smash it?" It was glass. It would break; what good would it be then?

"Just do it." Blake's voice brooked no argument, his eyes giving him a firm look.

Harry automatically let go of the orb; pissing Blake off was just guaranteed to make him leave. He wanted to know more... everything he could... everything that Professor Dumbledore wanted kept from him. That made him angry, but he was pacified by the fact that he was getting his questions answered before he could get too worked up over it.

Harry cringed in anticipation of the glass shattering but he didn't hear that; no, instead he heard a familiar raspy, booming voice shrieking at the top of her lungs. He heard words that were unfamiliar to him, but his other self didn't even bat an eyelash; obviously he knew it very well, as he was mouthing the words to that prophecy under his breath. A shudder ran down his spine, as he
deduced what on earth it meant.

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...

Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...

And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...

And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies

"I've got to defeat him?" Harry whispered, horrified. Part of him had already suspected as much but always buried it away — too terrified to even contemplate murder. Sure, he'd vowed to kill Sirius if he saw him before he knew what happened, but it was easy to say that; he couldn't even let someone else kill in his presence. He hadn't let Sirius get his revenge for what happened to his parents. He'd told himself the only reason Voldemort was after him was because he survived.

Blake moved over and squeezed his shoulder in reassurance. "You won't be alone." He tried making his voice as soothing as possible, but it sounded as though he was constipated; it had been years since he had comforted anyone. "I will get you up to scratch, and I'll take care of everything else." The promise was obvious in his voice.

"What about Sirius and Remus and my friends?" Harry asked, "My stuff, my cloak, my pictures."

"You want him here?" Blake grimaced.

"Of course!" Harry cried out, "Don't you?" he added uneasily; did Sirius not make it? Did they fall out?

"Give me a fortnight to get everything I need done, and then I will bring him here," Blake stated, massaging his temples. He would also need to get a bloody mind healer; Sirius wasn't in his right mind, but at least here he could keep an eye on him.

"What are you doing?" Harry asked, wondering if he could help.

"Just concentrate on your task," Blake pointed out, before he reclaimed his seat and soon was immersed in a book about time-travel. It was the closest thing he'd been able to find to his experience as possible. So he was hoping that this book held the answer.

"Time-travel? Are you trying to get home?" Harry asked, not sure how he felt about that… he'd taken guardianship of him… what would it mean for him if he went back? His mind was reeling, still trying to understand everything that had happened in the past few hours.

"Not particularly; I am trying to understand it," Blake told Harry without even lifting his head from the book.
"Wake up," Blake insisted loudly, knocking at Harry's door — it was just after six thirty in the morning.

"Wha… why?" Harry murmured sleepily, opening his eyes and groaning at the fact the wizard was wide awake, dressed for the day... and smartly dressed at that. What time was it? It must be early since he was still so tired; it felt as though he'd only just closed his eyes. Harry squinted at the clock, before grumbling inwardly and putting his glasses on to read the time. His eyes widened; six thirty? He'd been sleeping for an hour! He had spent all night reading the books about Occlumency and Legilimency. He'd heard Blake say that he should do things himself instead of relying on Hermione and he'd gotten angry about it... it made him want to prove that he had the smarts to do it himself. The books explained the process thoroughly, and it looked as if Blake had given him the books he really needed to understand it. When he first began reading it, he'd been asking himself how he was supposed to suppress his own feelings; it seemed an impossible task. Yet it went on to talk about a shield, magic, and then he understood.

"We are going to Diagon Alley. The earlier we go, the quicker we can get everything we need, and be back home before anyone is even up." Blake explained, "The shops open up at seven; I wish to be there then. Be quick, breakfast is already made." With that he exited the bedroom, idly noticing that one of the books was still on the bed. Hopefully Harry was going to take his studies seriously, but in his future, it had been the death of Sirius Black that truly led him on the path to self-destruction; that and the prophecy, as well as Dumbledore's actions ... or rather inactions.

Blake wandered through the house; he had already been up for over an hour and a half, which he'd spent training and taking a quick shower before dressing and wakening Harry up. His breakfast was already waiting for him, along with a cup of black coffee. He would definitely need it — it was going to be a long day. The books on theoretical time travel had been somewhat useless, but that didn't surprise him, seeing as it was in fact theoretical. He had found one that seemed the most realistic, but he wasn't putting his money on it. He'd been here for weeks already, which changed things, and he hadn't been forced back. He thought that this could only indicate that he wouldn't be forced back to the future... if such a thing could be done.

Automatically eating his breakfast, he pondered on Dumbledore's possible reactions and actions now that Harry was out of his sphere of control. He'd put himself in danger; Dumbledore would do anything to get him back, including feeding Harry lies about him, when he returned to Hogwarts. Fortunately that would be a waste of time, with a little luck Harry would learn to close off his mind so that Dumbledore couldn't figure out the real truth. The Order probably already knew as well, so he would need to keep an eye out for them. He knew all the members, including Dumbledore's contacts that didn't attend the meetings.

Blake's hand automatically went for his wand, twitching when a pop startled him out of his thoughts. Sighing inaudibly, he remained impassive as his heartbeat slowly began to beat at a more regular rhythm. He nodded his thanks to Dobby who had placed breakfast for Harry on the table, and disappeared again. He owed Dobby his life; if he hadn't come, hadn't known what to do — how to heal him, he would have died. Harry must be on his way, if Dobby was putting the
breakfast out for him. Good, he'd only taken seven minutes; they might just be able to leave on
time like he wanted.

"Good morning," Blake said formally, watching the boy as he walked across the room and sat
down.

"Morning," Harry murmured quietly, still tired.

"Did you understand what you've read so far?" Blake enquired, watching as Harry scoffed down
his breakfast — at least he had more manners than Ronald, he supposed.

"I've read both books," Harry admitted, flushing red still as he remembered Blake's reprimand from
yesterday.

Blake's eyebrow arched in surprise, "I'm pleased you are taking this seriously, because it is. I'm
sure you could figure out why."

"Because someone could read my mind?" Harry guessed, but he'd always thought that Snape could
do it. It was just the look he'd get on his face, like he knew he was up to something.

"More than one someone, but it also prevents you from being possessed," Blake informed him
grimly.

Harry stared at Blake cautiously; he had a feeling that this was more than just something of a
preventative measure. "It happened to you?" Why would someone go to the trouble of possessing
him?

"It did," Blake confirmed, "Believe me, it's worse than even the Cruciatatus Curse. That, added to the
fact your body is outside of your control, that you're nothing but a bystander watching it happen but
unable to do a damn thing." His green eyes were gleaming darkly; he had been possessed twice; the
first was bad enough but the second? Ten times worse; not only had he nearly killed someone — or
rather in his possessed state he'd been nearly forced to — but he'd almost been killed himself after
being forced, in his possessed state, to leave the safety of the safe house. "Closing your mind is one
of the most important things to do; you must learn, and I know you can do it."

"How did you learn?" Harry asked, still trying to digest the fact he'd actually been possessed and he
could only think of a few people who would want to do that: Voldemort or his Death Eaters.

"The way it was written about in the book. Follow the guidelines, it won't steer you wrong," Blake
suggested, taking a sip of his coffee which was now cool enough for him to drink without scalding
his mouth. He had the entire summer to help Harry become an expert and he would do it if it was
the last thing he did.

Harry nodded before staring at Blake, opening his mouth before closing it with a snap; he didn't
want to start the day with Blake in a mood because he felt offended.

"Go ahead, ask your question," Blake ordered without even looking at him.

Harry gaped, how on earth could he do that? He had been looking at the coffee! "Why do you not
like Sirius?" he asked hesitantly.

"What gave you the impression that I disliked him?" Blake queried, looking amused instead of
offended.

"The face you made when you asked me if I wanted him here," Harry pointed out confused; if he
didn't hate him, then why was he acting like Sirius didn't have a part in their life?

"I guess you haven't come to terms with the fact that Sirius sees you as a carbon copy of your father yet," Blake stated, placing his empty cup down for Dobby to take away whenever he was ready. It was nearly time to go, so he hoped Harry was finished digging for answers. "That, and the fact Sirius Black wasn't part of my future."

"Why? What did he do?" Harry cried out in shock.

"Harry this is war, did you think that everyone you care about will come out unscathed? Let me enlighten you, it's not true," Blake told him firmly, green eyes glimmering in sympathy. "I bet when you wanted answers…none of this crossed your mind. Know that I am not doing it to hurt you, I am doing it to save lives."

"He dies?" Harry whispered out, shocked.

"He does. He's more impulsive than us, and that's saying something," Blake muttered rolling his eyes, displaying his exasperation. "You understand that he needs help mental help after his exposure to the Dementors?"

"Why didn't anyone help him?" Harry was beginning to feel very frustrated.

"Honestly? Because he was useless; he couldn't fight or help the Order, otherwise he would have been arrested. He didn't fit into Dumbledore's grand scheme of things. Now I've set something up where he will get the help he needs. He may visit once a week, other than that there is much to be done. Sirius needs to get better, and you, you need to train before going back to Hogwarts. If you think what's happened so far is bad…it's nothing on what happens years from now," Blake stated calmly. "Don't try and defend Dumbledore, we both know you have your doubts, have had them since we were eleven. Only the desire to be loved clouded it completely, warring inside of you until you had no choice but to accept the reality."

Harry stared at the floor, nobody knew about his worries, he rarely even thought about them. He didn't like it, I mean he didn't want to doubt the Headmaster; he was always there for him when he needed it. He'd looked up to him, seeking approval, yet the fact he'd set the path for him to face Voldemort when he was eleven began the doubts. Unfortunately, unfounded doubts weren't enough to make him hate Dumbledore; it seemed like Blake did though…from his words it sounded like he was blaming Dumbledore for his godfather's death. Now that Sirius had been proven innocent, maybe the future had already changed. The news was splashed all over the newspaper, that and about Voldemort's return.

"Let's go," Blake suggested after a few moments of silence; it was obvious Harry was through asking questions for now. He had thought that too soon, apparently, as Harry asked another question as he stood up.

"What if Sirius doesn't agree to get help?" Harry asked, his green eyes filled with worry — even he knew how stubborn his godfather was.

"He will," Blake assured him, smirking deviously; he knew just how to get through to the wizard. "Hold on, I'm going to Apparate us." Holding onto Harry, he Apparated them both out of the building and into Diagon Alley.

"I don't have my key," Harry protested immediately, realizing that he had no money to get anything.
“I know, but in future please do not let anyone handle it. Regardless you do not need your key,” Blake brushed it off; "You are my ward, which means I am obliged to buy you everything you need and want." With that he began walking towards the first shop on his list, Madam Malkin's. Harry would need decent clothes, and not just his school clothes. Everything in his trunk wasn't worth a penny; no, all it was fit for was burning to ash. "Keep up; do not leave my side for any reason," he warned Harry, all the while glancing around, paying particular attention to certain spots, that gave vantage positions to watch over the Alley without losing the subject or being too noticeable.

Oh, he was suspicious as hell, thought Harry stepping into Madam Malkin's, watching Blake's eyes roam around the shop, even trying to look in the back while Madam Malkin's attention was on him.

Blake relaxed but remained somewhat alert, standing in a position that allowed him to see both doors, especially the front door.

"Can I help you?" Madam Malkin asked, turning to face Blake; she had fitted him for an entire wardrobe just a week ago. He still looked as though he was about to be attacked any moment, perhaps the young boy would help him relax. Although given what the news had just revealed, perhaps he had a right to be on edge. Perhaps he was an Unspeakable and already knew before the public did; it would be like the Ministry, trying to come up with a solution before having to inevitably inform the public. It was their duty to make sure the public was well informed, she just wished with all her heart that it wasn't true, that Voldemort wasn't back. She hadn't believed the rumours that Harry was deluded though, he had always been such a sweet, albeit shy young boy. That young boy was currently in her shop; the clothes he had on looked old, perhaps from one of his friends in the Weasley family? Nobody wore that style anymore... with the obvious exception of those that couldn't afford new clothes.

"Full wardrobe, formal and informal, as well as his usual school uniform," Blake stated curtly, wasting no time.

"Colours?" Madam Malkin immediately asked, bringing out a notepad from her apron and gazing at him, all professional.

"Nothing gaudy, blues, greens, blacks; perhaps some blood red and neutral colours," Blake replied tersely. "How long will it take?"

"Five hours at least," Madam Malkin answered, already knowing what his answer would be — he had done this for himself just a fortnight ago.

"Unacceptable; put it on rush order," Blake demanded, "I will add ten percent of the total price if you can have it done within two hours."

"Very well, consider it done," Malkin agreed immediately, he hadn't offered that the last time. He had totally dismissed the idea of her sending them to him, he obviously didn't want to say where he lived, but if her suspicions were right and he was an Unspeakable, it was little wonder. She would just call in her assistants early and have them get to work right now. Push back her other orders and let them know it would be delayed; it wasn't as if they were in a rush for them anyway.

"Good, I would like the same charms I had placed on my own if there is enough time before I collect them, start with the school uniform first," Blake stated.

"Dragonhide gloves included?" Malkin questioned, she'd had a few orders for them this year already. "Step up, Mr. Potter!" she said kindly, gesturing towards the little stool she had making it easier to do her work, still listening intently for this wizard's answer. She did find it curious that Harry was here with him, he usually came in alone or with the Weasleys.
"As well as a new winter set: cloak, hat, gloves, scarf; the whole shebang,"

"Right away," she said, "That's you done; would you like something to drink while you wait?"

"We will be back in two hours," Blake informed her, silently gesturing to Harry to move. Harry did, and they left the shop just as quietly as they came, the door closing with a silent click.

"What charms?" Harry questioned curiously.

"Charms that allow the outfits to expand both in height and around the middle," Blake told him wryly, "Then there's those that protect you from Potion spills and the essential ones that prevents your clothes from catching fire and such." He didn't want to name them all, he would be there all day. Crossing over the way and into a side alley, he entered his next destination.

"Can I help you?" a bored monotone voice asked without even looking up at his customers as he thumbed through the newspaper he was reading.

"You can start by paying attention, unless you wish me to take my business elsewhere!" Blake barked at the wizard, glaring at him. Such a display would get him killed! He should always be alert and aware of his surroundings; to him this wizard was a bloody idiot.

"Um… right, er… how can I help you?" the wizard, David, stuttered, struck dumb by Blake and his words.

"Go pick a trunk, any one you like," Blake told Harry firmly, moving to the side and remaining there. "I would suggest one with safety features."

"Let me show you!" David replied eagerly, very different from how he had been mere moments ago. Especially now that he knew it would be a big sale, the safety featured trunks were in the higher priced range. He got even more hyper when he noticed the scar on the boy's forehead; this wasn't just anyone, it was Harry Potter! If people knew he was getting expensive trunks, they would want one too — it was guaranteed to work as a trendsetter. "Let me show you our best."

Harry followed the wizard, annoyed by the fact he hadn't removed his gaze from his scar, it was just a bloody mark, for Merlin's sake. He pressed his hand down over his hair, making the scar impossible to see. Only then did the shop assistant snap out of it, and began showing him the 'one of a kind' trunks and explained all the safety features that were on them. How nobody would be able to get into his trunk unless it was him, that his unique magical signature would prevent anyone touching it.

"What happens if they did try to open it?" Harry asked curiously, he liked the look of it, it was much like Moody's trunk, and he would definitely fit everything into it. He was worried about his own trunk though; what would happen to everything? Would they let Hedwig out so she could find him? Would she be able to find him? It had never been a problem for her before; she was very good at finding him no matter where he was. She was his familiar, though, so she had a small bond with him that let her know.

"It depends on what you want on it," Blake informed him with a satisfied lilt to his voice.

"It could be a simple spell to zap them, like a little electric shock, or something that will make sure you know they've been trying to enter your trunk, like turning them blue or red — even just their hands. There are a lot of protective measures out there. I have a magazine you can choose from the list of spells," David explained, excited. This was the most expensive trunk in the shop — if he sold it, his boss was going to be impressed; he had been trying to sell it for years. "But I must
inform you, since it's going to be in a school, the more... lethal charms cannot be used." It was a public setting, so it was illegal to put lethal works on a trunk.

"Do you like it?" Blake asked, looking at Harry with an eyebrow arched in curiosity. He knew the boy did, after all, he had admired Moody's trunk, which was very similar to this one.

"How much is it?" Harry turned to David wanting an answer.

"Three thousand Galleons," David told him, watching them both and hoping he wasn't about to lose a sale.

"Isn't that a bit much?" Harry gaped in shock; his first one hadn't been that expensive.

"We'll take it, magically protected to prevent anyone getting into it; the charm to turn their hand red will also be welcomed if their hand remains on the trunk longer than five seconds with the intention of entering it." Blake ordered, his voice icy while talking to David. "If anyone tries to open it magically, then the electric charge seems appropriate, at level three." He didn't ask if it was possible since he already knew it was. Level three wasn't the highest; number seven could be compared to the Cruciatius Curse, and that was the one he used.

"But it's three thousand Galleons!" Harry cried out, before whispering heatedly at Blake. "It's more than I've ever spent in four years."

"I'll go and put the charms on it!" David said quickly, levitating the trunk over to his workroom and began layering the spells on before Harry Potter convinced whoever this was that he didn't want to buy it.

Harry opened his mouth to protest sharply at the wizard who was scuttling away with the trunk.

"It won't even make a little dent in our fortune. The vault you've seen is merely our trust fund; if James and Lily were alive, it would be your vault to buy whatever you wanted. A new broom, sweets at Hogsmeade, books you wanted, posters... absolutely anything. It was to last you until you turned seventeen and received your inheritance," Blake told him curtly.

"But... but..."

"Nobody told you, I know. Griphook should have taken you aside, but with Hagrid there and the contents they removed from the other vault, it wasn't prudent. That, and they probably assumed you knew everything, as was proper for the heir to the Potter Estate," Blake replied.

"Everyone knows I was raised by Muggles!" Harry hissed out, angry at everyone's assumptions; not just angry, but tired and defeated by it.

"Indeed. Regardless of whether you were informed when you were eleven, they tell you everything upon your seventeenth birthday, and are quite apoplectic when they realize you didn't know. They weren't in the wrong per se, since they acted within the letter of the law." Blake added it wasn't just the Goblins' fault; it was everyone's, at the end of the day. "Do not worry about money."

"I've never really worried about it," Harry pointed out, "I just don't like buying much." He took enough out to get his school supplies and enough to buy some sweets on the train and during Hogsmeade.

Blake snorted bitterly, "You mean so Ronald Weasley doesn't have a hissy fit?"

Harry flushed but refused to answer, merely looked over at the wizard who was busy chanting over
his shiny new trunk.

"Go collect your initial plates," Blake ordered, pointing towards the rack filled with gold plated metal alphabet letters.

"You're very demanding," Harry muttered exasperated as he made his way over to the rack and began to pull out the ones he needed, a H, J and of course a P. What had turned him into this? The war? Just remembering their earlier conversation he shuddered softly, it sounded pretty damn grim. Possession, Sirius dying, and probably a lot of others if his comment about losing people were to go by. If he lost Sirius or Hermione or Ron, he didn't know how he would cope. He handed the letter plates over to David; he didn't have to tell him which order they needed to be in — everyone in the magical world knew his bloody name.

"Wait, place your wand here, run your magic into it," David instructed, Harry removed his wand and did as he was told; the trunk glowed brightly and the wizard nodded, obviously satisfied that it had worked.

"How much longer?" Blake enquired in irritation. He was behind already; they had a lot to do today and only two hours to do it in. That's if they were lucky and nobody tried anything.

"Two seconds," David reassured, hurriedly removing the letters from the packets and magically welding them to the trunk. "Would you like it shrunk and packaged?" he added quickly, as it was obvious they were in a hurry.

"Shrink only," Blake replied, handing over his Gringotts card when the wizard reached the till again. Once the bill was paid the trunk was handed over; by then Harry had rejoined them, and Blake gave it to the teenager, smirking at the twinkle in his eyes. He was excited, whether he showed it or not, although sooner or later he would be reminded of Ronald Weasley and his constant jealousy.

"Thanks," Harry said, putting it in his trouser pocket, he still had the clothes on he'd worn at the trial, but Dobby had taken them at night so they were cleaned for the next day.

As soon as Blake had his card back he turned around and exited the shop, once again looking around which was easy to do since not many people were about yet. They wouldn't be either, since the news had just been posted in the Daily Prophet about Voldemort's return. They would probably take a few hours to digest it then begin panicking, as well as panic buying, trying to stock up so they didn't have to leave their houses.

"Is that us finished?" Harry enquired, doing as he'd been asked and sticking to Blake closely.

"Not even close," Blake chuckled wryly as they walked towards a shop Harry hadn't stepped foot in for four years, although he had seen Ollivander just months ago during the Weighing of the Wands.

"Wait, I already have a wand," Harry stated in confusion, he knew Blake had one as well… well, more than one really.

"The greatest asset in war is always to have a back-up in place; they think because they've disarmed you that you're vulnerable. Most wizards don't even bother having a second wand, so let's go. Hopefully it won't take you as long as it did the last time," he said dryly, opening the door and urging Harry in, aware of the charm they'd tripped that alerted Ollivander to their presence. Ollivander was a rare wizard who could see auras, which made it easy for him to match a wizard to a wand. Or rather the wand to the wizard, since that was exactly what the wand did; it chose the person with whom to bond.
"Ah, Mr. Slytherin, I didn't expect you back so soon," Ollivander commented, appearing from the back of the shop, his eyes as always glimmering with otherworldly knowledge. "A second wand, I assume?"

"Indeed," Blake agreed, nodding firmly. The look on Ollivander's face when he'd wandered in a week ago had been hilarious. He was under a Vow, and could say nothing to anyone about him, or anything he did. Which of course included this; there was no law against having a second wand, though, not even in Hogwarts' rules.

"Let me see," Ollivander muttered disappearing into the back of his shop, the shuffling of boxes could be heard before the eccentric wizard reappeared with a dozen boxes in his arms which he laid on the counter. "Come, Mr. Potter, let's equip you with another wand." He just hoped his shop didn't end up in need of significant repair. The boy was powerful, and it was known he would become even more powerful with age — as proven by his other self. "Ha! Here we go, give it a try."

Harry took the wand and gave it a wave like he had done with his first one. Nothing, not even a drawer opened or vase smashed like last time.

"Hmm, obviously not," Ollivander muttered, plucking the wand from Harry and replacing it in the box before putting it aside and opening another box. Handing it over his silver eyes watched Harry curiously, if it was anything like last two times (Harry and Blake of course) it would take quite a while but he'd never failed a customer yet. Any witch or wizard that stepped into his shop walked out with a wand. "Nope, not that one!" he cried out as every single drawer slammed open.

"Try this one," Ollivander suggested, as another wand joined the no pile, as the pile he'd brought out began to get smaller. "That's disappointing; no, not that one," as his door was yanked open and closed by an invisible force — along with the glass smashing into smithereens. Those walking by didn't even blink, used to things smashing around in his shop as someone tried to get their wand. He flicked his own wand, repairing the damage as he got the teenager to try another.

The three of them knew immediately that it was right one as he glowed powerfully, warming, then heating the room to unbearably hot conditions. Sparks flew out of it before it faded and remained still.

"Which one is it?" Blake asked curiously.

Harry glanced at Blake; he wasn't being demanding with Ollivander like he had been with Madam Malkin and the guy at the trunk store. He couldn't help but wonder why; did he respect Ollivander or something? He doubted all the time in the world would help him figure out this man who somehow he had become.

"Applewood, nine inches with, unsurprisingly, a Phoenix feather wand core," Ollivander stated. "Applewood wands are not made in great numbers. They are powerful, and best suited to an owner of high aims and ideals, as this wood mixes poorly with Dark magic. It is said that the possessor of an apple wand will be well-loved and long-lived, and I have often noticed that customers of great personal charm find their perfect match in an applewood wand. An unusual ability to converse with other magical beings in their native tongues is often found among apple wand owners. Considering that Harry had the ability to talk to snakes, it is perhaps appropriate that he discovered such a wand would choose him."

"How much?" Harry asked, feeling the weight of it. He was surprised by how powerful it felt compared to his other wand.
"I also need a calf and wrist fitted wand holster, preferably Hungarian Horntail Dragonhide, if you have it," Blake asked before Ollivander could reply.

"Of course," Ollivander was not surprised by the request as he ducked under his desk and pulled out two strips of dragonhide. He moved out from behind his counter and silently requesting Harry's wrist, fitting it to him using magic. "How does that feel?"

"Good," Harry said, giving Ollivander a smile.

"Put this on your calf," Ollivander instructed and handed over the other wand holster.

Harry bent over and put the holster on his leg. It was too big, but one spell from Ollivander and it began to shrink until it fitted comfortable against his leg. "How do I take it off?" It was like a second skin. Sure, he could probably get the one off his wrist, but his leg holster would be impossible.

"You don't have to; it won't rot or get dirty, it's self cleaning," Ollivander explained. "If you wish to remove it, I'm sure Mr. Slytherin will tell you the spells required."

"Indeed," Blake stated amused. "How much?"

"Sixteen galleons in total, Mr. Slytherin," Ollivander told him as he returned to his counter.

Blake nodded as if he had suspected that would be the price; removing a pouch from his pocket he handed over the required amount. "Pleasure doing business, as always."

"It is," Ollivander said, his lips twitching into a genuine smile.

"You might want to add some spells to the shop and keep a Portkey on your person; in about a year you'll become a person of interest," Blake warned him solemnly, before he exited the shop, missing his reaction.

"I thought you didn't want to talk about the future?" Harry whispered as he scrambled after Blake just as surprised as Ollivander was at what he'd said... judging by the old man's face.

"Do you think it's because I'm scared of screwing up the future?" Blake questioned, speaking low so the two witches who were walking just ahead of them wouldn't hear.

"Isn't it?" Harry asked. Yes, he probably would never understand Blake. He stopped abruptly as the older wizard paused.

"No, Harry, it's not," Blake admitted, facing him, "I hope to Merlin you never have to find out." His green eyes showed just how haunted he was by the things he'd seen and done. "I'll do everything I can to end this war before it gets to the extent it reached in my future." With that he began walking again.

"Won't you changing the future stop you coming back in the first place?" Harry asked catching up with him.

"Do not discuss this here," Blake stated curtly, glancing around.

"Sorry," Harry gushed. The holsters felt odd on him; he could just feel them and no more.

"It's getting busier than I thought," Blake muttered looking around suspiciously.

Harry turned to face him again, was it just him or was Blake actually anxious?
"In here," Blake said, getting them both into Flourish and Blotts. Instead of waiting around, he grabbed a basket and began to put books into it. Harry was amazed, how could he remember which books he would need for Hogwarts? Especially if it was years ago. He wasn't sure how old Blake was, but he didn't look as if he had just left Hogwarts, he looked old — teacher kind of old.

"Err… we turn into Hermione?" Harry rasped out at the number of books; he prayed they weren't all for him. Although he knew he would read them if Blake asked it of him. He wasn't sure why, but he wanted his approval, to show him that he could figure things out himself and he didn't always rely on Hermione.

"Knowledge is power, Harry, the more spells you have in your arsenal, the more chance you have of winning," Blake informed him seriously as he picked up more books; he wasn't even glancing at the prices. As he'd told Harry, they wouldn't even make a dent in the inheritance. Plus this wasn't even half of what he had bought a week ago. He had simply ordered them and had them put aside so all he'd had to do was go in and get the pre-packed box and leave. Backtracking, he added two additional books he knew Harry would enjoy before placing the basket on the counter.

Turning to the door he watched the outside idly as the books were rung up, placing his card under the woman's nose without turning, not interested in the total — regardless of that he was told. "Put it on my card." He glanced at the time; the two hours were nearly up, how did time manage to go so fast? It was ridiculous. He still had three or four more shops he planned on going to. He may as well go to Madam Malkin's and get the clothes while he was on this side of the Alley.

"Would you like them shrunk?" the shop keeper asked, gazing at Blake.

"Please," Blake agreed, actually managing to sound sincere.

Despite the fact it had been shrunk, the bulging box was too big to be placed in his pocket. Instead Blake handed it to Harry and left him to carry it. It wasn't heavy, so Harry didn't have much trouble.

"Just a few more shops," Blake promised, before swiftly making his way towards Gringotts, the Potter estate was in desperate need of repair.

"Technically this isn’t a shop," Harry pointed out, feeling smug when Blake’s lips twitched in genuine amusement.

"Indeed," Blake agreed, his Dragon-hide books clicking across the marble lobby of Gringotts as he made his way to the tellers. “I require Griphook’s presence,”

"Griphook is busy," the teller replied without so much as a glance up.

“I am Lord Blake Slytherin, and I have with me Harry Potter, heir to the Nobel most Ancient House of Potter do you wish to reiterate that statement?” Blake said in a false honeyed tone.

The goblin visibly swallowed, its black beady eyes glancing between them in shock. “Very well, follow me, I’ll lead you to his office.”

“Much obliged,” Blake said sardonically.

With that the goblin walked as quickly as his little feet would carry him, leading them through a section of Gringotts that Harry had never seen. He’d always assumed it was just tellers and vaults, the rooms were just like everywhere else in Gringotts, pristine, gleaming and with an abundance of weaponry in cases shelved along the walls. He was vividly reminded of the sword of Gryffindor when it came to one particular weapon but it was emeralds not rubies.
“Beautiful aren’t they?” Blake said appreciating the weaponry for what they were.

“Um, I suppose so,” Harry blinked in surprise, he’d never really thought on it.

“Lord Slytherin with his new ward Heir Potter,” the goblin used official titles to announce them to Griphook before he practically ran back to his teller. Praying that he wouldn’t be demoted to a miner status before the end of the night for annoying two of their important clients.

“Lord Slytherin, how can I help you?” Griphook stood up as Blake entered, Harry observed genuine respect on the Goblin’s face, something he was definitely not used to seeing.

“I want to see a copy of all comings and goings from the Potter trust fund for the past thirteen years,” Blake demanded, sitting down, only then did Griphook do the same. He knew what would be found, but Harry definitely didn’t.

“Of course,” Griphook said, opening one of the drawers, which was half empty, all Gringotts managers had a copy of the folders which was self updating, keyed to the magic in the key which was required for each transaction. He found the Potter folder easily enough, and hoisted it out and placed it on his desk. He found the statements easily enough and handed it over without a word.

“Here,” Blake handed it over to the teen, watching the green confused eyes glance over the statement he’d never seen one before that much Blake knew too.

“Why is there so many transactions? The only money taken out is numbered to four times?” Harry glanced over all of them perplexed.

“There is only one person who had your key prior to you joining the wizarding world,” Blake stated, “The amount he has removed of course is pocket change to your overall worth,” he conceded.

“Excuse me, Lord Slytherin…are you implying that Mr. Potter has not agreed to these withdrawals?” Griphook looked incensed at the mere idea of someone potentially stealing from their clients.

“Of course he didn’t,” Blake replied, “Fortunately there is a limit one can withdraw in a single year, since this is a child’s vault,”

“But why? He’s the Headmaster…he had his own money…” Harry blanched as the reality sunk in.

“Not something I was ever able to get an answer to,” Blake replied idly. “The reason I am here is I wish for the key to Harry’s vault to be changed,” that would prevent Dumbledore from dipping into Harry’s trust fund this year.

“It will be done immediately,” Griphook said still indignant. “Do you wish for charges to be pressed?” it was thievery after all. He quickly exited his office and was barking orders in gobbledegook.

“No,” Blake shook it off, he knew Dumbledore would just get off with it, stating that he had passed it along to the Dursley’s for Harry’s upkeep.

“What? Why not?” Harry protested, surprised that Blake would say no to a chance of taking Dumbledore down.

“Out of everything he had done, this is…nothing, Harry,” Blake informed the teen, his green eyes gleaming with dark pity and rage. “Believe me he would be able to talk himself out of it, no I have
other plans in motion believe me he will pay for all he’s done,” he knew the goblins would find that amusing, especially Griphook who had just returned.

Harry quietened at that, he knew Blake didn’t exaggerate, from what he’d seen so far he told the complete honest truth and that scared him more than anything else.

“I would also like a copy of all things pertaining to the Potter estate,” Blake informed Griphook who had just sat down again.

A single click of his fingers there were two folders now lying on the table, he handed the copied one over, which would not self-update like the original. He passed it over, and unsurprisingly Blake didn’t begin reading right away.

“The new key you requested,” a goblin said, rushing in.

“Thank you, Silvertin,” Griphook accepted the key and passed it over to Blake.

Blake accepted it and removed a gold chain from around his neck and placed the key on it and handed it to Harry. “Keep it with you at all times, do not give it to anyone, no matter how much you may trust them.” he informed the teen sternly, catching the folder before it fell to the floor. It was going to take a while to get the Potter Estate back up and running the way it should be. It had stayed in a state of disrepair due to the fact James had never written a will, none that anyone had found anyway, that didn’t mean someone hadn’t made it disappear.

“I will,” Harry promised.

“Good, we must depart we have much to do today,” Blake said standing up, “Thank you for your help today, Griphook, I shall be in touch regarding the Potter estate soon enough.”

“May the gods grant you more gold, Lord Slytherin,” Griphook said respectfully.

“And may your coffers never empty,” Blake nodded grimly, before they exited Griphook’s office, through the main floor and down the steps and out of Gringotts completely.

They couldn't wait around; he had Sirius scheduled to come in less than ten minutes, and he wanted to be back before the wizard appeared. Although if he tried to bring anyone with him, he would be in for one hell of a surprise, the Portkey would only let one person through to his property, and that person would be Sirius — the intended recipient. Hopefully he would do as asked and actually bring Harry’s old trunk, he knew how precious the items inside it were, still were, actually. Unfortunately his were in the future, with the exception of the invisibility cloak. Blake hastily guided Harry out, his eyes automatically catching familiar black robes. He wanted to snort in amusement, like he would be fooled by glamours; that was Severus, his walk and robes were unmistakable. Which meant there were other Order members there. Cursing quietly, he practically ran them both towards Madam Malkin's and closed the door, putting up a ward preventing anyone from coming in. It would disappear as soon as his magic disappeared from the vicinity; at least he had the upper hand here since this type of ward wasn't invented yet.

"Are they ready?" Blake demanded, watching as one of the female order members tried to open the door.

"Yes, everything is done as you asked," Madam Malkin confirmed. With three assistants, she'd gotten it done double time, as well as her back orders so she wasn't behind. She quickly grabbed the box and closed it glancing at the door worriedly; was something going on? Was Harry in danger? It didn't seem likely.
"Put it on my card, I believe you already have it on file?" Blake enquired, lifting the box up.

"I do," Madam Malkin nodded quickly, warily looking at the door. There were three people there now, trying to get into her shop and shouting for Harry to let them in.

"I can't believe they'd actually resort to kidnapping you in broad daylight," Blake spat bitterly, glaring at the Order members.

"Kidnap?" Madam Malkin squeaked in shock. Her assistants began talking amongst themselves, just as appalled as Malkin was by what she was hearing.

"Mr. Potter is my ward, I have legal custody of him," Blake told her. "Thank you."

Harry watched Blake closely. He didn't just let that slip, he must be wanting people to know about his placement with him. In his own way he was keeping them both safe and making the Order outcasts. Blake wrapped his magic around Harry and they were gone, just as the Order burst through the door, shattering it into smithereens, Madam Malkin wasn't going to be happy with them in the slightest.
Chapter 5

The Games They Play

Chapter 5

“SIRIUS!” Harry called in surprise, shocked to see his godfather standing in Blake’s home, he didn’t care how awkward he looked standing there.

"Harry!” Sirius called out, running the short distance and hugging him for all he was worth. Relief pouring off him in waves; the past few days had been hell, due to the worry and constant fear that something had happened. The curt letter he had gotten had done nothing to ease the worry, either. He’d done what had been demanded, very reluctantly, not daring to let anyone in on it — not even Remus, for fear that Harry would pay the price. He would willingly give up his life for him — Harry was his godson after all, and it was his duty to look after him. "Thank Merlin you’re alright!” Unwrapping his arms, he set Harry back at arm’s length and inspected him — he was still in the clothes he’d worn to go to the Ministry.

"I’m fine, Sirius," Harry said, stepping back out of his hold completely, feeling extremely awkward. To his right was a wizard who showed every emotion; to his left was a powerful wizard who showed nothing. He was a strong, powerful presence that he couldn't forget was there. He wondered if it was because they were the same person or if everyone felt like that beside him. He stared between the two of them, watching as they sized each other up… or rather Sirius did; Blake just stood there impassively.

"I assume you brought his trunk?” Blake queried, his gaze never wavering from Black’s.

Sirius didn't answer at first; his gaze turned to the bare forearms of the wizard opposite him, but there was no Dark Mark. He didn't understand it; why else would this wizard want with his godson? Why was Harry so comfortably standing at his side? What had he done to him? Had he enchanted him?

"Well?” Blake barked impatiently, a slight frown appearing on his face.

"Um… yeah, I did," Sirius said while blinking rapidly, deciding to be honest — it might help get answers in return.

"Good, hand it over," Blake demanded, holding his hand out in expectation.

"Harry?” Sirius questioned, glancing at his godson, his grey eyes filled with worry.

"What is it?” Harry asked, wondering at his godfather’s expression.

A sudden pop interrupted their staring match, as Dobby made an appearance. Snapping his fingers, lunch was spread out on the table like a feast for them all to enjoy. He left without a word, knowing Blake wasn't one for small talk. It saddened him, what his Master Harry had become, but he was loyal nonetheless and would help however he could. The look on Blake's face when he first saw him was one of heartbreak and pain; he knew he had somehow died in the future. He was sure his future had changed now, but he and all creatures knew how hard it was for the future to be changed. It wasn't easy or simple.

"Sit and eat,” Blake told Harry firmly.
"Don't talk to him like that!" Sirius snapped, moving in front of his godson as if to defend him.

"Unless you wish to be evicted without a single word more, I suggest you shut up about things that do not concern you. The boy is rail thin; he needs to eat to become stronger. Unlike you, I won't allow the boy to suffer, not at his so-called relatives while you hide in Grimmauld Place like a coward, neglecting your duties as godfather," Blake insisted harshly, watching Sirius flinch as if he had just been struck. "You knew but did nothing; you have failed him, and more importantly, you failed Lily and James. They never should have elected to make you Harry's godfather." Seeing Harry opening his mouth to protest, Blake gave him a pointed look; he was not to intervene.

"I-I-I couldn't do anything," Sirius rasped out, "I couldn't. I was a wanted man, I would have endangered him."

"Is that what you tell yourself to sleep easier? Is it?" Blake asked sardonically.

Sirius' eyes narrowed in anger as he found his own voice. "You don't know what you're talking about!"

Harry's eyes were darting back and forth, his heart pounding like a drum. He had thought these things himself, but defended his godfather. To see an adult stand up for him — even if it was his older self — was odd. He wasn't used to it and it made him feel somewhat worthy. Worthy of being defended, and it made him feel an odd ache in his heart. Was it fondness? Or relief that someone was actually defending him? Stepping up and trying to find answers or rather demanding to receive them.

"No? You didn't abandon your godson, leaving him with a half-giant whose idea of a pet is a dragon? To chase after Pettigrew, instead of taking your godson and leaving right away for the Ministry of magic to declare your innocence and let them know that the real culprit was still at large?" Blake scoffed derisively. "Or deciding that going to alert the so-called Order to Voldemort's return was more important than giving your godson moral support?! He is fourteen years old! He had just faced Voldemort, been cursed with the Cruciatus curse! A curse that grown men tremble in fear at the mere mention of, never mind experiencing it at the tender age of fourteen… twice in one night! You thought, 'oh, no, I best do as Dumbledore demands and run after people to tell them that he had returned'! As if he was about to attack everywhere right away!"

Sirius continued to gape, stunned by the wizard’s words. He was seriously wounded by them; each word was like a knife to his heart. Turning to Harry, he whispered, "Do you feel that way, Harry? Truly?" His blue eyes unwittingly began to tear up slightly. He didn't want to believe that Harry felt this way, but Slytherin wouldn't have known this information unless Harry had told him.

"Tell him the truth, he must learn it to truly understand. To have a relationship, it must be based on trust and understanding," Blake told Harry, speaking quietly so that Sirius couldn't overhear, "Only then will he get the help he needs." He wouldn't be surprised if Black was actually able to hear them… but perhaps it was a good thing, it would mean he couldn't be accused of manipulating Harry.

Harry opened his mouth, clearly wishing to protest; he didn't want to admit those things to Sirius. It wasn't fair; he'd done the best he could. He shook his head numbly, hating that he was being torn in two, it wasn't right. He stepped back his green eyes filled with conflicting emotions. Staring between both of them, his mind reeled as he tried to decide what to do.

"Harry?" Sirius said more urgently, giving Harry a peculiar look, was his silence… this indecision an admission that he agreed with Blake, or was he just too terrified to go against Slytherin and actually say what he thought? Sirius didn't know which one he would prefer, if he was honest with
himself. Would he even believe what Harry said? This man had taken his godson; who knows what he was threatening him with.

"I'm sorry, Sirius," Harry said sadly, swallowing thickly, staring at the floor momentarily before meeting Sirius' gaze steadily. "I have thought all these things. I would have done anything to see you after what happened, but I knew how dangerous it was."

"I'm so sorry," Sirius whispered horrified, seeing the genuine truth in Harry's eyes. He wasn't being coerced into saying any of this. "I'm so sorry I failed you."

"Go on, tell him," Blake encouraged, sitting down on his chair, staring at his younger self and Sirius Black pensively.

"I'm not my dad, Sirius; I'll never be like him, and I never even knew him… I hardly know anything about my parents…” Harry continued, drawing strength from Blake's presence. "Every time you expect me to be like him — it hurts. I don't know if you see me when you look at me, or only my father."

"When have I thought you were like him?!" Sirius gaped, completely bewildered.

"How quickly you forget," Blake stated derisively; oh, he knew very well what Harry was speaking about.

Harry turned to Blake and shook his head, the wizard had asked him to be honest about his feelings, so that's what he was doing. He didn't want Blake trying to do any more damage than he was about to do himself. He didn't know where he was getting this strength from, but he was suddenly feeling as if a weight had been lifted from him.

"That day you wanted me to meet you in the cave; I didn't want you to come, I didn't want you to be captured and sent back to Azkaban," Harry said, his tone defeated. "Do you remember what you said to me? I do. I was less like my father than you thought."

"You're as different as light and day," Blake said standing up once more, picking up the grapes and eating them.

"What does that mean?" Harry asked, there had been something in Blake's voice, something off and he honestly didn't like it.

"You wouldn't!" Sirius hissed out, suspecting what this wizard was about to spill.

"What's wrong? Scared Harry will see both of you in different light? Afraid that he will find out you blatantly lied to his face?" Blake smirked, eyeing the shocked wizard with amusement.

"You're disgusting," Sirius said, his face screwed up in revulsion, "He's a boy, there are some things he shouldn't know."

"You mean until he finds out on his own and feels betrayed, with nobody to speak to?" Blake said in a deep dark voice, his green eyes flaming with fiery passion.

Harry cringed; he hated having to find out things on his own, worse still being lied too. He didn't even question Blake; after all these were his experiences, just future and past experiences. Sirius must have already lied to him, if he was bringing it up, or he wouldn't risk revealing himself, wouldn't he? Man, he wished he understood why he'd turned out this way; were the betrayals just too much that he was so bitter? Yet he was a good man; he realized that. "What are you talking about?" Harry demanded.
"Nothing!" Sirius exclaimed hastily.

"Go on, give him the news," Blake taunted.

Harry stared at Blake. He was enjoying this, but Harry had a feeling it was more to do with winding Black up rather than hurting him. Didn't he realize he was hurting him anyway? Swallowing thickly he continued to stare at Blake, trying to understand him; he was an enigma. Harry's green eyes glared out his anger and frustration at this situation.

"You don't like me for whatever reason, that's fine, but do not do this to Harry. It's not fair," Sirius protested sharply, still glaring at the wizard.

"Life isn't fair, nor is it fair when someone lies to you," Blake gritted his teeth harshly. He'd been lied to enough; Blake wasn't going to allow it to be done to Harry. "It always comes back to bite you; you should never have lied to him."

"How did he lie to me?!" Harry cried out in exasperation.

Blake gave Sirius a look that clearly said 'go ahead and tell him or I will'. When nothing was forthcoming, Blake rolled his eyes in annoyance. "Do you remember in the cave with Sirius that day, where he informed you that Severus Snape was only ever friends with Death Eaters?"

"Don't!" Sirius muttered grimacing in disgust.

"Yes, why? What does that have to do with anything?" Harry asked in confusion, glancing furtively at Sirius and wondering if he lied, why he had.

"He disgraced your mother's memory," Blake revealed, "The truth of the matter is, that Severus Snape was best friends with your mother, and they knew each other years before they attended Hogwarts. It was he who informed her of everything and anything magical. He was also the reason your family went into hiding; unfortunately, his sacrifice was for nothing, and they chose the wrong person to keep them safe."

"Why did you lie?" Harry asked Sirius, befuddled. Harry watched Blake sit back down and stare at Sirius again; he obviously wanted an answer. It depressed him when he realized that Blake obviously hadn't received one before this; he must have found out after Sirius died.

"The past," Blake informed him, "There is bad blood between Severus, your father, and godfather."

Sirius closed his eyes in defeat. Why was Blake doing this? Why had he brought him here to spill all this?

"Bad blood?" Harry echoed scrunching up his nose in thought. He really hated when Blake got vague, it was annoying as hell.

"That's right; James and Sirius here took an aversion to Severus on the train to Hogwarts. Primary because of his looks, the fact he did not have brand new robes, and the fact his hair is greasy. There's also the fact he wanted to be in Slytherin and the bullying started up immediately. Four against one; not good odds at all," Blake informed him.

"But they're adults now," Harry objected.

"Some hates just run too deep," Blake sighed, ignoring the desperate shakes of Sirius' head. "You see, Sirius thought it would be funny to send Severus down to the Whomping Willow on the night of the full moon. I do not think I need to further my explanation."
"Remus?" Harry gaped, "But how did he survive?"

"Ah, the kicker; Sirius told James what he had done, thinking he would find it hilarious. Fortunately for both Remus and Severus, that he did not. He immediately left the castle, got Severus out of the shack and turned into his Animagus form to fend off the werewolf. Snape was saved by his enemy; can you imagine how you'd feel after being saved by Draco Malfoy?"

"Who are you? How do you know so much?" Sirius asked, horrified. He was around their age by the look of things, had they been in the same year? He didn't recognize him; he knew about their Animagus forms… about Remus being a werewolf… how could he know these things?

"I haven't always gone by the name of Slytherin," Blake said a secret smile playing across his face, telling the complete truth yet not the whole truth. Sirius Black wouldn't know the truth; nobody other than Harry would, and as soon as he'd perfected his occlumency skills he would show Harry how to hide them, so that if he ever ingested Veritaserum he would never spill the beans.

"What do you want from me?" Sirius asked in exhausted defeat.

"You need help; you need a mind-healer," Blake told him bluntly, "What sixteen-year-old thinks it's funny to send someone after a werewolf? There's obviously something wrong inside your mind; that and you genuinely need help after Azkaban, so you can clear your mind and be able to tell the difference between your godson and best friend."

"I can," Sirius said half-heartedly, unable to put much bite into it.

"Tell me, what is his favourite colour? Food? What does he want to be when he grows up? Can you tell me the most basic things about him?" Blake asked, a glint of sadness in his eyes as he asked this.

Harry felt his heart tug in agony; what kind of future did he have that nobody knew these things? Ten years he had spent in a cupboard, hoping for a miracle, and Hogwarts had come to him, or he to it; was it his destiny to always be alone? Judging from Blake, he already knew that answer… unless he'd been forced away from someone he loved. But he didn't seem too depressed and lovesick, just angry at everything. Not just angry… sad too, but it was almost impossible to get a read on Blake. He was, for the most part, emotionless.

"And going to a mind healer is going to ensure I do know these things?" Sirius scoffed.

"You'll never get to see him otherwise. I am his magical guardian, and he is my ward," Blake revealed evenly.

"You're blackmailing me," Sirius gaped in disbelief.

"Put it how you will, but I will not have Harry spending time with someone who is unstable," Blake bluntly admitted.

"You can't do this," Sirius whispered, his throat tight… knowing that his words were false; there was nothing he could do. "Why are you doing this to me?"

Blake grunted in irritation, "The world doesn't revolve around you, Sirius Black, and contrary to your belief, I am actually trying to protect you. Do not think for a minute that if you had been freed, you would have been allowed to take custody of Harry. Do these words sound familiar: 'He can't leave the safety of the blood wards, my boy, they're more important than anything else. We must keep Harry safe from Voldemort'? Judging by the look on your face, I'm obviously pretty close." He was impressed with himself, but Dumbledore was always the same. "Do you deny that
"You would have gone against Dumbledore?"

"I - I don't know," Sirius admitted, feeling as though he'd been taking body blows all day. He was beginning to realize that this wizard wasn't denying him access, not unless he didn't get help. If he truly hated him, then he wouldn't let him come here or see Harry, surely? He wasn't a Death Eater, and clearly didn't support Dumbledore, so who the hell was he? He was so confused. "Harry?"

"Get help, Sirius, for me," Harry whispered. Despite the lies, he wanted his godfather in his life. Although, it was going to take a while to trust him properly. His mind was whirling with everything he'd just learned, unable to process it.

Blake saw that Sirius was reluctant so he added, "It's an out programme; a healer I trust. Since Grimmauld Place isn't exactly habitable, and nobody in their right mind would want to spend time in it, you will be visiting the healer at this address." He passed over a folder without another word, with the details of the Mind-Healer.
"Dobby?" Blake called, staring in at the empty bedroom. He didn’t want to admit it, but he was worried he had pushed his younger self too far. It was so easy to forget that he had yet to even experience even a miniscule of the anger and rage yet to come. He would have had an inkling during the trial, if he hadn't been there, since it all really started when Dumbledore started treating him as if he wasn't there. He wanted to make sure Harry didn't end up like himself, but to do that he would need to alienate a lot of people. He knew it wouldn't be easy, but he’d had no idea just how difficult it would be.

"Yes, Sir?" Dobby appearing with a pop.

"Where is Harry?" Blake enquired resignedly.

"He's outside, Sir, just ten minutes, will Dobby take you?" Dobby asked, perking up at the thought of helping his Master. He liked being here, it was better than being at Hogwarts… well, at least during the summer holidays. There was nobody to really serve during those months, and not a lot to do without students at the school.

"No, I'll go alone," Blake stated, nixing the idea immediately. Even in the future he didn't use House-elves often, so he wasn't about to start relying on Dobby all the time here either.

Dobby bowed low before disappearing once more, getting back to his original task… which was cleaning the areas that neither Blake nor Harry had yet to go near. The building was larger than anyone would guess, and included a underground basement, with soundproof walls. From the instruments they’d found abandoned inside, Blake assumed that the last person using it had been into alchemy. It had remained undisturbed so they were in agreement that the basement had been concealed; either as the owners they could see it when nobody else could, or the concealing spells had deteriorated with time. Which was possible, since the dust was so thick that it was nearly impossible to breathe down there. The books they’d found there had been put into a box— to callously discard someone's life work seemed just horrible. No, someone else would get the use of them. It wouldn’t be him; he didn't know much about alchemy, merely the potions aspect of it, but that was just two percent of the process.

Stalking out of the house, he began walking along the path, thinking mostly on what had occurred hours ago. He'd been too vocal against Black, in front of Harry at least. On one hand he wanted Harry to know everything so he didn't feel the hurt and anger he did. Trying to undo things, though, he might just end up screwing up and making himself angrier quicker; the thought did make him a little worried.

True to Dobby's word it was a ten minute walk until he spotted Harry beside the small pond. Standing there motionless, just staring ahead… Blake didn't need to get closer to guess Harry was thinking. It was pretty obvious; sighing in agitation, he walked forward, his mind trying to come up with some way to fix it.

"You didn’t eat much," Blake stated, turning to face Harry or rather his side.

"No, no I didn't," Harry admitted, also turning to face Blake. "Does Snape blame me for what
happened to my mum?"

That was what was bothering him? "Is that truly what is bothering you?" he enquired.

"One of the things," Harry confessed, his green eyes clouded.

"No, he's never blamed you," Blake revealed.

"Then why does he…?" Harry asked desperately.

"Sit down," Blake said, taking a seat on the grass. "You have to understand that Snape's had a harsh life; his home life was worse than our own. The only person he ever had to rely on was our mother. Then he got drawn into a crowd that liked the same things as him and held the same ideals as him."

"Death Eaters?" Harry guessed; his brow puckered as he thought about it.

"At the time they weren't; he's only ever marked two people before they left Hogwarts," Blake explained. "His father was a Muggle, and he treated both Severus' mother and him very badly. It's how he came to the assumption that Muggles should never know about magic. That and I don't think he understood why his mother let his father do it; she was a witch, and she held the power. It wasn't long before he was sucked into the Death Eater ways, believing that Muggle-lovers should die, that he should be free to use what magic he liked without the threat of Azkaban hovering over his head. Our mother tried to get him to see sense, but he had a sense of comradeship with them; he couldn't see what he was truly doing. Lily gave him an ultimatum: her or them, without using so many words. But that wasn't the clincher; no, the fact he called her a Mudblood was what stopped everything."

"But he wasn't a pureblood, why would he call her that?" Harry indignantly.

"He was being humiliated by James, and needed an outlet; she was in the way. He didn't mean it of course, and tried to make up for it. He even slept outside Gryffindor common room in hopes of getting her to speak to him. Once he lost her, he truly lost it; he immersed himself in the Dark Arts," Blake explained. "Don't get me wrong, he wasn't a pleasant person, even back then; there were only a few people he cared about. The rest could have all gone to hell for all he cared."

"How could he be like that?" Harry shook his head, not truly understanding.

"Because they didn't care about or help him when he needed it most. He did care about the students, even if he never showed it. Once he grew up, he realized what he was doing—which wouldn't have happened if not for the threat to our mother’s life; she became his conscious in a way. He mourned the loss of the people he had to sit back and watch killed, and felt the guilt very deeply, which made it impossible for anyone to penetrate the shields he wore as armour twenty-four seven."

"Did?" Harry noticed how Blake had phrased it.

"Yes, did," Blake said, knowing Harry understood without him saying anything further. He had not survived in his future... just like many others. "Believe me, Harry, you don't want to see the future I've come from." His tone was haunted and defeated. "I will do everything I can to help, but you'll need to be patient; seeing people alive that… that hurt me with their lies… so suddenly, I find it increasingly difficult to not unleash hell upon them, especially Dumbledore."

Harry tried to see it from Blake's point of view, being lied to then finding out that person was gone, only to realize somewhere down the line they had lied to you. You weren't able to call them out on their lies; you just had to live with it, and it piling up, the anger and love just warring in your heart.
for dominance. This was the first time Blake had obviously seen Sirius since he died; it was bound to hurt, no matter how much he lied. "Is it because he lied that you don't care for him?"

"I only ever saw Sirius…" Blake calculated the total amount of times, "Four times before he died, and only one of those times was more than just a few hours. I didn't get the chance to know him. I've spent my entire life without a guardian. Sirius might have been the closest we ever got but his death… his death ended that for me. I realised I could only count on myself; of course Ron and Hermione as well as a few others wouldn't allow that and made sure I didn't become a total recluse. They tried to understand but they couldn't possibly hope to begin. There was only one other that could fathom our feelings." Neville, who had lost as much as he had. They were also gone to him now too, he was stuck in a time that belonged to his younger self. He was alienated here, and would remain so forever.

"Oh," Harry murmured. That sounded so little; he didn't like the thought that he'd never seen Sirius — it reminded him of what Blake had said earlier in a mock of Dumbledore's voice. Was that the reason Sirius hadn't seen him in the future? Or were there not many opportunities… he had so many things to learn from Blake. "You say we have a lot to do; I get a feeling it's more than just training… am I right?" he asked as he twisted his fingers through the grass.

"Yes, but we must be careful. They will not stop looking for you and they will take you if they can," Blake replied grimly. "I thought about going alone, but I realized you must know what's happening; it's vital, especially if something happens to me." It was why he had taken precautions. "If something does happen to me, the goblins will collect you from wherever you are; go with them. A pensieve will be presented to you, and you'll learn everything, that way I can guarantee the future will not be the same."

Harry gulped, it was getting real too soon, but hadn't that been what he wanted? He was suddenly not so sure anymore, perhaps it was better not knowing everything. Yet it was true, if he knew everything then he could stop it, make everything better for them all. He didn't want to do it, though, so he prayed nothing happened to Blake.

"Promise me," Blake urged grimly, gasping a hold of the teenager.

"Yes," Harry said, coming out of his thoughts, "I promise." and it wasn't just to placate him. He would do it; he just hoped he didn't have to.

"Good," Blake said sighing softly, his hands dropping. "I am sorry about earlier, though, I should never have said anything."

"But you meant it, though, right?" Harry asked.

"I did," Blake replied unable to deny it.

"You are me; it's how I would have felt, so how can I be angry? I just hope I don't end up like…” Harry stopped talking before he dug himself deeper.

"End up like me?" Blake finished for him, a dark bitter laugh leaving his lips. "Believe me I know; I can barely stand how innocent you are… I'm sure you feel the same with my jadedness."

Harry just grinned sheepishly.

"We will just have to learn to be patient with each other," Blake informed him, "Now, why don't you get your trunk from the living room and make the bedroom yours. I hope you understand I will have to check everything and remove the tracking charms."
"What do you mean by remove the tracking charms?" Harry was aghast.

"Why do you think they caught up with you so quickly? It certainly wasn't Ernie and Stan in the Knight Bus; you used magic, yes, but at Privet Drive, not at the Leaky Cauldron. He was waiting for you, and then suddenly the Weasleys can afford to live at the Leaky Cauldron as well? After a trip to Egypt? Use the brain you were born with, Harry," Blake insisted, standing up, holding out his hand and pulling Harry up with him.

"What are you saying?" Harry demanded, his worry obvious.

"Dumbledore has you more closely watched than you think," Blake revealed, as he urged Harry to walk with him.

"But my friends…" Harry grappled shocked.

"Are not a part of it, they just listen to him. Hermione's always had a belief in adult authority; as of right now, the reason you haven't heard from them, as you know, is because he told them how dangerous it was." Blake told him snorting derisively. "Which by the way it nonsense, they already know where you live at Privet Drive. The only reason they haven't tried anything is due to the blood wards. He believes in them fully, due to what happened in your first year; he couldn't touch you."

Harry felt relief flow through him. The knowledge his friends weren't part of Dumbledore's scheme was a balm to his soul.

"They're friends, Harry, but true friends are hard to come by. You'll find two kindred spirits in Luna and Neville," Blake revealed wistfully.

"Luna and Neville?" Harry asked, not sure what to think of that, he wasn't sure he knew anyone called Luna actually.

"Yes, both of them have lost loved ones," Blake informed him. "Let's go back inside?"

Harry nodded; he already knew that Neville's parents had been cursed insane with the Cruciatus Curse just after Voldemort was defeated by him and his mum the last time. They weren't dead, but it would have been better for them all if they had been; what had happened to them was horrific.

Once they were in the living room he levitated the trunk, he moved over to the sofa and quickly opened it and began to rummage through. Taking each item out, Blake checked them for spells, focusing on the more important ones that he knew Dumbledore would cast trackers on, items he would never go anywhere without. His invisibility cloak didn't have anything on it. No spells actually held onto the cloak; he’d found that out himself. He found one on his photo album though, and couldn't help but flipping through it. "It looks newer, fewer photos too," Blake commented with a hint of wistfulness to him.

Snapping out of the mood quickly, he looked through the rest, making sure there was nothing left that Dumbledore could have meddled with. Once he had found everything that was tampered with, he quickly removed the spells and put it all back into the now old chest. "That's it; dinner will be ready soon, you must eat more. Tonight we will try our first lesson on Occlumency; go on."

Harry blinked, then grabbed the handle of his trunk and began to pull it away from the room. He had a feeling that Blake was as overwhelmed as him, and didn't want to show it.

"Another thing, you can use magic here; it won’t be detected… but only indoors. Outside isn't protected in the same manner even if the wards do stretch a few miles," Blake said, adding, "Use
"Um… okay," he said; it was the only thing he could think to say. He did grab his new wand, and after making sure it was his new one in his hand he turned to levitate his trunk to his bedroom. His bedroom, Blake had said; it was nice to know he had a bedroom of his own, where he could put his things out and just relax. "Wingardium Leviosa!" With that he walked out of the room, his trunk bobbing up and down behind him. There was more to Blake than anger… more to himself. He still had hopes, dreams, and wishes, it wasn't all lost… Blake wasn't as lost as he liked to portray himself. It helped him with his understanding of Blake… far greater than anything else could.

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Grimmauld Place

Severus Snape stalked into Grimmauld Place, a look of utter distaste on his face. The place was disgusting and he didn't bother hiding the fact he found it horrible. His house might be in a run-down area, shabby, but there was no denying that it was clean, if a little cluttered with his books. Every inch of this building was uninhabitable; Merlin only knows the damage they were doing to themselves by breathing in the very rancid air circulating through this property. He was extremely annoyed and had no qualms about showing it.

"Ah, Severus, we are just about to eat, come join us," Albus called out in invitation. He was without his usual exuberance and would remain so until he had Harry safely back within the wards. The children weren't down yet—Molly hadn't called them—and the food had only just been plated.

"I haven't come to eat, Albus; I will give my report then depart," Severus replied curtly. He paid no attention to anyone else, although he did notice the lack of antagonistic noises that usually accompanied him being in the same room as Sirius Black. A small relief, but he didn't let that get to him, knowing this was his house—he could come through that door at any given moment.

"Very well," Albus said quietly, "I already know that the others saw Harry and Mr. Slytherin." His distaste was carefully hidden.

"We did," Severus replied immediately.

"What is your opinion?" he asked, genuinely curious.

"Whoever he is, the boy trusts him," Severus answered.

"That is a bit premature is it not?" Albus enquired, alarmed by that thought; it would be difficult to get the boy if he was genuinely fond of Slytherin.

"No; he's definitely not a Death Eater, he's not familiar. And the Dark Lord would never allow anyone to carry his name—you know as well as I the measures he took to eradicate all family members," Severus stated surely, "He may as well have signed his own death warrant." The Dark Lord was possessive of everything he considered his.

"Doesn't that put Harry in even more danger?" Molly asked fretfully.

"He has endangered Harry by removing him from where he's protected. He doesn't have Harry's best interests at heart, and we must rescue him at the first opportunity possible," Albus insisted. Who knows what lies he had been feeding the boy? He didn't like Severus' analyses of the situation and he believed him; out of all versions, he knew Severus would notice things others wouldn't.

"It is not a rescue mission, and I will not remove the boy. I can do no good locked up for
kidnapping," Severus told Albus adamantly.

"Kidnapping?" Arthur looked stunned at the suggestion.

"Merely a technicality," Albus said, inwardly despairing at the stunned looks they all wore right now.

"Albus… does this man have a legal hold over Harry?" Diggle asked.

"Harry is his ward, he took custody of him," Shacklebolt answered for Dumbledore, entering the room. It was why they had declined to do as Albus had suggested — by looking for him and trying to get him away from this apparent Slytherin. He placed the documents on the table as complete proof of his words. He had spent hours working to find it.

"That was why she was so angry and saying those things." They despaired, they couldn't do what Albus wanted them to; the risk of Azkaban for kidnapping was just too good a motivator in saying no.

"Do you have the information I requested, Kingsley?" Albus asked, trying to get off the topic they were currently on, not liking the way it was going. He'd asked the Aurors to do it, but they had said no, so he'd asked the others, despite the fact they were not exactly able to track and suss out anything odd or off. Severus had done it, albeit reluctantly; it seemed even he wasn't willing to do anything further. He might have to do it alone, he wasn't about to let Slytherin sink his claws into Harry — he was far too important for that.

"He's legit; he had to be vetted and was before he was able to take him, you know this," Shacklebolt reported, "He attended Durmstrang; apparently he moved there with his parents when he was ten, only recently moved back." With that he added the other information on the table, everything that he had managed to dig up on Blake Slytherin.

"No reason as to why he would take Harry?" Albus was very perplexed; nothing made sense anymore.

"No, but he is the same age as Harry's parents." Shacklebolt finally sat down.

"Who is?" Remus asked, joining the conversation as he entered the kitchen worried and slightly distracted.

"Blake Slytherin," Shacklebolt said as he pinched the bridge of his nose. Idly he noticed that Snape was still standing stiller than a statue, looking as bored and fed up as he felt.

"Did James ever speak about someone called Blake? Did Lily?" Albus silently urged Remus to answer.

Remus frowned, only half paying attention, "I don't think so, no, nothing, I remember every guest at their wedding, no Blake."

"I was thinking along the lines of a childhood friend," Albus corrected.

"No, sorry, did Sirius mention leaving?" Remus enquired of everyone.

"He did go into the back garden for some fresh air a while ago," Molly confirmed.

"I don't think it was for air… Harry's trunk is missing," Remus said in concern.
Albus perked up, could Harry have gotten in touch with Sirius? Did that mean the trunk was with him? If that was the case, then Harry would be found. Suddenly not so hungry, he stood up, "Please excuse me, there is something I must do, it cannot wait." With that he jumped in the Floo network hastily making his way to Hogwarts, eager to get Harry back… at any or all cost.
Chapter 7

After breakfast both Harry and Blake made their way to the office. As Harry surveyed the room, Blake pulled out a drawer and grabbed a vial that was inside. Blake turned to face the teenager, still finding himself out of sorts. His younger self was here; he was his own guardian… it was rather odd even compared to all the other weird things he had done in his life.

"Here, drink this," Blake demanded, handing over the potion that was reddish in colour… and gooey by the look of it.

"What is it?" Harry asked, eyeing it warily, yet despite that he accepted the vial and opened it. He didn't put it to his mouth, though, still waiting for Blake to tell him what it was.

"Bit of advice, remove your glasses before you take it," Blake said, levitating the table in the middle of the room over to the side, along with the chairs, clearing a large area in the middle for what he wanted to do next.

Harry's eyes widened; a potion that fixed his eyesight? Well, it must be alright, surely? Since Blake had obviously done it with no adverse affects. Well, he wasn't going to pass this opportunity up, despite the fact Blake wasn't one for explaining himself, so he held his breath and swallowed the potion as rapidly as possible, then quickly removed his glasses. He gasped in pain, the empty vial slipping from his hand. His eyes slid closed as they began to burn. Helplessly he began to rub at them, seeing stars explode behind his eyelids as he did so. "Ugh," Harry moaned; tears were making their way down his face from his closed eyes.

"Here, this will help," Blake asserted, conjuring a cloth and casting the Aguamenti charm to soak it, then pressing it against Harry's eyes. When he was sure the teen had a grip on it he stepped back, watching him trying to stop the flow of tears. He knew how it felt; it was like getting salt as well as onion juice in your eyes. The cool clean water would help, and it did; after a few moments Harry was able to keep his eyes open even if the occasional welling of tears occurred.

"Did you make the potion?" Harry asked, still wiping his face with the black cloth, glancing over at Blake and wondering if he would get an answer.

"I did, it's a rather complicated potion, but challenging nonetheless," Blake said, "You'll get better at potions and come to enjoy them as I do." There was nothing better than just brewing aimlessly, hidden away from the world in your own personal den of solitude.

"I don't know about that," Harry said, he'd never enjoyed potions, although he had been very excited about the first lesson beforehand. He knew how to cook and enjoyed that, he had assumed it would be the same for potions but Snape's attitude had knocked any excitement down. He didn't even try anymore; it just wasn't worth the bother, what with things constantly getting thrown in his potions by the Slytherins and the resulting messes being banished by Snape.

"Feeling better?" Blake enquired, ready to get started.

Harry nodded, looking around for a place to put the wet cloth down but he couldn't find anywhere.
Not that he had to worry, since it disappeared with a flick of Blake's wand, his glasses too he noticed. He'd forgotten he was allowed to use magic now, it would take some getting used to since he was so used to not doing any magic outside of Hogwarts. Well, if you didn't include accidental magic, and he couldn't since it wasn't exactly up to him — it just reacted to circumstances, after all.

"Alright," Blake said, grabbing a cushion and placing it on the floor, silently gesturing for Harry to sit down. "We have a lot to do before you return to Hogwarts, so much that I've had to start prioritising which ones are more important. Two are at the top of that list, so the first thing we will do today is rudimentary Occlumency. You will start by closing your mind. With us being so similar, we should be able to short circuit the process, I hope."

Harry sat cross legged on the cushion, listening to Blake speaking, and found himself once again nodding in silent agreement while wondering what the second task was, and if they would be doing it today. It must be important of course, and he couldn't help but speculate what it was. Nothing he guessed was probably near the truth of course… but his thoughts were cut off when Blake began speaking again.

"Close your eyes. Since you've read the books, you'll know how to meditate, I presume?" Blake enquired, moving around Harry until he was standing in front of him.

"Yes," Harry affirmed. His eyes closed and he let his breathing even out as it told you to do in the occlumency book.

"To do this requires complete trust. Eventually you won't have to meditate, you'll be able to feel your shields at all times. They'll become a part of you… part of your magic." Blake spoke, his voice soft and soothing, almost hypnotic in its quality. "Feel your magic, your core, warm and welcoming just like the feeling you got when you first held your wand." Watching Harry closely, he could see the boy was beginning to relax further, but he wasn't fully there yet if his estimation was correct.

"Your magic is the most important thing in the world; it can be used to heal, kill, defend, and there is nothing your magic can't do if you put your mind to it. Feel it, Harry, allow yourself to sink into it, it is you. You control it, don't let it control you," he said quietly, almost grinning when he observed the magic surrounding Harry. "Free yourself of all emotion, just exist for the moment; someone else is carrying your troubles."

Harry felt astonishment fill him when his magic surrounded him in its warmth; for the first time in a long time he felt content. Nothing could bother him in here; he knew that. Relaxing further, he allowed himself to solely exist for that moment. Time held no meaning to him here, it was like being immersed in the most perfect bath, or flying on the perfect day where nothing could touch him.

Blake glanced at his watch, twenty minutes had gone by, and he had found his core. That was a good thing; it would take less time when they had to do this again. Harry was deep in meditation, fully relaxed and allowing his magic to surround him. Blake could feel it, Harry's was much lighter than his was, but of course it would be. He had learned other magic to level the playing fields, and he would teach the same things to Harry eventually… but that wasn't the most important thing on their agenda today. He would give him books, though, so he could read and ready himself for when they did begin dark arts lessons.

"Can you see the red strand of magic?" Blake enquired, speaking louder than he had since Harry began meditating, having no choice since Harry wouldn't hear him otherwise.

"Yes," Harry murmured sounding tired yet happy. He could barely hear him; part of him didn't
want to hear him, wanted to ignore Blake but he didn't, he somehow remembered that this was important.

"That is what you need to protect," Blake told him, "Surround your magic with it, and build up your defences, build a wall of pure magic. Make it impenetrable; leave no holes, no vulnerabilities in it." He had learned that on his own; hopefully him telling Harry would make it easier and quicker for the boy to learn how to do this.

Blake removed one of the chairs from on top of the table and placed it silently on the floor and took a seat. He picked up one of the books he was currently reading and began where he had previously left off. He only finished the chapter before placing his bookmark in it and putting it back on the desk. "Have you done it?"

"Yes," Harry said, sounding more alert than he had ten minutes ago when he last spoke.

"Good," Blake stated, removing his wand and casting "Legilimens!" causing Harry to cry out in surprise. There was a little resistance, but it shattered after a few seconds, allowing Blake to see his memories. Blake didn't stop right away, instead choosing to let Harry see what happened when Legilimency was cast. Only after he had seen a few memories did he relent and stop his attack.

"That is how it feels when someone viciously penetrates your mind, having no qualms about you knowing what they are up to. Such practices are illegal; only those who have been given permission are allowed to do this. Dumbledore is much more subtle in his search for answers. He doesn't go deep, and he remains in the forefront of your mind, picking out thoughts with you completely unaware. This too is illegal, but Dumbledore isn't one for giving a sod about legality," Blake informed him. "Did you see how quickly my magic broke through your shield?"

Harry's eyes slid open, "Yes," he admitted, rubbing at his forehead— that had bloody hurt like hell.

"Yes it hurt, and will continue to do so. Mental shields are like muscles, it takes time to build them up," Blake said, after hearing his thoughts. "You'll get used to it, and it will no longer pain you."

"You're reading my thoughts aren't you?" Harry gasped, "I can't even feel you doing it."

"Yes, and that is what Dumbledore does; the only way it can be accomplished is if you look him in the eye," Blake informed him, his lips twitching when Harry automatically looked away. "Look at their ears or nose, or even their mouth, and it will prevent anyone from reading your thoughts."

"Okay," Harry said his brow furrowed.

"Ready to try again? This time go straight to the mind strand and build up defences. Trust me, you will get stronger. Your defences will get strong and sooner or later you will be able to stop me from entering your mind," Blake assured him.

"How long?" Harry enquired.

"It's different for everyone, but if we continue on as we are right now, I would say you will have very good shields by the time you return to Hogwarts. Certainly enough for you to tell when someone is subtly trying to read your thoughts," Blake replied.

"So I'll know soon enough if Dumbledore tries? Even if I am looking at him, I mean?" Harry wanted clarification.

"Certainly," Blake once again assured him.
Harry relaxed fully, "Good." He didn't want anyone being able to read his thoughts; it was horrifying to think that it had been done to him in the past.

"Now let's try again," Blake said, remaining silent to see if Harry could do it on his own. Five minutes later he smirked in satisfaction. He was right; Harry had found it much earlier this time around.

"You'll get better," Blake insisted, as he held out a hand for Harry to take over an hour later, after their lesson had ended. "I could feel your resistance the last time. To do more right now would be detrimental to your health, weaken you to the point that you would be easy picking for anyone."

Harry gulped, "Okay," deciding against asking for them to continue. It was just, when he got an idea into his mind, he wanted to complete it right away. Just like when he had done the Patronus charm, it had annoyed him until he could do it properly.

"We will do this every day after breakfast; you'll soon see a difference," Blake informed him, as he pressed a hand against Harry's back and propelled them out of the room and into the hallway.

"Why after breakfast?" Harry asked, accepting the cloak that was passed to him, and absently slipping into his new Dragon-hide boots.

"If you are meditating before bed, it's when your mind shields will be the most prepared," Blake answered, as he himself got ready to leave, sliding his knives into position and ensuring he had both wands before nodding to himself. "I am going to Apparate us,"

"Will you tell me what we are doing?" Harry asked slightly exasperated.

"That is the reason you are coming," Blake muttered sardonically as he grasped a hold of Harry's shoulders and Apparated them both out of their new home.

Harry looked around at the decrepit, deserted area; it looked as if it had once been a thriving area… maybe a long time ago. Not anymore; the place right in front of him looked as if it was on its last legs, ready to topple over at any given moment.

"Welcome to Little Hangleton. If you look down that way, you'll see that is where you were taken to… to watch and participate in the resurrection of the Dark Lord," Blake said pointing the cemetery out to him, "This is where the Dark Lord's family is from. Where he killed his Muggle father and grandparents, as well as setting up his remaining magical family member. The Gaunts, they are the descendants of Slytherin; you would be generous calling them wizards, really. Not only were they mentally unstable, they rarely spoke anything other than Parseltongue. The inbreeding caused them to look worse than Crabbe and Goyle Junior, and the same thing happened to their magic to boot."

"Oh," Harry said in surprise, trying to digest the information, "Which brings me to the next question: why are you using the name Slytherin?"

"It's in our blood. We’re distantly related to the Dark Lord; cousins," Blake informed him, "It's within my right to use the name." That and he’d wanted to stick it to Voldemort.

"You're joking!" Harry rasped out disgusted.

"Why do you find that hard to believe? Our grandmother is a Black; we’re related to Sirius. Black is related to the Malfoys, and even the Weasleys are related to the Blacks; Cedrella Black married
Septimus Weasley," Blake informed him. "Somewhere down the line we are all related, Harry,"

"Now let's go," Blake said, stalking towards the house, his wand out as he kept muttering spell after spell. Harry couldn't make out what they were but whatever it was, the spell kept coming up yellow — whatever it was, that must be good otherwise they wouldn't have continued. "Nothing; he must have just cursed the ring."

"Ring?" Harry echoed eager for more information.

"Come," Blake said, removing the floorboards and levitating the box onto the dusty broken floorboards and checking the box for any spells. Once he was sure there was nothing on it, he opened it up, showing it to Harry.

"It doesn't look like much," Harry admitted, staring at it.

"No, no, it doesn't, but this stone is more special than you can fathom," Blake replied amused. "This is one of the legendary Hallows."

"Hallows?" Harry echoed yet again.

"It is said that there were three items fashioned by Death himself, it's in a children's book called Beadle the Bard. Three brothers each demanded an item from him, after Death pretended to be impressed with them for outwitting him—they'd used magic to fashion a bridge over a river; when all others tried crossing it they died. And so the three items they requested were, first, a wand so powerful that it was unbeatable. It was called the death stick, the elder wand; wherever it went, death followed it like a plague." Blake told him, his voice drawing Harry in. "The second demanded a way to speak to the dead; this is exactly that, do you see the inscription on it?"

"Is that a triangle with a circle and maybe I on it?" Harry said peering at it.

"It's a sign of the three hallows, the 'I' as you called it is the elder wand, the circle is this stone: the resurrection stone. The last but no means the least... the last brother requested a way to evade death: the cloak of invisibility. It has been handed down from father to son, from Ignotus Peverell to you," Blake explained. "The stone used to be just a stone until the Gaunts made it into a ring, one of the two remaining family heirlooms."  

"And the wand? Why didn't it stay in that family?" Harry mused.

"Because he didn't have a family. He was killed after bragging about the wand of unlimited power," Blake stated, "Now, this is cursed. The Dark Lord placed a dark and dangerous curse on it; to touch it once is to wish for death. It will kill you, slowly and painfully. I need to concentrate so please, do not disturb me." He hadn't told him the worst of it yet, that it was a Horcrux.

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Severus Snape followed the two wizards, keeping extremely quiet, remaining outside of the property; he would be heard going in as the shack was ramshackle. He would be heard before he could get even a foot in the door. He was quite frankly baffled as to why Slytherin would bring Harry Potter here. As soon as he heard him talking about the Dark Lord he knew he had been wrong — the older wizard was obviously a Death Eater. Snape cursed inwardly, he would need to get Harry to safety; he couldn't leave him in the hands of a Death Eater. It went against his vow to keep him safe. To leave now would be signing his death warrant.

Gripping his wand tightly, he moved as quickly and quietly as possible, just as Slytherin finished speaking. "Move and I will end you where you are," Severus hissed in his most menacing voice,
his black eyes flashing furiously. He just hoped Potter was smart enough to realize he was trying to help him. After what had happened with Black, though, he sincerely doubted it. He kept his eye on the both of them; he wouldn't make the same mistake with Potter twice.

"I sincerely doubt that," Blake said, eyeing Severus as though he was a rare specimen that he wasn't familiar with. He did however, remain crouched, closing the box as he did so. If things got sticky, he wasn't about to end up falling on this damn thing and ending up dead. He didn't want to fight Snape, but it seemed the other wizard wasn't about to give him a choice. "Surely you realise you cannot just go around attacking people? It matters little who you have backing you, I will see to it that you end up in Azkaban." What bothered him most of all was the fact Snape had found them in the first place.

"After what I heard? You wouldn't dare go to the Ministry," Severus gritted out causing his teeth to protest at his actions.

Blake frowned, thinking back on what he had said that would make Severus think he was a fugitive or someone up to anything illegal. Nothing he had said should have him thinking such a thing. He couldn't risk him believing something that Dumbledore had said to him. Then something else occurred to him: if Severus actually tried to attack him, he would die. Magic would react badly to his Vow of protection being so callously ignored. Magic wouldn't care that he was from the future or that Severus had no idea who he was. He would need to get this under control now; quite frankly Severus was one of the only people he trusted… in his future, not right now. Right now he was someone who trusted Dumbledore wholly, at least he thought so.

Unholstering his wand surreptitiously so that Severus had absolutely no idea what was happening, Blake jumped up, thrust Harry behind him—hoping the boy remembered he could use magic—and threw out one of his daggers. Simultaneously he conjured a shield. And it was a good thing he had; a few seconds later a spell bounced off the powerful shield. Severus, injured by the dagger and having to dodge out of the way of his own reflected spell, found himself in a very vulnerable position. He was now sprawled out on the floor, with a dagger imbedded in his chest causing him excruciating pain.

Nobody used daggers anymore, absolutely nobody.

The next thing Severus knew was Blake standing over him; ideally it should have been the wand he first noticed, now pointed at his face. Yet it wasn't, it was Blake’s eyes; they were identical to Harry's… to Lily's… The last thing he observed before a red stunning curse was sent his way was… remorse? Then blackness overcame his vision.
"You just threw a knife at him!" Harry protested scrambling over, "Why did you do that? And what did he mean, what he heard? And why would you not go to the Ministry?"

"One question at a time," Blake grouched. "We will do it from the safety of home; now stay there."

Blake stood up and debated for a few seconds before creating a replica of the box and its contents, even going so far as to pouring some dark magic into it so it looked like the ring hadn't been tampered with. Only if he investigated thoroughly would Voldemort realize that. Hopefully he wouldn't; Blake shuddered anew remembering the feeling in his gut when the Dark Lord had created another. Breathing deeply, he refused to think on it; this was his second chance and he swore to Merlin he wouldn't let anything jeopardize that … unfortunately that meant not even Severus.

Shrinking the original box, he placed it in his pocket which had a protective shield layered into it, keeping it safe. Moving back over to Harry and Severus, he grasped a hold of both of them and Apparated away. He couldn't risk that Snape might not have been alone or had already alerted Dumbledore to his …Harry's… location. Harry and Blake landed on their feet; Snape's unconscious form however, thudded quite painfully against the floor, driving the dagger further into his already bleeding wound. Cursing under his breath, Blake was honestly not sure what to do; he would just have to make Snape see the truth for what it was.

He couldn't Obliviate him; that was just not possible. Snape was an Occlumens and had taken safety measures to ensure his memories couldn't be tampered with. Everyone who knew Occlumency and Legilimency knew this. Severus was too Slytherin to even think of making a Vow to save his life, especially after the others he'd had to swear. He wouldn't do him the disservice of trying it either.

"Dobby!" Blake barked out, his wand in one hand as he gripped the dagger hilt and yanked it out as quickly as possible.

"What can—" Dobby stopped stunned.

"Bring a bowl with warm water, blood replenisher, infection prevention and a healing balm, and some bandages to my office immediately." Blake listed off what he needed quickly and didn't waste time with pleasantries. Not that he did often, but he rarely spoke to Dobby in such a way. At the moment it was understandable; he was under pressure.

Dobby popped away almost immediately after Master 'Blake' had finished speaking.

"What are you going to do?" Harry asked pensively, green eyes alight with worry. He might not like his Potions Master but he knew his mum! All he'd ever heard was he had her eyes and she had been good at charms; nobody else ever told him anything… yet this wizard knew her, had known her for years. Quite frankly he was worried about what Blake would do to him; he didn't want to think he was capable of murdering anyone or doing something he shouldn't, but unfortunately nothing would surprise him when it came to his future self.
"What do you expect me to do? Kill him?" Blake muttered sardonically, only to frown when he saw the look on Harry's face. "For Merlin's sake, I'm going to heal him and talk to him." He just neglected to mention the Veritaserum he meant to use, or the fact the Potions Master would be bound during the duration of that 'talk'. Harry wouldn't be there for that; seeing Harry would just make matters more complicated. Severus didn't get over his hatred for Harry until a year before he died, and by then it was too late. He had just referred to himself in third person; interesting. Well, if he had his way, they would be two very different people. Grabbing Severus' wand he slid it into his pocket for safe keeping.

"Levicorpus!" Blake muttered, levitating the stunned wizard to his office where he could interrogate him privately. He noticed Harry following him, still looking worried; he almost wanted to laugh. His younger self before he came would never have expressed any concern over Snape's wellbeing. Knowing about his past had obviously made Harry realize Snape wasn't all that bad. He'd just been a product of his own upbringing and stupidity, and had believed in the lies a powerful dark wizard told him.

Dobby returned with the items he’d requested, laying them on Blake's table, mindful not to spill the water within the bowl on any of the books or parchment he had laying on the table. "Will Dobby help?"

"No, I have this, Dobby; go and make lunch," Blake instructed, "Perhaps enough for three, just in case." Hopefully he would get Snape to see reason; otherwise he would be at a loss for what to do. He cursed under his breath, furious with himself for being so lax with security and not realizing that Snape was there; he just hadn't expected it. Nobody was supposed to go near the Gaunt shack… not for a few years at least. Things were changing; it wasn't as easy as he had hoped, but that shouldn't surprise him. His presence here was already changing things rapidly.

"Yes, Sir," Dobby said and with a pop he was gone.

Blake quickly poured the potions down Snape's throat, Non-verbally using a spell to get him to swallow the concoctions. He ripped his patient's cloak to reveal the wound, which wasn’t as bad as it could have been. Harry held the bowl of water down for him so he could wipe the blood away from the site of the knife injury, only to have more appearing immediately afterwards, replacing what he'd just wiped away. Summoning the salve he scooped some up in his hands before spreading it over the wound. Immediately afterwards the blood flow stopped as the skin knitted together like a zip in front of their eyes.

"Will he be alright now?" Harry enquired; surely the dagger will have done more damage than a surface wound?

"Potions are miracle workers. If I had wanted him dead, Harry, he would be; I have perfect aim," Blake stated without boasting. "Now, you know how Snape is with you, so I need you to leave us; perhaps go for a fly. Just remember what Dobby told you about the wards. Until I find out how Se-Snape found us, we must remain here behind the safety of the wards. If you go outside of them, they will have proximity of our location; with Bill Weasley helping them, they could very well rip the wards to shreds."

"Alright," Harry sighed but agreed somewhat reluctantly, he wanted to know what they were going to do and say. He didn't like being kept out of the loop; especially not now that Blake was actually telling him things.

"I will let you know what happens; go on," Blake said leading Harry out of his office, watching him go for his broomstick and go out the back. "Dobby?"
"Yes, Sir?" Dobby asked appearing before him as always eager to serve.

"Keep an eye on Harry, make sure he doesn't accidentally go past the wards. We have already been found once," Blake informed him. Once that was done he closed his office door and locked it, taking every measure possible to make sure Harry couldn't get in and that nobody—primarily Severus—could get out.

Sighing softly, he gazed at the wizard on the floor. "How you managed to stay alive I have no clue; you're far too curious for your own good…" he muttered, levitating him once again and sitting him in one of the more comfortable couch. His conscience didn't want him to let Snape be more uncomfortable than he would be, he did owe the wizard a great deal after all.

"Finite Incantatem; Incarcerous," Blake waved his hand while muttering the spells under his breath. More often than not he didn't use his Wandless magic, preferring to keep it secret until it served him well, to save his life. Almost immediately Snape tensed up, his eyes snapping open filled with fire, pain and a little resignation.

"How did you find us?" Blake asked, moving around the wizard, purposely intimidating him by not allowing Snape to keep him within his sight. Unsurprisingly Snape kept quiet, refusing to answer his question. "No? Snape, do not make me use Veritaserum on you, I will."

Severus' eyes flashed angrily and his lips pursing further; he didn’t like being threatened, especially when tied to a couch. Veritaserum wouldn't work on him, but he wasn't about to clue the wizard in on that. He hadn't ever felt this vulnerable before, not even kneeling before the Dark Lord; speaking of the Dark Lord, he wondered how soon he would be here. The thought of the torture he would be put through before death honestly terrified him. The Dark Lord didn't just torture traitors; he broke them, made them wish for death days before the end. It had always been a possibility, he knew, since going back to him after the events of the bloody tournament. If Dumbledore had just made sure Potter hadn't participated, things might not have gone down like this; the Dark Lord might not have come back… at least not so soon.

"If you think you're safe because of your Occlumency shields, think again; I will get to the bottom of the matter." Blake then repeated, "How did you find us?" He really didn't want to do this.

Severus merely stared up at the wizard impassively.

"Very well, on your head be it," Blake said, opening his drawer and bringing out a vial of liquid that had Snape stiffening. Of course, he would know exactly what it was. "Do not make me do this," he said, giving him another chance, as futile as it was. "Do you really want to spill every single one of your secrets to a stranger?"

Severus' eye twitched as he glared at the wizard in a way that promised his death.

Blake moved a chair and sat down opposite Severus, staring at him intently. He wondered if there was another way to get to him. "You know, for a spy you are completely reckless; I'd almost go as far as to say the stunt you just pulled was positively Gryffindor."

Severus' eyes flashed with fear, his heart began to thump dangerously in his chest; he was feeling as if his worst fears were being confirmed. He was so off kilter that he didn't even feel insulted or angered by the fact he was being compared to a Gryffindor.

"How did you find us? Is Dumbledore tracking Harry's movements?" Had he missed finding something while making sure nothing was tracked? "No? You didn't get close enough to track us…” Blake noticed him subtly stiffening, "Ah, so it was you; I must commend you on it, I didn't
even notice."

Severus cursed the fact his body was giving him away, but also felt extremely confused by the fact he was being commended. He didn't even seem that upset; this wasn't going how he expected it to, and the Dark Lord still hadn't made an appearance.

Blake rolled up the sleeves of his shirt in feigned casualness. "So the question remains, did you cast it on Harry or myself?" He paused, thinking back, "Considering I was keeping Harry in front of me, I'm going to assume the spell attached itself to me?" He didn't even try to prevent himself from smirking when he noticed the surprise in Severus' gaze. "Gotcha," he muttered, knowing he had figured it out without the use of Veritaserum.

Severus gazed at the revealed forearms feeling decidedly confused; there was no way known to man to cover it up. He should know, he had tried many times, but in the end he'd had to give in to defeat. Which meant he had to wear full robes even during the summer, and since he liked wearing black, it was decidedly uncomfortable and hot. Unless he had simply decided against marking him... but that wasn't like the Dark Lord at all.

"What has Dumbledore been telling people about me?" Blake demanded, his green eyes searing into black demanding answers. He had to know, it would tell him just how much of a problem the Order was going to be. Since they all listened to Dumbledore zealously, he knew he would have a problem regardless. Just then he felt the wards at his office door shimmer, and grunted in frustration. It seemed that despite the fact he had promised to tell him, Harry couldn't help himself but eavesdrop.

Flicking his wand he tore the wards down, and opened the door abruptly, causing Harry to fall in with a surprised cry.

"What have I told you about this?" Blake hissed yanking Harry back onto his feet, "You really need to start minding your own business!"

"I am," Harry pointed out sheepishly.

Blake burst out laughing suddenly, what the hell could he say to that? It was true in so many ways, that he couldn't bring himself to be offended. "Here I was thinking you didn't want to become me," he muttered sardonically, getting himself back into gear, shoving Harry into one of the other free chairs. Sitting down himself, his fingers drummed on the arm of the chair as he gazed pensively, wondering what the hell to do next.

Severus watched the pair, once again observing that Harry wasn't afraid of him, even when he yanked at him and hoisted him up. Just what the hell had Slytherin done to make Harry trust him? The boy didn't trust easily, with the obvious exception of those that had known his parents. Slytherin wasn't one of those people; he and Lily had been all they knew in Spinners End, and obviously Slytherin hadn't been a childhood friend of James bloody Potter. He hadn't understood the reason for his laughter, he was missing something.

"Just tell him," Harry said. He didn't know why, but he suspected Blake didn't want to do anything to Snape. Maybe even understood him on a level only he could?

"Harry," Blake warned him his voice much fiercer than normal.

"It might make things easier; you said it yourself that you have a lot to do, and not enough time to do it all," Harry said quietly, wondering if he was going too far.
Severus' eyes narrowed further, he was definitely missing something.

Blake sighed, rubbing at his eyes. He knew Harry was right, but Harry also had no idea just how busy Snape was at the end of the day. Not only did he have potions to brew, he had duties to oversee even during the holidays as a Head of House, the Order to put up with, and of course the Dark Lord to tend to. He quite literally didn't get much time to himself. Although it did bring an idea to mind, while he couldn't use it, Severus could, he mused now scratching his chin thoughtfully.

Sitting forward, Blake began, "Do you know how the Dark Lord survived that Halloween night?"

"That's why he thought you were bad!" Harry suddenly yelped standing up, "He must have heard you say that instead of Voldemort or You-Know-Who. Remember, only his followers call him that... for now."

Severus hadn't been more confused in his entire life and that was saying something, since he had put up with an insane melodramatic mass murderer and doing his bidding.

"Do you know?" Blake urged.

"No," Severus ground out, "Release me."

"I'm afraid I can't do that just yet, and believe it or not, it is for your sake, for I know you'll be tempted to attack me again," Blake answered dispassionately. Opening his cloak he removed the box, created a table between them and placed the box on it. "This is the Gaunt ring. If you've done background research on the Dark Lord, you'll know that he was related to the Gaunts through his mother, specifically Merope Gaunt, who died giving birth to him. This ring has been in the family for many generations; it used to be just a stone itself, but was eventually fashioned into a ring. The stone was created by Camdus Peverell, an extremely powerful wizard."

"Didn't you say Death gave them it?" Harry was confused.

"That was the popular belief; perhaps it was what happened, who knows? Either he created it or was given it, I prefer to think they fashioned the story to be revered and remembered by all," Blake replied. "It worked; even to this day they are remembered."

"What does this have to do with anything?" Severus hissed, hating the fact Potter and Slytherin were having a conversation while he was bound, lying on a blasted bed.

"It has everything to do with this. You see, this is the resurrection stone; to touch it is to see those you hold most dear to your heart. Unfortunately, or rather fortunately, the Gaunts had no idea what they had in their possession. Not even the Dark Lord realised, once he'd acquired it from his Uncle before he altered his mind to make him think he had killed the Riddles, the father and grandparents, who the Dark Lord had in fact just killed himself. He took it and created something so evil that it quite literally kept him on this earth even when he should have died," Blake told them, his voice almost hypnotic in telling the story.

"It's nothing new, the Dark Lord often told us of rituals he had done to avoid death," Severus replied, staring at the ring pensively. Why did he have it if he wasn’t a follower? Potter implied that he wasn't one as well; he just had a preference for calling him the Dark Lord by the look of things. The bigger question was how he knew; there was no way the Dark Lord told anyone, let alone him. Yet he had to have... there was no other way he could have possibly found out. Was he being lulled into a false sense of security? Was this a test regarding his allegiance? It couldn't be, it was too elaborate for that. There was also the fact the Dark Lord wanted Harry dead, not just out of
Dumbledore's reach.

"You see, Severus was the one that relayed the prophecy to the Dark Lord. He was unaware of the consequences of his actions, but he didn't have to wait long; when your parents were targeted, Severus went to the Dark Lord and begged him to spare your mother." Blake began watching Severus pale drastically, "Which he then promised he would do. But Severus did not believe that he would keep that promise, understandably. And so he went to Dumbledore, begging him to keep Lily safe. The dear old Headmaster, in not so many words, gave him an ultimatum: spy for him and he would do as he asked, or it was Azkaban for him. Severus, ever the Slytherin, went with his self preservation and became a spy. Anything to keep Lily alive and safe. Dumbledore conveyed his disgust at the fact Severus did not care for James… or yourself, for that matter."

Severus was beyond horrified; he felt sick and dizzy — how on earth did this man know so much?

"Now fast forward to Halloween night; you know what happens due to the Dementors. He bombarded his way into the cottage, duelled with your father, killed him, then made his way to your nursery where Lily and baby Harry were hiding. That door was also smashed open, and the Dark Lord demanded three times that Lily stand aside."

Severus' head snapped up, surprise filtering across his face.

"But each time she refused; she begged him to take her instead, and thus the powerful witch that she was, she created a protection, sacrificial blood magic the likes of which nobody had ever seen before. That was why the killing curse rebounded off you, and tore the Dark Lord from his body. You have Severus to thank for your survival that night; if he had not asked for Lily to be spared… the Dark Lord would have merely killed her and you would have died that night as well," Blake continued as if it wasn't a touchy subject.

"Not even twenty-four hours after it happened, Dumbledore made Severus Vow to protect you; should he fail in his endeavour, he would be killed by the Vow. It is why he has gone to such great lengths to protect you," Blake informed him. "Something else happened that night, something that not even the Dark Lord is aware of."

Severus was speechless, for the first time in his life he couldn't think of a single thing to say. There was no sardonic or biting retort ready on his tongue.

"Now we come back to your second year at Hogwarts, the diary you encountered. It was more than just a mere memory," Blake said, "You see, when the Dark Lord was at Hogwarts, he opened the Chamber of Secrets, and unleashed the Basilisk in the school. When the Headmaster at the time, Dippet, informed him that the school would be closing, he quickly pointed the blame at an innocent student, Hagrid, who was quickly expelled and the whole thing swept under the rug. The Dark Lord couldn't risk opening the chamber again, not while he was there, for fear of Hogwarts actually being closed. When Myrtle was killed, he used her death to create himself a Horcrux; that is what the diary was, a piece of the Dark Lord’s soul."

Severus choked out in disbelief, seeing Blake in a whole new light, his gaze filtering to the ring in realisation.

"What is a Horcrux?" Harry asked, confused.

"That is," Blake gesturing towards the ring. "The Dark Lord created seven. It's the foulest piece of magic known to Wizardkind. To split your soul once is against the very laws of magic, of nature, never mind the number of times he actually did it. In his fear of death, the Dark Lord went on to create more than any other before him, which is why he looks as he does. The version you saw in
the diary is what he looked like before he began to deteriorate due to his creations; it is also what caused his insanity."

Severus frowned, not really understanding how seven could be created but the Dark Lord be oblivious to it. He didn't know a lot about Horcruxes, he had read them in passing only. The book he had read it from didn't give instructions on how to create one, not that he had cared, he had not relished, even at the time, the thought of damaging his soul.

"So that's why we went to get it!" Harry said, "So we're going to get the rest, right?"

"Indeed," Blake replied, nodding affirmative. "As you can see, Severus, I don't intend to cause Harry harm, I am merely trying to protect him. I need you to swear you won't relay this information to anyone, it's the only way to keep it from anyone that might read your mind or stop me from being able to collect them."

"How do you know about them?" Severus was beyond bewildered.

"I am Harry Potter," Blake said, "Or I used to be; an incident in the future, a mispronounced spell brought me back here. If you try and hurt me the Vow would see that as you breaking your oath and it would kill you. It was why I acted as I did in the shack, believe it or not."

"Impossible," Severus vehemently denied the possibility.

"I, Harry James Potter otherwise known at Blake Slytherin so swear that everything I have told you is the truth," magic quickly circled the room, heating it uncomfortably. "Lumos!" "Satisfied?"

"It's really me, we even have the same scars," Harry said quietly.

"Before I release you and give you back your wand, I need you to swear you won't tell anyone," Blake said, rubbing his face tiredly. "I know you probably don't like the thought of it, but I'm afraid there is no other way forward."

"I'll need my wand," Severus stated.

"Don't take me for a fool, Severus Tobias Snape, I know very well how good you are at Wandless magic," Blake snapped.

Harry choked back a laugh, hearing his teacher scolded like that was hilarious, and using his full name too. Even more hilarious was the fact he swore that his professor's cheeks went red, in what… embarrassment or anger at being spoken to like that?
Harry lay in bed unable to sleep; the day’s events kept playing around in his mind. He felt as though he had missed something but what? He just couldn't think of what it could be. Once Snape had made the Vow, Blake had let him go. He didn't say anything else, probably because before he could, Snape had hissed out in discomfort and pain — the Dark Mark had hurt and Snape had been forced to leave or suffer Voldemort's wrath. Blake hadn't stopped him; afterwards he had relayed just how dangerous the ring was and the terrible consequences of touching it. He knew what the spell was, he just wasn't familiar with the counter-curse so he quickly placed it in his office drawer using every spell imaginable to safeguard it, spells Harry couldn't even begin to name… well maybe one or two, but the rest were unknown to him.

Then came the best part of the day, practicing spells on duelling dummies that Blake had acquired. They weren't activated yet; Blake told him they were Auror-grade dummies that actually could throw coloured beams of light at their opponent, without damaging them of course, but if they got hit with a lethal colour, the duel was over and the dummy won and went inactive until it was activated again. He was using his new wand, which he felt was much better than his old one, for these sessions. He'd learned ten spells today before they stopped, and he'd been utterly exhausted, yet he felt a glowing sense of accomplishment.

Then after dinner he was left to read books as instructed before Blake had squirreled himself away in his study, stating he had research he had to do, and if he wanted, Harry could sit with him or do whatever he pleased. For the first hour he had remained sitting with Blake until he grew bored with the book he was reading and quietly left, deciding to continue reading the books on Occlumency and Legilimency that were in his bedroom.

He hadn't received any mail. Neither of his friends had written to him again. When he had raged at them, he thought maybe they wouldn't do it again. He thought they had understood… apparently he was wrong. Swallowing thickly, he realized that he was feeling rather upset with them. Not angry this time, just saddened. Did his friendship mean so little to them? Blake had said he would find true friends in Neville and a girl named Luna — whoever she was. Maybe he should write to Neville, but he didn't know what to say. He didn't know him all that well, he shamefully admitted.

Sighing in agitation, he lay on his back, and closing his eyes he began to meditate, forcing his negative emotions back. Without even realizing it he slipped asleep with no warring emotions, which left him feeling content — at peace. He was beginning to realize there was no point to stressing about things that can't be changed.

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"Morning, how did you sleep?" Blake asked from behind the newspaper, which he had found very amusing indeed. The Daily Prophet had gotten wind of what the Order had attempted to do in Diagon Alley the other day — not that they knew they were Order members. He had a feeling that they wouldn't be venturing out anytime soon. It was that or risk being dragged into the Ministry for questioning. They had blatantly tried to kidnap Harry Potter from his new rightful guardian. Added to that was the damage to the shop and scaring away her customers for the day; Madam Malkin
had lost out and required compensation. Blake knew she wasn't a vindictive sort of person, so it was probably true. It was potentially worse than that. Doge was a member of the Wizengamot, so the consequences of being found out would be most severe for him. Diggle and Moody would also be easily found, albeit it might be more difficult to get to the paranoid Auror. But if he tried to run, if they all did, they would find themselves in further trouble.

Harry gasped when he saw the headlines, "Did you tell…?" He didn't think so, it didn't seem like a move that Blake would pull. He didn't want to call attention to himself, and that was a quick way to go about it.

"Of course not, you know how Rita Skeeter is," Blake replied smoothly, folding up the newspaper and placing it to the side, then regarding Harry calmly.

Harry nodded his understanding and the fact that what he had suspected was in fact right. He picked up the paper, though, and began reading what she had to say, along the way finding out who had tried to get him away from his new guardian. Doge, Diggle, and Moody… he only really knew one of them, if that could be counted as knowing, since someone else had been impersonating him all year. He did find out what they did though: Diggle was retired and Doge was apparently an important member of the Ministry. He was not surprised to see Skeeter had overly dramatised the entire thing, making it sound even worse. "I hate her," Harry scowled, finally putting the paper down, and starting to eat his breakfast as it popped into the place setting in front of him.

"At least they're saying nothing against you now," Blake smirked viciously, "I have no doubt that now you have a magical guardian, they'll think twice just in case I sue them for slander." Not that it would matter, since the magical world was now aware of the Dark Lord's return, thanks to his actions.

"When did they find out? You know… that he was back?" Harry asked, chewing on his sausage thoughtfully, wondering if Blake would tell him.

"They didn't find out until the end of my fifth year," Blake replied, sitting back and sipping his coffee while eyeing Harry critically. "He went for the prophecy, tricking me into thinking he had Sirius Black at the Ministry and that he was torturing him and about to kill him. Like a fool I rushed in, determined I was right despite all warnings to the contrary. In the end a fight ensued, the Order members came after receiving Severus' warning. Black was killed, he was hit with a spell and fell through the Veil of Death within the Ministry's Unspeakables Department of Mysteries. The Dark Lord showed up, possessed me and got into a duel with Dumbledore; in the end he was force to flee, but not before being seen by high up members of the Ministry, including the Minister himself… or Ex-Minister, seeing as he has now been removed from his position. There was no way to cover it up, so they were forced to acknowledge his return. I became their beloved hero once more," he finished, sneering disdainfully. He said his fifth-year, since Harry's years at Hogwarts would now be different from his own. Forewarned was forearmed; he would make sure Harry didn't make his mistakes.

"Oh," Harry said, not able to meet his eyes. He had known Sirius wouldn't survive, and it shouldn't have surprised him that it would happen so soon. He should have guessed, after all Blake had said he'd only seen him a few times before his death.

"Yes," Blake muttered, "You see, the Dark Lord can make you see the most awful things in your own mind, convince you they were real, that they had happened to you. I've seen him use it on the strongest of men and watched them break before Voldemort, unable to withstand the ruthlessness of his mind and being shattered beyond comprehension."

Harry shuddered, no wonder Blake wanted him to learn Occlumency; he swore to do his level best
to learn it and quickly. He had made Blake see Sirius being tortured? He realized he would have run to him as well, which made his training all the more important.

"Letters came for you this morning," Blake informed him, relaxing now that they weren't talking about one of the most turbulent times of his teenage years. He was also happy that Harry understood the direness of needing to learn Occlumency. Just telling him sometimes wasn't enough — he had to truly realize. Although his first Occlumency lesson had gone better than he'd ever dreamed.

"Really?" Harry perked up eagerly.

"Mmm hmm," Blake confirmed. "Do not get your hopes up, I have a feeling I know just what they contain." His face was impassive as he spoke, a glint of sympathy flashed in his green eyes but it was gone so fast Harry barely saw it.

Harry grasped the letters, diving them up, three letters went to Blake along with a shrunk parcel —if the shrunk letters were anything to go on anyway; one he noticed was from Gringotts. He was still trying to get his mind around the fact he was really a descendant of Salazar Slytherin. When he'd asked Dumbledore, he'd said it was Voldemort's powers that made him have the ability to speak to snakes. Another lie apparently; the more time he spent with Blake, the more he realized just how much he had been lied to over the years.

Harry

The Headmaster told us what happened; we cannot believe it! He's taken you away from the safety of Headmaster Dumbledore as well as the wards that keep you safe from Voldemort. Harry, please let us know you are okay and do as the headmaster asks; we're all worried about you. He thinks Blake Slytherin might be an agent of Voldemort, you are in grave danger.

I can’t believe he would put everyone at risk, Harry; three wizards are about to be arrested for trying to save you. They've already got to Doge this morning, the Headmaster is furious over it. Diggle and Moody are remaining here for now, but things are becoming very dangerous very fast.

We are all still in the same place as before; if you get away come straight here. If you can't, please write to us and let us know you are alright.

Hermione.

Harry stared at the letter uncomprehendingly, before staring up at Blake. Well, he was right again. He shouldn't have gotten his hopes up, like an idiot he had thought they would be happy for him. They couldn't be blamed completely, though, since they were listening to Dumbledore. Sighing softly, he ripped open the letter from Dumbledore.

Mr. Potter

Harry, please tell me where it is you are hiding, and I shall send some people to collect you, and bring you to where you will be safe. I fear Lord Voldemort and the Death Eaters are on the move; now that they've been revealed to the public, there is no longer a need to lay low. It is very dangerous to be outside of my protection. The wards on the Dursleys have been replenished for the
year, so you can stay with your friends within the safety of our Headquarters.

There has been a rise in Death Eater activity lately; I truly fear that it's only a matter of time, my boy. Everyone is extremely worried about you, especially Sirius and Remus, as well as the Weasleys; Molly is going out of her mind with worry.

Albus Dumbledore

Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

"Are the Death Eaters doing anything?" Harry asked worriedly.

"No," Blake replied, "Anything of that nature would definitely be in the newspaper. Right now he's concentrating on a mission that will take at least three or four months to put together. Regardless of whether everyone knows or not, I think he will continue on with his plans in the order he originally intended. If there is one thing I know about the Dark Lord, it’s that he gets obsessive."

"But the Headmaster says there's a rise in Death Eater activity," Harry objected, concerned for the people.

"Of course he would, he wants you to feel guilty and go running back to him as quickly as possible," Blake snorted bitterly, "He's very good at that Harry, surely you've noticed? That and the fact he cannot track you down; he will be feeling at a loss, it's why he's written to you — it's a last resort. He will get more desperate as time passes, probably he’ll resort to using your parents and Cedric Diggory in a bid to squash any hope of independence from you."

Harry wanted to exclaim that Dumbledore wouldn't do that very vocally, but deep within his heart, where Blake had already said he suspected everything, was telling him it was the truth. He had a feeling he would soon find out; Dumbledore wasn't going to give up, he was just that desperate. "What do I do?" Harry whispered apprehensively.

Blake looked up from the bank statements from the Potter estate he was reading now and arched an eyebrow. "What do you want to do?" He was genuinely curious what his younger self thought at this very moment. Coming back in time was very handy, since he knew what the results of various Quidditch games were going to be; he’d bet on them with a great deal of money from his and Harry’s accounts and it had more than tripled their income. The Slytherin vaults had been, in reality, sorely lacking, and he hadn’t been about to spend the Potter fortune — it belonged to Harry. So he was amassing his own fortune; he knew the more money he had, the greater the respect he would be accorded from everyone, hence why he was doing this. Plus there was no telling when extra gold would come in handy.

"Ignore them," Harry admitted, feeling disappointed. Hermione's staunch belief in the Headmaster was becoming increasingly annoying. She was a good friend, and he liked her a lot, but every time something happened, she ran to a teacher. First over his Firebolt and now this… it was tiresome.

"Then do that," Blake suggested, turning back to the rest of his mail, chuckling softly when he recognized Snape's handwriting, shaking his head bemusedly he opened it and wasn't surprised by its contents.

We need to meet.

S. Snape
He knew if Voldemort hadn't chosen that exact moment to call his followers that Snape wouldn't have left after swearing the Vow. He would have remained until he had gotten as much information from him as possible, especially regarding the Horcruxes. He hadn't been in the mood to share; still wasn't, if he was honest with himself. It had taken him ten minutes to word the Vow in such a way that literally made Snape unable to talk about it unless it was with him. That included no gestures, no sly ways of talking about them to someone, or writing it down even. It had been very tricky wording it just right to achieve its full effectiveness; the look of disgruntled respect on Severus' face had been hilarious.

"What's funny?" Harry asked his green eyes peering into Blake's curiously.

"Severus wishes to meet," Blake stated rolling his eyes, "I'm surprised he didn't write sooner, but considering the length of time it will have been in flight, I'd estimate it might have been sent just after the meeting." He would have needed time to digest everything he'd learned anyway, it's not every day someone learned that there was a wizard here that belonged in the future.

"What… how do you know how long they last?" Harry exclaimed.

"Depending on what the Dark Lord is up to, they usually last for an hour and a half to two and a half hours. If he's furious it can last up to three hours; he's usually too busy cursing everyone to let them tell him what information they've uncovered and such," Blake explained as if he was talking about the weather, not Voldemort cursing people left, right, and centre.

"Why does he want to come?" Harry enquired his brow furrowing as he absently scrunched up both letters that had come from Dumbledore and Hermione. His professor didn't like him, never had; he had a feeling it wasn't fully just to keep his cover… but he hadn't been nasty at all yesterday, so he was feeling conflicted over what he thought to be the truth.

Blake sighed glancing at the teenager, "Take a moment to think about it, Harry. He's a wizard who has survived solely due to his ability to understand everyone around him, collecting every crumb of knowledge that will aid him in his quest. He vowed to do everything in his power to help you, which coincidentally means help you defeat the Dark Lord, so you will be safe. Along comes someone with knowledge and information from the future, information that isn't available to anyone else… what do you think he sees about this opportunity and situation?"

"Um…" Harry started thinking thoughtfully, "You said knowledge was power, so if he knows things he will be able to be more informed. That and well… it might make Voldemort die sooner so he doesn't have to spy so long?" Then he remembered another tidbit of what Blake had said to him, remembering his advice to Ollivander. "Are you going to tell him what happens to him?"

"That I don't know," Blake admitted, tiredly rubbing his face. But there was one thing he knew, Severus and himself might have better luck coming up with a ritual to remove the Horcrux from Harry together than he would hunting alone. There was no denying that Severus was absolutely amazing when it came to spell crafting, he could perhaps see a way much quicker than he would. "I think perhaps he will probably ask; he is a Slytherin, after all."

"Did he ever tell you about mum?" Harry then asked after a few minutes of silence.

"He left me memories as he lay dying in my arms," Blake admitted harshly, pain showing through his normally impassive masks.

Harry gasped but said nothing else. He might not like his Potions professor, but he would never
wish harm upon him. Not when it was so obvious that he was on their side… which he wouldn't have believed if not for Blake. His head cocked to the side thoughtfully; did that mean he hadn't fully trusted Dumbledore, since Dumbledore always insisted Snape was on their side?

"Dobby?" Blake barked, trying to get himself back into some semblance of control; he loathed talking about the war and the people he had lost.

"Yes, Sir?" Dobby asked, no hint of hesitation on his face. He knew even when Master Harry, or rather Blake, was angry he would never hurt him. He had just been through so much that he sometimes got upset, and it made him angry when he felt that way.

"Go to Hogwarts and retrieve Severus Snape; approach him when he is alone and warn him," Blake informed the House-elf, "Bring him here; the wards will admit him."

"Dobby will do as Master wishes right away!" Dobby promised clicking his fingers the breakfast dishes disappeared before Dobby was gone with a single nearly soundless pop.
Chapter 10

The Games They Play

Chapter 10

Blake and Harry entered the office; as soon as they did Harry took his usual position, on the floor cross legged. He might have only had three Occlumency lessons, but he knew how important they were, and now knew to get into position without needing to be asked. He wanted so badly to protect his mind properly, he didn’t want to risk Voldemort getting in and possessing him. The thought horrified him to the core, and the fact he had no need to know things like he had in the past, such as the prophecy, he had every intention of mastering it. He also had to so Dumbledore didn’t get in his mind, he didn’t even want to think about what the Headmaster would do if he found out ‘Blake Slytherin’ was actually himself from the future.

Blake also sat down in the seat opposite Harry, he had left his office the way it was seeing no need to change it - only to have to change it back every morning. He had enough place for what he used this office for, and that was enough for him. Dobby had returned yesterday afternoon to cook lunch and dinner then sleep, seeing as Severus wasn’t available. He had presumably left after breakfast a few moments ago, but he didn’t know, House-elves magic was different from wizards, and he couldn’t sense him even bound to him. But that was the way it was, House-elves served them unseen and did everything without looking for acknowledgements. He hadn’t asked Dobby whether he succeeded or not, he didn’t want to deal with a depressed house-elf who thought he had failed, and tried to bash his bloody head in. He would leave him to it he wasn’t sure he was up to a Snape-centric interrogation anyway.

“Have you begun your meditation exercise?” Blake asked the teen grabbing the book he was currently reading, waiting for Harry to reply before starting.

“Yes, and find something that helps me shield and protect my mind,” Harry told him, his voice unusually soft and peaceful - but only when he was meditating.

“Good,” Blake said, turning to page he’d last read, keeping the bookmark in the book but not on his currant page slotting it through pages he’d read previously. Relaxing himself, he began to immerse himself in the words; he was looking for a way to remove the curse on the ring. Considering Severus knew the counter-curse he felt it was a futile exercise but he had long ago stopped relying on anyone for answers and did things himself. If he didn’t find it before Severus came then that was fine, there was nothing wrong with asking him or somehow getting him to point him in the right direction.

Fifteen minutes in, he noticed a change in Harry’s breathing and his magic spiked, indicating he was doing as asked, magically shielding his mind from external penetration. Pride filled him, three lessons and he was already shorting the time, this was good. Of course, Harry would do it quicker than him; he had someone helping him, properly. Not that Snape had been doing it wrong; he just did it the quick way as he had been asked to by Dumbledore. Unfortunately with his connecting with Voldemort, the dreams, and his mind being raided every night it had the opposite affect and kept him weaker. Part of him wondered often if that had been Dumbledore’s intention, but he didn’t care for those thoughts anymore - nothing would surprise him though.

Looking down at his book again he finished the fifth page of this morning and put the bookmark in it again. He had given Harry enough time to solid barriers to protect his mind. “Legilimens!” and with that Blake pushed into Harry’s mind, feeling the resistance this time, and found himself once
again feeling proud of the teenager. Unfortunately it wouldn’t be enough to stand against him fully pressing all his magic against him. He was right, pushing his magic into it caused his shield’s to explode spectacularly and memories come spilling into his mind. After a few moments he ended it, watching Harry regain his strength, it had weakened him considerably.

“Let’s see if this might make sense,” Blake muttered, flicking his wand two items appeared magically. “Do you spot any differences in them?”

“You have Easter eggs?” Harry looked confused. They were unwrapped, and sitting there in Blake’s hands.

“Do you notice any difference?” Blake urged.

Harry gave Blake a wary look before gazing at the chocolate Easter eggs, he couldn’t find anything different about them at all. He looked a little longer wondering if it was a trick or something, but when he couldn’t see anything he reluctantly shook his head.

“That’s right, because outwardly there is no difference. Take them,” Blake said, giving the teenager the two eggs.

“One’s heavier,” Harry said immediately.

Blake nodded, flicking his wand and placing a clean container at his feet. “Now drop them both in.”

Harry gave him a quick look to make sure he had heard right before shifting his hands and the eggs immediately fell. One smashed into smithereens and the other barely cracked at all, Harry couldn’t help but wonder why they were doing this, it made absolutely no sense to him - but he had a feeling he would soon.

“Now see here, the one with the less chocolate was reduced to smithereens, the other was barely hit.” Blake said staring at them. “The one that smashed is like your shields, you are surrounding your mind with one layer of magic, and against a stronger opponent it’s useless. Your shield needs to be like the second one,” he told him pointing towards the cracked but still whole chocolate egg. “You need more layers; the more you have the stronger your defences will be. So when I get through one set, you have time to repair the damage, and stop it.”

“Oh,” Harry replied, understanding why he had used them as an example now.

“Think of Russian nesting dolls, layer your magic around and around it, keep it secure, safe and impenetrable.” Blake added thoughtfully, “Let’s try a few more times before we stop for the day,”

Harry nodded grimly, cheekily nabbing a piece of chocolate he got back into position, and closed his eyes once again concentrating.

Blake once again began to read his book; ten minutes in he looked up over it to feel the magic surrounding him in its warmth. Yes, he would be well versed in Occlumency before the end of the summer, that much he was certain of. Sighing softly, he returned to his secondary task, giving Harry time to cast as much shielding as he could. He had a feeling tomorrow his shields would be massively strengthened. If he slept with them the way he had suggested, then they would only tighten and becoming impenetrable over time. The only reason he was using Legilimency was to show Harry what happens, so he can fight against it. Learning Occlumency was all good and well from a book, but it didn’t prepare you for the real thing.

This would ensure success like nothing else.
Blake pointed his wand at the unsuspecting wizard and uttered, “Legilimens!” he would learn to watch out for it and expect it that would help as well. To his further flaming pride Harry had listened, it took him a minute to tear through the three layers of shields he’s successfully erected.

“Now that is the way to go,” Blake said, “I’m proud of the success your showing, Harry, keep this up and you’ll be finished these lessons in a month or so. Did you feel me getting through each layer?” not sure if he would yet.

“I think so,” Harry said honestly, a frown settling on his face, “My magic sort of tingled three times.”

“That’s right,” Blake said immediately, nodding firmly, “That is the feeling, the more used to it you are the greater the feeling will become letting you know if there’s even the slightest nudge.”

“Wicked!” Harry said grinning.

“One more time, then you’ll put your barriers back up and we will train for an hour,” Blake said.

“Were you ever a teacher? You’re really good at this stuff,” Harry said in admiration.

“No,” Blake replied grimly, “The war wasn’t over in future, Harry, quite frankly everyone not a pureblood was running for their lives and dying.” he had inverted caused a few, he had encouraged people to say the name Voldemort, and when the taboo went into affect, people were cut down before they could comprehend what was happening.

Harry stared stunned, he had no idea how old Blake was, but he was old, really old, the war went on that long? Swallowing thickly, it was no wonder Blake was so determined to see this through, he really could prevent the war from getting so bad this time around. It was almost like a second chance of getting things right - a fresh start.

“Let’s do it.” Harry said with renewed determination.

“Okay, go ahead.” Blake informed him from his seat, discarding the book back on the table not feeling like reading. Harry’s questions had made him dwell on very negative things, and he loathed thinking on them. That mispronounced spell had been quite literally the best thing that ever happened to him, even more so than finding out he was a wizard and that his parents weren’t lazy drunks who died in a car crash. As Harry thought it was a second chance, to put things right and he couldn’t do that alone. He would need help, more than just from Harry, he was only one man, and the chances of succeeding alone were slim. If he got caught, then he would be able to die knowing that people knew, that this screwed up world would be fine. Perhaps he should apply for the defence position, Dumbledore would agree thinking he’d die at the end of the year, but he wouldn’t, not if he used his pseudo name. They had found a way around the curse just before Hogwarts was taken. Nobody wanted the position this year, so he would be in for a chance, especially without Umbridge there. If Dumbledore wasn’t amendable then he could just use the Ministry to ensure it. It was a thought, he wasn’t sure whether he would do it, but it would help keep an eye on Harry.

“I’m going to use the spell now,” Blake told him in warning, wishing to see if it made any difference before pointing his wand and uttering, “Legilimens!” and he made short work of the four shield’s, apparently with Harry anticipating the attack he had tensed and enabled him to get through quicker, interesting. “You did well today,”

Harry grinned almost shyly; he wasn’t used to people telling him that on a regular basis. When he performed really good magic like the Patronus he was told he was, but this was nice, even if it was
only himself telling him that! Harry grunted it made him sound like he was talking about himself in his mind. Closing his eyes, he began to meditate for the final time today, if Blake was telling him he was doing good then he had to be, no way would he say that as an empty platitude.

“I will be in the training room when you are done,” Blake said, leaving Harry to meditate alone, anything lying around was unimportant, all other things were locked up at all times. He never risked it, not when he knew himself all too well; hopefully he could drum it out of him, a bit at a time.

Blake headed straight for the Muggle gym equipment straight ahead to the right hand corner and pulled on his gloves and began to pound the bag magically stuck to the wall, no matter how hard or if his magic accidentally leaked into it, it wouldn’t fall down or end up well for the lack of better words reduced to shreds. He worked off some of his aggression, his memories were just so bitter and twisted that he needed this, an outlet for his anger otherwise his magic would explode like it did as a teen. When his hearing picked up the subtle click of a door being closed he slowed down and eventually stopped just as Harry entered the room. “I’ve ordered a different dummy for you to work with, it’s not Auror grade but for novices in defence, it’s primarily bought by those who apprentice to a Defence Master.” surprised Harry hadn’t exploded at the word ‘novice’.

“What will it be like?” Harry asked eagerly, he was dying to try the dummies out, even if they were Auror grade - now he wouldn’t have to he’d have one with less skill.

“It will throw spells up to seventh year grade spells,” Blake answered, his lips twitching. “I will be giving you books to ensure your O.W.L grades reflect what I know you’re capable of. I know you think what’s the point I wont be doing or studying history after I leave or working with herbs, but the truth is Harry, you are capable of getting amazing grades that can go right up there with Dumbledore and Tom Riddle, certain classes, since you did not take Runes or Arithmancy due to wanting an easy class because that was what Ron was doing.” his distaste obvious but it seemed inward not aimed at Harry. “Half the respect you get after leaving Hogwarts comes from your grades, and when you’re interviewed for a job. This is the year that you will be asked what you want to do after graduating Hogwarts. You have half a year to think about it, I have a book that will help you pick something you’ll actually enjoy. It will also tell you the requirements for that particular job or mastery whichever you prefer. Do not just tell anyone what they want to hear, it is your life, not our fathers do you understand?”

Harry blinked in surprise, “Not really, what do you mean by what people want to hear?”

“Obviously you aren’t thinking like that yet,” Blake said bemused, “You tell McGonagall you want to be an Auror, and everyone is expecting it. You can’t live your life according to them, you’ve already done so much, stopped so much is fighting and battling really what you want to do with your life?”

“I don’t know,” Harry said again, he hadn’t really thought about it.

“I’ll give you the book so you have a clear definitive answer to give your Head of House when the time comes.” Blake said softly.

Harry nodded his agreement.

“Now today we are going to try something different,” Blake said, “It’s difficult, I’ll admit, but it’s also something you excel at.”

Harry perked up, curiously, “What?” he asked almost desperate for answers.
“Since you’ve learned all the spells you’ll be taught in your fifth year, I’m going to teach you the things I learnt in my sixth year, but if things go my way...you might not be learning from that particular person.” Blake informed him, Dumbledore wouldn’t risk his precious spy for the Defence position if he wasn’t dying. “Nonverbal spells admittedly its ones you’ve already be taught but doing them nonverbally is different.”

Harry grinned nodding eagerly.

“Now nonverbally saying spells might give you a second’s advantage, but the power is greatly diminished, you don’t get their full affect as you would if they were saying the spell. So in reality while its cool to begin with, it isn’t one of the greatest things to learn, although you’ll be surprised to note that a combination of Wandless and Nonverbal spell together makes it stronger, it remains pure while magic cast with a wand is slightly tainted due to the magic being poured from you and channelled through your wand.” Blake stated, “Watch.” he demanded.

Harry watched as Blake conjured two wooden dummies, and fired off a red spell with his wand, which then blasted the dummy.

He stepped to the second one, same distance from both, and noticeably putting his wand away, the red light shined more brightly and it smashed into the dummy, pieces of it clattered to the ground like a Jenga game lost.

“Now you see the difference?” Blake said, gazing at both of the dummies shrewdly.

“Yes!” Harry exclaimed, he wasn’t blind! One was barely scorched the other well if it had been a human they’d be dead for sure.

“A lot of wizards and witches cast Nonverbal magic, it is nothing spectacular, some even go so far to make it seem as though they’re casting magic without a wand, when in reality its on a holster strapped to their wrist.” Blake informed him, glazing in wonder if Harry would understand if he would get what he was talking about. He didn’t. “Just like Albus Dumbledore does at the beginning of every year, watch closely, you’ll see his wand pointing out of his sleeve.” Blake’s eyes twinkled brightly. “While Dumbledore is powerful, he isn’t as powerful as you, I or the Dark Lord.”

Harry gaped utterly stunned.

“He won one duel fifty odd years ago, Harry, against someone he knew quite well, it’s easy to defeat an opponent when you know their every move.” Blake said kindly as if not wishing to overwhelm him.

Harry licked his dry lips as he stuttered out, “H-he knew Grindelwald?”

“Intimately,” Blake replied, standing there talking to Harry as if he was discussing the weather.

“WHAT!” Harry shrieked, swaying slightly now feeling overwhelmed.

“Yes, they as teenagers decided that Muggles were beneath them and they were going to be the lord of them all, kind overlords and prevent any wizard or witch ever be harmed from a Muggle ever again. He of course, chickened out, and Grindelwald went on to make a war ten times worse, eventually Dumbledore was begged to help and gave in.” Blake informed him, “Do you understand how ironic it is that Dumbledore distrusted the Dark Lord as a teenager? When he himself had thought about doing the same thing?” a twisted parody of a smile on his face.

A pop interrupted their conversation, but Dobby waited until his Master was finished speaking his
eyes wider than usual indicating he had heard and understood exactly what Blake Slytherin had just said.

“Master Slytherin, Potions Master Severus Snape is in the living room as you wished,” Dobby said giving a small bow.

“Thank you, Dobby, take refreshments to him, and inform him I will be there shortly.” Blake said, giving Dobby an encouraging smile, knowing why he was stock still in shock, having just heard what he had, and he felt he should be punished. He doubted what the Malfoy’s had done to him would ever truly leave him.

“Alright, we will have to be quick, knowing Severus he will get extremely impatient, very quickly.” Blake pointed out, “Unless…well we will be beginning on first year spells, I don’t suppose it can hurt to do so in the sitting room.” nodding his head, “Are you hungry?”

“Yes,” Harry admitted, his stomach was getting swiftly used to the large meals Dobby loved to make, even bigger than the ones he ate at Hogwarts.

“Then lets go,” Blake said, glancing at the time as they left, it was just slightly after their usual lunch time. They had gotten quite behind either that or spent longer than he suspected on Occlumency lessons.

“Good afternoon, Severus,” Blake said curtly, as he entered the room, critically gazing over Severus, making sure he wasn’t supporting any injuries. He knew him too well, he wouldn’t show it, but the body had its own tells, not even a spy as proficient as he would be able to completely prevent his body from showing how much pain it was in. He was fully relaxed, but alert Blake thought, he must be fine then, perhaps already taken the potions required to help him.

“Mr. Slytherin,” Severus replied sardonically, his eyes twinkling self-satisfied. “Mr. Potter,” he added, his lips twitching, there was no denying he was incredibly smug to know the secret that he was pretty sure that not many others knew - if anyone did come to that.

“You wished to see me?” Blake enquired, getting down to business as he took his seat and poured both of them a cup, it didn’t miss Severus’ observations that the man knew exactly how he took it. Giving him a figurative glance, more curious than ever. Giving a small nod of thanks he accepted it, but he also checked it for anything, he wasn’t an idiot, and the man wasn’t even the slightest bit put out.

“Yes, but somehow I get the feeling that it doesn’t surprise you,” Severus commented after sipping the deliciously warm coffee in his hand - perfect drinking temperature.

“No, it doesn’t,” Blake replied relaxing back gazing at Severus, an eyebrow arched, he wasn’t going to be the one doing the talking today, if he wanted answers then he would be asking them.
Chapter 11

The Games They Play

Chapter 11

“What year did you come back from?” Severus asked, placing his cup on his lap as he gazed at the elder wizard, he had a rough estimate on what age he as, if you listened to what Shacklebolt said then it was thirty-four years old, but Har…no, Blake could only have just used his parents birth dates to make it easier to remember - he had no possible idea on what this incarnation of Harry Potter could think. He was very different from the young boy sitting beside them eating his food, his green eyes alert and curious indicating that he didn’t know everything either. Severus wrenched his eyes away, cursing himself for getting lost in those eyes, damn it; he must have taken the potion to correct his eyesight at long last.

“Two thousand and fourteen,” Blake stated with calmness, but at the last second a grimace appeared on his face for whatever reason.

Severus froze, bloody hell, he prayed that this didn’t mean the war lasted well into the new millennium. He knew some instincts didn’t fade, that they would remain until the day you died, yet he was constantly on edge, either the war had been over for say a year or so - or horrifying enough it had continued on. The thought of it going on so long was incomprehensible, nineteen years in the future and the possibility of war still being on going on their shores it was damn right he could barely understand it, he didn’t want to either. Given the fact that the Dark Lord had taken measures to ensure his survival…creating Horcruxes, perhaps the war hadn’t been full out - perhaps there had been peace between bouts of war with the insane Dark Lord. Tightening his grip on the cup in his hand he managed to steady himself, perhaps knowing wasn’t the best idea, but he needed to know, desired it above all else - despite the possible consequences. “He was active the entire time?” his tone off as he asked that question.

“No,” Blake replied, “But the Death Eaters were, it never took the Dark Lord long to return though, not like last time.” there wasn’t thirteen years of peace between his resurrections. “The Death Eaters had to bring him back, they knew if they didn’t the possibility of Azkaban would loom dangerously close, that and they were terrified of what was left of the resistance.” a satisfied sneer on his face as he thought about it.

Severus scoffed, unable to help himself, why would the Death Eaters be afraid of the Order? He voiced his question out loud and froze once again by the look on Blake’s face.

“The Order you knew wasn’t the resistance in the future, we had all lost our families, there was quite literally nothing left to lose, death wasn’t something we were sacred of, Severus, if not for the desire to win against them, the hope of bringing back the magical world the way it was they would have been happy enough to stand in front of a killing curse and be reunited with their loved ones.” Blake stated harshly, his hands balling into fists as he thought about them, all those he had left behind, but really if he did this right he would be saving them from that life, they would never feel the way they did, the way he did now. They had run for years trying to stay one step ahead, losing friends along the way.

“Do you know enough to ensure his destruction?” Severus enquired quietly, the magic swirling around Blake in all is glory was magnificent, threatening, and he quite frankly was intimidated enough not to wish the wizards ire upon him. He was a ticking time bomb, there was no other word for it, if he had been through even a shred of what he suspected, mostly due to how he remembered
the last war, painted worse in his mind - it was little wonder. Hopefully being here in this time, would help him relax a little but Severus somehow doubted it. He was still aghast at the mere thought of what the man had been through. “Was I able to help…I swore…” he added haltingly not sure whether he wanted an answer to where he could be after so long. He had only just returned to the Dark Lord’s services, he couldn’t imagine going that length of time playing a double agent so successfully. Even world war two and the war with Grindelwald hadn’t lasted more than four years.

“You were Dumbledore’s man right to the very end,” Blake uttered blankly none of his anger showing, wondering if the spy would get the reference or not. He really disliked talking about the future, he didn’t want to if he was honest, yet if they knew, these two, he was hoping that he could avoid everything. It was stupid to hope, in his future all hope had been lost years ago, defeat was all they knew, until one second he was in 2014 only to end up back here - so as well as being confused emotions exploded within him, emotions he hadn’t been sure he had anymore. Yet he was proven wrong, and he really didn’t want Harry to hear all this, it wasn’t fair, he was fifteen, why should he be weighed down and mentally scarred by what could come?

Severus swallowed thickly, briefly wondering what it was that he had done for Dumbledore that Har--Blake didn’t like. It could be anything frankly, and the reference to the very end told him that he wasn’t alive in the wizard’s future. It didn’t surprise him, he had known deep down that he was living on borrowed time from the moment he arose again months ago. Yet it did cause his heart to jerk painfully, did everyone know what he had done? Had redemption been his? Was he hated despite all he had sacrificed? This was something he definitely didn’t want to know, he wasn’t sure quite frankly if he could handle it.

What Severus failed to realize it was what Dumbledore had done TO him not the other way around. Perhaps in time that would become clear, but for the moment he sat in silence clutching the cup as it cooled in his clammy hands. It took everything in his willpower to stop himself trembling just a bit.

Harry stared at both of them, his eyes glazed slightly, taking in what they were saying but not truly processing it. He’d already had two quite large shocks thrown at him today, albeit both about Dumbledore - he didn’t want to hear more. Yet he couldn’t force himself to stand up and walk away. He would sit there hear it all, so he knew what would happen should he fail. A terrifying thought struck him like lightning if Blake couldn’t kill Voldemort…what the hell hope did he have? No, he would get better, he wasn’t alone, Harry thought to himself trying to stem his worry, Blake had promised him that he wasn’t alone that he would help him every step of the way.

“As for your first question, yes, I know where they all are,” Blake added, “I actually need your help in regards to one in particular.”

Severus blinked, surprised beyond belief that he was actually being asked to do something. The look on his face showed how distasteful Blake found asking someone for help. “Yes?” Severus drawled cautiously.

“Long or short version?” Blake enquired curtly, crossing his legs over in a very feigned show of casualness.

“Long,” Severus replied immediately, he wanted to know everything; he didn’t care that he couldn’t tell anyone else. Well that wasn’t strictly accurate, he had wished desperately to tell the Headmaster, although for some reason he had felt hesitant to do so - even with the Vow preventing him from repeating all he had heard. The Vow had been completed in such a manner that there was absolutely no leeway for him to get around the Vow to inform him. It was full proof and he had to
admire that, even if it did irritate him something rotten - just like any Slytherin would admire it in its entirety.

Blake’s lips just quirked slightly, unsurprised by his answer. “You already know part of it, the Dark Lord intended to create seven Horcruxes, in the process it completely destroyed his humanity, and his main piece as I call it, was only a very small portion of his soul. He had committed so much murder, splintered his soul so many times that when he killed my mother and tried to kill me, a portion of it embedded itself in me.”

“What?” Harry shrieked wide eyed, standing up looking at Blake in horrified betrayal and anguish, why hadn’t he told him? What did that mean for them? For him? He had piece of that murderer inside of him, his parent’s killer, and he had never told him. Why couldn’t he breathe? He couldn’t breathe. He just continued to pant feeling as though he was rudderless, lost at sea.

Blake jerked around at Harry, cursing himself inwardly he had completely forgotten his younger self was here. How could he have been so bloody stupid? That had been the most thoughtless thing that had come out of his mouth in years. Blast it all to hell, his eyes widened further when he noticed the trouble Harry was having breathing, was he having a panic attack?! He’d never EVER had one, a biting condemnation in his thoughts snapped bitterly that ‘he hadn’t been just barely fifteen when he learned about someone’s soul inside of him’ standing up he guided the hyperventilating teen to the seat completely bewildered, he had absolutely no idea how to deal with this. “Harry calm down and look at me, put your barriers up and centre yourself,”

“He’s beyond that, he needs a calming draught,” Severus informed Blake, his usually blank black eyes shining with pity and shock of his own. Gathering his scattered wits by Blake’s latest revelation, he dug into his pocket and pulled out a very small bag and non-verbally returned it to its proper size and quickly found the correct potion vial, easily done as seen as he kept everything organized neatly within it replenishing it every time it was used. He handed it over to the wizard who promptly managed to get Harry to swallow the potion. Severus had noticed Blake’s un-comprehending face as he had stared at Harry; evidently it didn’t happen in future whenever he finds out. Completely missing the realization that Blake Slytherin was teaching Harry Potter Occlumency for the time being.

“Excuse me,” Blake uttered through gritted teeth as he hoisted the still slightly underweight teen in his arms, he had been feeding him properly after all. He left the sitting room and made his way to Harry’s bedroom, Dobby thankfully opened the door for him so he could get him in with minimal fuss. Staring down at the teen that now looked calm and peacefully a sleep, how could he have been so recklessly stupid? Why had he revealed that? Scowling angrily, but tampering it down, he knew why, he needed help to remove it from Harry, he knew how to destroy them, how to remove them from their containers and send back to the main soul piece, but that was in containers, not with one attached to a human or animal soul. He didn’t dare risk it, since most of his work on Horcruxes was mostly theoretical.

Harry Potter was a Horcrux? Was Blake one as well or had it been removed somewhere in future? That was good, if it had then that meant he could remove it - if he could though, he thought with a sinking feeling, why hadn’t he already done so? Had he? Just with Harry completely unaware of it? If that had been the case, then he would have surely informed the panicking teen of that detail? He was becoming more and more disturbed by each revelation, he might look calm but the truth was he was anything but, the future looked bleaker by the minute. Each new piece of information he learned was like a stab in his heart, with the knowledge it might be completely impossible.

“Well that could have gone better,” Blake admitted, pinching the bridge of his nose in a manner very reminiscent of the wizard sitting in the very room with him.
“I assume you reacted differently?” Severus asked cautiously, seeking further information.

“Yes,” Blake stated blankly, before reclaiming his seat. “Back to our original topic, the first Horcrux he created was anchored by Myrtle’s death, the girl that haunts the girl’s second floor bathroom? Which coincidently is the same bathroom that houses the secret entrance to the chamber of secrets. The second one he created not even a month afterwards using the death of his father and grandparents, he used the Gaunt ring (incidentally after framing his Uncle Morfin for the deeds) you saw to host another piece of his soul. The next ones I’m not actually sure which order they were done in truthfully,” he admitted thoughtfully, “Both were stolen from Hepzibah Smith back in the early fifties I assume, Salazar Slytherin’s locket and of course Helga Hufflepuff’s golden chalice. She was murdered by the Dark Lord and he modified yet another memory to frame someone innocent this time a House-elf. Now those two will be extremely challenging to get, one currently resides in ---” Blake rolled his eyes, irritated. “The Order headquarters, evidently the Fidelus Charm has been placed upon it. Kreacher has it, he stole it from the black bags when the Weasleys were cleaning, but it then gets stolen at some point by Mundungus Fletcher. How Black can allow it I have no idea, all that family history just being discarded as if it was nothing.”

Severus raised a curious eyebrow but inwardly agreed with him, it was true, he had thought pretty much the same - especially in regards to the books. To see them being thrown out…hurt like blazes. A few of the titles had caught his eye, but he would never under any circumstances ask Black for anything. Most of the items were dark, so they must be evil; he thought sardonically to himself, he was sick of the constant labelling - wrongly too. Some of this information was already familiar to him, he hadn’t forgotten a word the wizard had said the day his entire life spiralled out of control. He flushed darkly remembering Blake’s words, it was rather disconcerting how well the wizard knew him - barely anyone knew his middle name he didn’t even like it. His mother had stuck to wizarding traditions despite it all and called him Severus Tobias - as if his life hadn’t been bad enough.

“Back on topic, yet again,” Blake frowned that was happening more and more as of late and he didn’t like it. He summarised it was to be expected, he had a lot of information that nobody did, and telling them wasn’t very straightforward not by a long shot. “He also retrieved Rowena Ravenclaw’s diadem, he charmed it out of the daughter, the Grey Lady less known as Helena Ravenclaw. She stole the diadem from her mother and ran away with it. Rowena wanted to see her daughter, she was on her death bed, and she requested someone to retrieve her, someone she knew who would get her - a man who was very much in love with her…you know him well, he is the Slytherin ghost the Bloody Baron. The Bloody Baron in his anger when she refused to come with him accidentally killed her, and when he saw what he had done, in his shame he killed himself.” chuckling at the look on Severus’ face, it wasn’t one he was familiar with. “The Dark Lord killed an Albanian peasant before returning to Scotland to apply for the Defence position, and in doing so brought the diadem back to Hogwarts where it has lain undisturbed for many years. Do you want to know the real kicker?”

Severus stared dumbstruck, did he?

“If Dumbledore had given him that position he wouldn’t have become the mass murderer we knew today, it was his out, he actually did want to teach. In his fury when Dumbledore refused him he cursed the position so that anybody he didn’t directly approve off would die or have to resign in some way. It’s a very complicated curse that the Dark Lord himself created; he is brilliant even if he’s insane I’ll admit that. Not giving your enemy the respect he deserves is just foolish.” Blake revealed waspishly. “Then of course fast-forward to Halloween night he created another in me accidentally. When Pettigrew found him, he used Bertha Jorkin’s death to create yet another in his familiar known as Nagini.”
By that point Severus was hearing everything but not truly digesting it, the Dark Lord had wanted an out? It seemed so completely unbelievable, yet he believed it, how many Death Eaters had the Dark Lord taught and given lessons to? Himself included, he had even been taught how to fly without the aid of a broom. He was a very intensive teacher, didn’t suffer mistakes - or fools, and in all honesty he made Severus look like a fluffy bunny in comparison. He just couldn’t believe it, all this war…this devastation could have been avoided if Dumbledore had just agreed? There was no guarantee, but surely anything would have been better than this? Horcruxes, the locket, so Blake wanted him to retrieve it from Grimmauld Place?

“So…the locket? Do you know how to destroy them? Do you have everything you need to do it?” Severus asked, “Is there any other additional information you can give me on it?” he really didn’t want to be found doing something he really couldn’t explain within the tight confines of Grimmauld Place. He was also feeling a smug sense of satisfaction that he was being asked and not Sirius Black.
Chapter 12

The Games They Play

Chapter 12

“It’s hidden in Kreacher’s den, if I am correct, but I cannot say with any certainty, you see, when I finally realized what it was, it had already been stolen and sold by Mundungus Fletcher. He sold it to Dolores Umbridge the undersecretary for the Minister of Magic, she proclaimed that the locket belonged to the Selwyn family, you see she was in actuality a half-blood, her father and herself were the only magical ones in the family, her mother and brother were both non-magical. Even from a young age it embarrassed her, she managed to get her father to retire from the Ministry, and hid her ‘sordid’ past. She was the one that sent the Dementors after Harry, but with a few choice words she won’t be trouble anymore. Although I’m sure she will try and dig up dirt on me, but she won’t find anything.” Blake chuckled darkly, his green eyes gleaming viciously.

Severus shifted slightly, a surprising amount of arousal shooting through him at his voice and the way his eyes gleamed. He raised his barriers as tightly as they would go as he placed the cup on the table and shifted his robes just to be on the safe side. He was not attracted to him, Severus thought to himself, trying to convince himself it was just a fluke.

“I won’t be destroying them until I have every single one of them, I made that mistake the last time and he figured out what we were up to and created more. It’s a risk I am not willing to take this time around.” Blake informed him grimly. “The items themselves won’t be destroyed this time around; in fact it will be nice to return them to where they’re meant to be.”

“Hogwarts?” Severus guessed. “Are any other than the Slytherin line still active?”

“Actually three of the four lines are active; I have no idea about the Ravenclaw line though. I am Slytherin’s heir, technically speaking Tom Marvolo Riddle is dead, he cannot claim lordship. Zacharias Smith is the youngest of the Hufflepuff line, that is if none of the Muggle-Born’s matches the founder closer of course, and I am also Gryffindor’s descendant.”

“What do you mean by Muggle-Born’s matching the founders closer?” Severus frowned contemplatively.

“Severus, Muggle-Born’s are not exactly born of Muggles, two Muggles cannot create a magical child, it’s impossible, it’s in our DNA,” Blake told him honestly. “Haven’t you wondered why Muggle-Born’s just seemed to spring up in the last six or seven decades? With more and more suddenly coming out of the woodworks? It happened when families couldn’t bring themselves to kill their children when they realized they weren’t magical. Instead they would denounce them and put them in the Muggle world, and those kids would go on to have families with Muggles, it takes a few generations for the magic to take hold and find a suitable host so to speak, and then magic flourishes once more. It prevents magic from dying off completely; Granger is related to the Weasley’s, so one of them must have been a squib at one point. My mother is actually related to Marius Black, one of the most known Black squibs who were disinherited.”

“All of them?” Severus asked overwhelmed, why is it that they didn’t know this? It was hard to believe that each Muggle-Born student was some way related to the older pureblood lines.

“All of them, a simple blood line inheritance potion test would prove that beyond a doubt, Dumbledore knows this, but has done nothing to aid the Muggle-Borns because he fears that they
would take their rightful place in the magical world without fear and the need for someone to look up to. Surely you’ve noticed that they all revere the ground Dumbledore walks on because he defends them and all they stand for? He needs supporters, people to look up to him - to feel important.” Blake informed him flippantly.

“Why would he need that? He has already accomplished so much.” Severus didn’t truly believe what Blake was saying, at least not about Dumbledore.

“So much? All the titles he gained he received them at the time he had Grindelwald imprisoned in Nurmengard, and that accomplishment was really just blown out of proportion since nobody knew the truth. Tell me Severus, what’s harder duelling someone you know nothing about or someone you know very well?” Blake asked, his eyes twinkling in smug satisfaction.

“That doesn’t deserve an answer,” Severus replied irritated, he wasn’t an idiot after all; of course it would be more difficult to win a duel against someone you don’t know.

“Hmm, true, but also relevant, Dumbledore knew Grindelwald, very intimately as matter of fact,” Blake revealed, his grin had a lot of teeth to it.

“Int-” Severus choked on his own words.

“Yes, he planned everything with Grindelwald, in his teenager years wanted to be a benign overlord to the Muggles, but at the last minute decided against it. Gellert Grindelwald continued their quest alone, fleeing the country and began his quest for world domination.” Blake took great delight in the look of utter shocked incredulity wafting from Severus in droves. He hadn’t seen his reaction to the book Skeeters had published, but like many of Dumbledore’s followers they probably thought she was talking a lot of rubbish, but he had found out a long the way that it was all true. “Everyone began begging the great and powerful Albus Dumbledore for help when the war began to grow too great, and in the end he couldn’t avoid the confrontation any longer and defeated him in a duel gaining with it the Elder wand.”

“Wait, Elder wand?” Severus rubbed at his temples he was getting too much information at once and only parts of others it just wasn’t coalescing.

“You know Grindelwald’s sign I assume?” Blake enquired, as he removed his wand,

“Vaguely,” Severus admitted, watching as the wizard created the sign with flames in mid air, then waved his hand and the shapes moved until three were floating in mid air.

“This triangle represents the cloak of Invisibility, this circle represents the resurrection stone, and this represents the Elder wand. Grindelwald used the sign of the Deathly Hallows, something of which he was obsessed with, more particularly the wand, which he found, the ironic thing was he traced it and found it as a teenager, it’s rather ingenious really. Although the fact the wand maker had boasted about having a wand with ultimate power probably helped in that regard. The wand wins its allegiance of those that beats its current master. Which Dumbledore did, of course, when he defeated Grindelwald, Dumbledore intended to die the wands last true master in my future.” Blake explained, his lips twitching again, he was the wands true master, and that was something Dumbledore would find out one day. “When the Dark Lord tried to duel Harry in the graveyard, both their wands connected, they are brother wands and incapable of fighting with each other. When he realized this the Dark Lord began his own search for the wand, taking Ollivander and torturing him for information on it.”

“I see,” Severus replied stoically, his mind spinning.
“Dumbledore despite leaving that part of his past behind still held a deep belief in all the hallows and was desperate to find them, he knew my cloak was one, in fact he had it for years after James died. He only gave it back when Harry was eleven, using it to further manipulate Harry into doing the things he has done at Hogwarts so far.” Blake replied. “When he found the Gaunt ring and realized what it was, he…the idiot touched it, and he began to die - the painful curse the Dark Lord left on it began to kill him but he got to you in time for you to ‘put a stopper in death’.

Severus’ lips twitched, unable to help himself, surprised that the wizard could remember what he said all those years ago. He didn’t make a habit of thinking about the future but he certainly hadn’t envisioned that Dumbledore would die wilfully touching a cursed object of all stupid things. No if anything, he supposed he’d expected Dumbledore to go out in a great battle or die of old age.

“So the locket is definitely in Kreacher’s den? Which I believe is behind the boiler if I remember correctly, I think I heard it muttering in his sleep about Regulus at one point during an Order meeting.” Severus said rolling his eyes.

“Yes, Regulus took the original Horcrux and replaced it with a fake, ordering Kreacher to destroy it, he knew what it was but was unaware of the lengths the Dark Lord had gone to - how many he had created - and assumed that once broken the Dark Lord ‘would meet his match, mortal once more’ he was killed by the Inferi but it was mercy in a way, he had drank the potion called drinker of despair.” Blake explained.

Severus grimaced as his stomach rebelled dangerously, that was one of the most awful potions ever invented, it was truly one of the worst ways to die. It was like dying slowly surrounded by hundreds of Dementors and all your worst memories all boxed into one horrifying existence until death was granted, and it took wizards days to succumb to the potion before dying. He himself had never brewed it, but it didn’t surprise him that the Dark Lord had, he was a genius at everything he did - even potions but he wanted someone to brew them for him and that’s where he had come into it.

“So if you need a way to keep him quiet and get the locket you can use what you know to get it away from him. Just give him a copy of it, and he will be quite happy with the promise of the real one being destroyed.” Blake told him, “I hadn’t thought of all this when I decided to hunt them down, it isn’t as easy as I thought, but when is anything ever? It’s not as easy to change time as you think, and they have that right.”

Severus nodded curtly, agreeing with him. “So I was alive when Dumbledore touched the cursed ring evidently seeing as I was the one who helped him. Did I…was I, did I do enough?”

“Are you asking if you felt you’d won redemption, Severus or are you asking how you die?” Blake enquired a sad glint in his eyes.

Swallowing thickly, “Perhaps both,” Severus conceded in defeat. Truthfully he didn’t think he could stand to hear how he had died.

“Well, Dumbledore was dying, he knew that, and he had planned on being the wands last true Master, so he used you, to both further that cause and cement your position as a Death Eater. Between you both you planned his death, Dumbledore supposed that you wouldn’t really be defeating him so he would die and the wand would forever be useless to anyone else. You did, you killed him in front of me, and to save Draco Malfoy, who was charged with killing Dumbledore, more to do with the fact the Dark Lord was furious with the family - you see Lucius Malfoy had lost the prophecy he will spend the next year trying to collect. He wanted to hear it all, but the most notorious Death Eaters were outwitted by a bunch of fifth year students and two fourth year who lived to tell the tale. Lucius, Bellatrix, Dolohov, Yaxley, Rookwood and a few others, they
were beaten by myself, Granger, Weasley, Weasley, Neville and Luna. They were imprisoned however briefly, that was Lucius’ punishment by marking Draco and forcing him to do a task that everyone knows the spoiled brat wouldn’t be able to complete. Dumbledore didn’t want him marring his ‘soul’ but had absolutely no problem with you doing it.” Blake muttered bitterly.

“I killed…but…” Severus closed his eyes in dawning horror; there was no way anyone would have forgiven him for murdering Albus Dumbledore in cold blood - no matter what had been discussed before hand.

“You became the Headmaster of Hogwarts, helping those you could without making it obvious who was doing the helping. The Carrows became the Muggle studies teacher and Dark Art’s teacher. The Muggle-Born’s were on the run and those that didn’t have Death Eater parents were being cursed left right and centre with the Cruciatus Curse. When they weren’t being cursed they were being forced to cast it on those who had earned ‘detention’” Blake revealed, continuing on despite the disgusted, appalled and horrified looks that flashed through Severus’ usually impeccable - yet impenetrable - masks. “During all that I was hunting for Horcruxes on my own without knowing a thing about them or how to destroy them. Sleeping rough and avoiding the snatchers, by that point the Dark Lord had control and had a taboo on his name. We were nearly captured for it during that time, but eventually got caught and taken to Malfoy Manor. We escaped thanks to Dobby the House-elf, but he died after the trip Bellatrix had hit him in the chest with a knife. Eventually I got down to the last few Horcruxes and went to Hogwarts, briefly duelled you before you ended up fighting with Minerva and Filius before you flew away from Hogwarts. A little while afterwards, the Dark Lord demanded your presence in the shrieking shack.”

Severus’ head bolted up at that, a huffed weak yet ironic chuckle burst through his pursed lips.

“Yes, the irony is astonishing, but it’s even more ironic that you weren’t killed because you were found out as a spy, you were killed because the Dark Lord thought you were the Master of the Elder wand, thanks to Dumbledore’s scheming. You died in my arms, giving me your memories,” Blake said, noticing Severus’ narrowing eyes, yes he had avoided telling him now, no doubt he realized that but he also probably realised it had been excruciatingly painful since he had ‘died’ slowly enough to ‘die’ in someone’s arms. “It turns out Dumbledore had informed you that I had to die in order for the Dark Lord to be truly defeated. Despite your vow to protect me, you went along with it, did what Dumbledore expected you - Dumbledore’s man to the very end.”

Severus flinched at the condemnation in that poison laced voice.

“I watched the memories you had given me, and it was those memories it got me through the harshest of times. You had given me the greatest gift known to man, allowing me to see memories of my mother, of what she was like and not just a picture.” Blake said with a sigh, “I walked to my own certain death, telling Neville to cut the snakes head off. I was hit with the killing curse and somehow still survived, I feigned death until the most opportune moment, which was when Neville struck and killed the snake. We began duelling in Hogwarts, the Great Hall; I told him that you hadn’t been his man at all, that you were on our side all along and informed him of who actually had the allegiance of the wand he held within his grasp. He tried to kill me and it rebound again, mimicking the events of sixteen years ago. He was struck down, we thought it was over, but the Death Eaters continued fighting we were forced to flee. Two months later news reported that the Dark Lord was once again walking amongst us, I didn’t want to believe it, I had gotten all the Horcruxes, but I was wrong, he had felt it happening and had made contingencies, and obviously told his Death Eaters about them - they had brought him back. I have no idea how many he made, but there had to be at least two since I successfully killed another portion of his soul before I was flung back here during another fight, I was hit with three curses, one from the Dark Lord and the other two from Death Eaters, although who they were was anyone’s guess, but I’m pretty sure one
of them was a Malfoy. I honestly don’t think many of us would have survived for much longer though.”

“Why is that?” Severus questioned quietly.

“While it was true that the Dark Lord was keeping the worlds separate, he was also killing the Muggle-Born’s, sending raiding parties when Rowena’s quill dictated them out, or of course when they were younger and using magic accidentally. With the advancements they had, portable cameras and videos, they were downloading them onto their internet for the entire world to see. The Muggle government insisted continuously that was a set up, denying the existence of magic to keep the peace, removing them when they could- there were groups though, of fanatics that believed (seen it even) it and were also killing people - most weren’t even magical either. The Muggle government realized the magical world was out of control, and their people kept paying the price, they were ready to completely obliterate us what it came down to was us or them, and the Muggle government wasn’t having it anymore. It was kept secret, only the highest up were aware of it. They didn’t know one of them was actually magical, and we were warned that they were taking steps I don’t know if they would have done it or not though.”

“I’ll get the locket the next time Dumbledore calls a meeting,” Severus replied his voice empty - he was truthfully unable to express any of what he was feeling since he sincerely didn’t know how to feel about all he had learned.

“I’d suggest putting it into a pensive if I hadn’t ended up in once twice myself, entirely accidentally, you’ll just have to process it and put it behind your barriers and not think about it, and with a little luck on my side I will hopefully prevent it.” Blake revealed, just as tired as Severus if not more so, Severus had been through several nasty wars, while Blake himself had been through what feels like dozens. Gazing at him solemnly, it was a lot to ask, a hell of a cross to bear, but he’d had no choice but to tell him.

“And Mr. Potter?” Severus enquired, gazing at where he had last seen him. He hadn’t thought he’d see the day where Harry Potter would panic; he had seen the Dark Lord up close too many times now for him to seriously think anything could panic him. He had been proven wrong, but he himself would have had a panic attack if he had been burden with the knowledge that the Dark Lord’s soul shard was inside of him.

“I’m doing what I can do remove it from him, I know how to remove it from containers, but not a living being, all I have is speculative theory’s. I can’t rely on the old timeline; everything has already drastically altered, so I must do something.” Blake stated. “I need more information.”

“The Black’s have the oldest and biggest private libraries in the UK, even bigger than Hogwarts… many of them I would assume are in the vaults, the large room you see is merely the books that were taken out.” Severus replied, “If you say Regulus found out…perhaps they have quite a collection on the information you need.”

Blake sat up, wanting to slap himself on the back of the head, well of bloody course, why hadn’t he thought of that earlier?

“I am going to assume you can at least tolerate Black’s presence for a few moments?” Blake asked, seeing the scowl Blake added, “Be the better man, mentally Black is still nineteen years old, you’ve had a chance to mature…or at least some version of that word. No mature wizard on this planet would deliberately hurt an eleven year old boy who had never met his parents (at least in his memory) and talk bad about him, whether you are right or not does not matter he was a child.”

Severus’ blank face revealed nothing; he nodded imperceptibly, noticing that Blake was still
talking about Harry as if he differed from him. He had admitted that it hurt though, and for some reason to know that Blake admitting it made him realize just how bad it was for him to do so. He hadn’t really thought about it, he had been playing his part for so long of dread, spiteful potions teacher that he hadn’t thought of the damage he was doing. Of course when he saw those green orbs glaring at him, he got angry and the vicious circle started worse than he had been with any other student before. Obviously he didn’t hold it against him, and that eased some of the guilt a bit, he had to make it up to Harry - but his actions couldn’t change in the classroom without arousing suspicion from the Dark Lord, and that was something he couldn’t risk.

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“Where’s Harry?” was the first thing Sirius Black asked as soon as exiting the fireplace having been given permission to enter Blake Slytherin’s residence.

Severus couldn’t quite keep the snort of amusement from slipping past his lips, finding it incredibly funny even though he knew he shouldn’t.

“Sniv--” the rest of the sentence was cut off with a hex from Blake, causing the Black heir to glare at the wizard in anger.

“It looks as though the healer isn’t doing as good a job as I would have liked, perhaps we should hold of you seeing Harry for a few weeks.” Blake stated emotionlessly. “You cannot help yourself can you?”

“I’m sorry,” Sirius said looking constipated as he said it. Quickly meditating like Healer Hanna had told him when he felt worked up. “What do you need my help with?”

“I want you to give me all the items that the Weasleys’ are currently throwing out that belong to the Black family,” Blake explained as he sat down, gesturing for Sirius to do the same.

“Why?” Sirius scoffed, before freezing at the look on the wizards face.

“I know you are getting some twisted childish thrill by throwing away precious heirlooms that have been in your family for generations, but it stops now. Do you know how much that stuff is worth? Hell some of its bloody priceless, I don’t really want to go to court and fight you for the lordship rights, but I will if I have to.” Blake told him adamantly.

“Lordship rights?” Sirius murmured, genuine fear entering his eyes.

“I’m a Black from both sides of the family, since I am older even by only a few weeks its within my right, that and I’m actually legally and mentally capable of setting rights and bringing the Black name back to its former glory it would be an easy battle for my lawyer.” Blake told him, telling him most of the truth. The lordship rights were Sirius’ for now, but even Harry could claim them due to Sirius’ mental instability. He couldn’t though since he was technically Harry Potter and couldn’t risk his secret getting out - no need for Black to know that after all.

“What’s so important that you want it?” Sirius asked perplexed.

“You’re letting guests in your home remove items whenever they want, destroy them, put them in the bin without care, yet you question why I would want to save them?” Blake questioned surprised, “A guest who treats you like shit? Questions everything you do, forgetting that you are keeping her and her entire family safe and under your roof? Hell, I can only imagine what your father Orion would have done if one of them had entered that house saying only one half of what Molly Weasley has said to you. You are weak, you are disgrace to the Black family, I doubt even
Andromeda would allow any guest to speak to her in any way.”

Sirius flushed darker and darker at the words coming from Blake Slytherin, in his heart he knew they were true, and that made it worse. The healer had been just as surprised when he spoke about it, but she had been a lot kinder and less…blunt with him. He couldn’t mention the place by name so he just called it ‘the place he stayed’ but she’d probably already known she didn’t seem surprised by the fact he continued to call it that.

“They certainly wouldn’t be welcomed in my home after the way I’ve seen them disrespecting you and yours,” Severus commented digging it in while appearing to be part of the conversation. Of course judging by the smirk Blake was suppressing he hadn’t been too subtle. While normally he got amusement out of Black being bullied by a woman like Molly Weasley, it was true what Blake said, it was pathetic and he was weak. Of course, he wouldn’t ever consider bringing the Weasley’s into his home, one it wasn’t big enough, two he wasn’t exactly proud of where he live, three he couldn’t stand Gryffindors.

“I know,” Sirius whispered quietly, he just couldn’t work himself up over something he was coming to terms with himself.

Blake arched an eyebrow, glancing sideways at Snape - he too was surprised apparently.

“Then go home, clear out the house and bring back everything you can that hasn’t already been stolen, removed or thrown out. Severus will go with you seen as he knows more about the Dark Arts than you, but please, just keep the arguments to a minimum while there, I would lend a hand but I’m afraid that will not be possible.” Blake stated not ashamed of it. There was no way in this world that Albus Dumbledore would give him permission to be there.

“It’s yours too, you can come,” Sirius said sliding his hand into his pocket and pulling out a piece of parchment a sheepish look on his face.

Blake shook his head, as he took it, the secret from the seeker keepers own hand, “It’s a good job Harry is no longer there, if you had lost that…Grimmauld Place would have been invaded and possibly Harry killed along with whoever else was there.”

“I don’t leave…I mean I didn’t leave Grimmauld Place before you wrote to me, ever,” Sirius admitted bitterly, “Dumbledore said it was too dangerous.”

“Dobby?” Blake called.

“What can Dobby do for Master Blake?” Dobby questioned wide eyed with wonder as he always was when it came to his Master Harry.

“I am going to be away from the house for a while, Harry is sleeping at the moment, when he stirs come and get me at this address, is that understood?” Blake said making sure Dobby knew it was imperative without him saying anything. Showing him the parchment giving him enough time to read it before stashing it away again.

“Why can’t he come?” Sirius asked. “His friends are there.”

“He received some shocking news this afternoon, hopefully he’ll feel better when he wakes up, stop looking like that Black, I’m not trying to hurt him, I’m trying to protect him. You’ll see him on Sunday for the entire day; surely it’s better than nothing? Once you are better you can see him more often and perhaps even help with his training.” here Blake was lying through his teeth.

Sirius perked up at that, nodding eagerly, making Blake feel guilty, and maybe letting him see
Harry more often wasn’t a bad idea...although he certainly wasn’t getting to train him. Merlin he’d only been here a while and he was already going soft and maudlin. Well it was time to get his game face on, thought Blake with a wicked chuckle, Dumbledore was going to wet himself when he saw him within the confines of Grimmauld Place. “If we are to Apparate we must leave the property through the door.” only he and Harry would be able to Apparate in or out and that was the way it would remain, although Dobby could take them he wasn’t lazy and had no intentions of using Dobby as transport.

With that they moved to leave the house, Sirius stood there gaping at everything Blake put on his body, especially his wicked sharp knives. The only tell tale sign of Severus’ surprise was the slight widening of his eyes, although considering he rubbed at his shoulder unconsciously, it might not have been the same kind of surprise Sirius supported.

It appeared as though the healer was starting to get through to Sirius; it eased him somewhat that if anything happened to him then Sirius might actually be whole enough to take over from where he left off. He just had to make sure Sirius was thoroughly independent and wasn’t relying on Dumbledore for anything; he couldn’t risk Harry falling back into Dumbledore’s grasp. It wouldn’t be good for him. Snape was still too quiet, it wasn’t like him, but he had just had a whole lot of information thrown at him, including his own death - it was expected of him to be not quite himself. Although he was looking forward to him totally recovering to see what sardonic barbs he had at the ready.

He still didn’t consider telling Sirius anything despite the changes in the wind.
Chapter 13

The Games They Play

Chapter 13

The three wizards Apparated to Grimmauld Place, standing directly outside of number eleven and thirteen, until they all thought of the property missing, and like magic it began to expand until a house was firmly square in the middle with a number 12 on the black door. Blake was grinning almost manically, as he swiftly began walking towards the door; this was going to be so much fun. He knew realistically he shouldn’t be antagonising everyone, especially seen as Harry cared about them all, but he didn’t care. Harry could still like them, I mean it wouldn’t be the first time friends had parents or guardians they don’t like now wasn’t it? If they tried to judge Harry just because of his new guardian then they weren’t worth the bloody time. Not that they were at this point in time, remembering his own summer holidays and how they’d ignored him. Although he had no intention of getting on at the children, Harry had already let them know how he felt. Although perhaps speaking to Granger might go along way, he had read the letter after Harry left it on the table - he was deeply unimpressed with the girl.

“You’re looking forward to this,” Severus murmured quietly, as the door of Grimmauld Place opened, letting all three of them enter.

“Perhaps a little too much,” Blake chuckled dryly, throwing him a smirk, “As I know you’ll enjoy it as well.”

“But of course,” Severus stated silkily, glad for his robes that they were able to conceal his potent reaction to this wizard in front of him. He knew Blake Slytherin was just Harry Potter older, but he couldn’t think of them as the same person, it was impossible. Harry was a teenager, a child compared to this man, who had been through too much in his life apparently - more so than him and that was saying a lot. If Blake had anything to say about it, Harry wouldn’t turn out to be anything like him, never be forced to kill to survive. He had created a whole new reality by being here, and everything was twisting around with him. He had never heard of such an occurrence, someone going back in time this far, without a time-turner. What spell had someone created in the future for this to happen? Well, only one person knew, and that was Blake.

Blake gave a little huffed laugh, before he wandered further in, looking in on the sitting room, or one of them at any rate, and found he four large black bags tied up at the side of the room ready to be dispatched. The entire room was bare bar the couches even the curtains that had been up were now gone. “Dobby?” called Blake quietly, knowing the House-elf could find the house now he knew its location, although he was sure House-elves can get around even wards like the Fidelius Charm, wizarding magic didn’t work against them often.

“What are you doing?” Sirius asked curious wandering in himself.

Blake ran his hands over the bags, whispering the spell that would allow him to detect if the locket/Horcrux was within. It wasn’t, either Kreacher had already removed it, or someone else had. There were plenty of other artefacts bunched up together ready for the bin; it was just irritating to see. “I want absolutely everything in this house, is that understood? None of it remains behind.”

“You won’t get into Regulus’ room, Kreacher goes feral whenever someone else does, but you’re welcome to everything else,” Sirius said quietly, guilt was new to him; especially for trinkets he had no desires to known. He knew he shouldn’t have let the Order do whatever they wanted to his
family stuff, that it should have been stored in a vault at least, there weren’t many Black’s left but it didn’t make it alright to see generations of his family history treated so disdainfully. He had nobody to blame but himself though. Blake was right, he had needed help, and the healer was really nice and helped him sort through his memories - even the really murky ones.

“I am also taking Kreacher, you will release him into my service,” Blake demanded coolly, before turning to Dobby who was patiently waiting in horrified disgust at the house and its filthiness. “Dobby, take these bags home, and leave them in my office.”

“Dumbledore won’t like that, he made it clear that he must remain…he knows too much about the Order.” Sirius said shaking his head; he really didn’t want to piss off Dumbledore. Although he would rather piss off Dumbledore than Slytherin, otherwise he might actually never get to see his godson. Although Slytherin seemed permanently pissed off at him, and he had still suggested he be allowed to see Harry on Sunday, even though he had forced him to see a mind healer. Given the choice to go back he would have agreed, it hadn’t been long and he was already feeling a difference.

“Believe me once I have him in my control he won’t say a word about the Order,” Blake sneered the word out derisively. They were pathetic, here and in the future, none of them survived, well Tonks and Bill had, Tonks had been stronger than the rest which was ironic but it must have been her determined Black blood pushing survival before all else. She hadn’t been the same bubbly personality she had here and now, although she had scrambled up enough to make the children the group had saved laugh and forget their worries. Bill and she had ended up dating years after Fleur died of course, if you could call it dating, you couldn’t really have a relationship constantly on the run, and forever separated with different tasks.

“Alright,” Sirius said slowly but resignedly. He didn’t like Kreacher anyway, so maybe he getting a new place to stay would be best for both of them. It didn’t go past his notice that Slytherin had given the new places, but he was determined now that he was out; to either buy the place or his own ready for when he was given the all clear by the healer. “Do you want me to call him?”

“Not yet,” Blake admitted, gazing around shrewdly to make sure there was absolutely nothing in the room, nodding in satisfaction he began the slow process of getting to each room without alerting anyone to his presence, Severus as always followed him and helping get all items boxed, the only thing that remained was the curtains and sofa’s or beds. He took even the ancient, yet beautifully designed bureaus that seemed to be in nearly every room. The most exquisite one of all was the one in the Master bedroom, probably unused since the time of Orion Black or Walburga of course.

It must be worth thousands upon thousands of galleons, yet it would have been discarded not even fit for firewood.

“SIRIUS BLACK! Where have you been? You know you’re not supposed to leave Grimmauld Place!” shrieked a voice at the top of her lungs.

“Here she goes,” Blake muttered as he placed another trinket in the conjured cardboard boxes he was using to fill everything. Every now and again Dobby would pop in and wait expectantly before taking them back to his cottage. He didn’t think he would be able to see his office when he got back if this was the way it was going to process. He had only cleaned out one room in the past, his past, so he hadn’t realized the extent of it.

“ALBUS DOES WHAT’S BEST FOR YOU!” Molly screeched.

“Hmm, he’s obviously remaining calm,” Severus said staring at the door quite confused.
“He’s seeing a healer, so obviously he will learn to stop letting his emotions rule him, it helps I was able to tell her quite a bit without him having to come out and say it himself - I wasn’t sure whether he would to be honest.” Blake mused.

“Does the healer know?” Severus enquired; he was hoping the answer was no but realized realistically that the answer would probably be yes. Surely a healer would have questioned where he got his information from.

“Of course not, while they cannot talk about their patience because of the vow - it doesn’t stop them from being able to reveal details of general day to day life. I am not one of her patients and I wouldn’t risk it.” Blake replied, having no fear of anyone figuring out their secret, since they weren’t outright discussing it.

“May I ask you a question?” Severus asked after putting the last of the items on his side into the box after removing the curse on it. Dark Arts was his speciality, he found it very easy to remove them, seeing as he could identify them.

“Since when did you ask permission?” Blake teased, turning to face him properly, curious now.

“Why did you tell me? Aside from the obvious I mean, you could have refused to see me,” Severus asked gazing straight into jaded green eyes.

“EXCUSE ME?” Molly boomed her voice even louder and shriller.

“I could have, but I also know you wouldn’t have left it at that,” Blake mused thoughtfully, rubbing his chin, “That and I do trust you, despite the fact your attitude left a lot to be desired as a young teen…I came to understand where it came from.”

Severus’ lips twitched in amusement, dipping his head slightly before sealing the box closed with a red X on it to let Blake know the ones in that particular box had already been dealt with and no longer cursed or hexed in any way.

"Who the bloody hell are you?" Ron said from outside the door before he hollered “MUUUUMMM!"

“Well I had hoped to avoid this for a little longer,” Blake sighed, sliding the last of the stuff from that room into the box.

Severus snorted, finding himself wholly amused and eager for what was to come.

“Library?” Blake suggested, uncaring that a swarm of Weasley’s would be ascending upon him soon, Ron just gaped at them suspiciously. “She’s still busy with Black so I doubt it will happen until it gets into his thick head that nobody is coming.” he whispered so softly that Weasley couldn’t hear.

“Indeed,” Severus stated immediately, this was truly what he had been waiting for; the thought of getting to read those books was more than he had hoped for. Now that they didn’t belong to Black...he was hoping that Blake would sense his desire and let him read a few. Of course, the thought of Molly Weasley trying to be her overbearing self against Blake...that he could safely say he was just as looking forward to. Flicking his wand he levitated the boxes and promptly walked towards the entrance, causing Weasley to stumble back not wishing to be near the Potions Professor.

Severus’ respect for Blake shot up further, nobody liked dealing with that harpy of a witch, her voice was just so...grating, so annoying that they just did not want to deal with her when she went
nuclear. He could barely stand dealing with her during Order meetings; she was either yelling herself hoarse, or simpering in that condescending manner of hers. Then again, after facing Voldemort so many times, it wasn’t a surprise that he wouldn’t even blink in deterrence with anything that Molly Weasley could throw at him.

Severus laughed softly when he heard Ron squeak and bolt down the stairs, probably wondering why his mother wasn’t coming to his aid just like Blake had implied. “And that is a fifteen year old boy,” he muttered drolly.

“He’s not like us, he has been shielded, loved by his mother in a way that makes him co-dependant on her, we learned to be independent quickly otherwise he would have suffered further.” Blake stated as if they were idly commenting on the weather - not the suffering of their childhood.

“We?” Severus’ eyes narrowed immediately, catching the implied implication behind the statement.

“You knew what Petunia was like,” Blake hissed rounding on Severus like a vampire, the library door within reach. “How bitter and twisted she became, what she called Lily for years before I showed up on her doorstep.”

“She was also at your mothers wedding, her very magical wedding to James Potter, they made up at some point,” Severus pointed out sounding unsure of himself. He’d had nothing to do with either Lily or Petunia since he was fifteen years old.

“Do you know what James and Sirius did to Vernon during that so called wedding? I’m sure you can guess,” Blake snorted derisively speaking so low that even Severus had to strain just to hear. “Just being their usual idiotic selves without care of the future consequences. The consequences that were handed to me in the form of seventeen years of hell.” he wouldn’t deny that he was extremely intimidated. That was with his powers (he suspected) contained.

Severus winced, he could just imagine what the idiotic Marauders had done to a defenceless muggle and then insisting it was just a ‘joke’. “How bad was it?” he demanded to know heatedly, his vow! He dreaded to know quite frankly.

“Not here,” Blake insisted, shaking his head stepping away, his momentarily slip forgotten as he twisted the door knob and stepped into the library. It was quite possibly the only room that hadn’t been touched - not even by the House-elf if the accumulated dust was anything to go on. “Well, this might take a while, and a while I do not have. Levitating would take longer; do you know any spells that will gently put the books in the boxes? Some of them look extremely brittle, and if I am not mistaken a few are delicate scrolls.”

“I wouldn’t suggest it,” Severus said thoughtfully, his black eyes critically gazing around the room. “Those packing spells are fine for students workbooks and such and accidents can happen while its fine to repair a newer book it wouldn’t be possible with these given how old some are. It’s definitely going to take hours,” the room was filled with books from ceiling to floor, all around the edges of the room with shelves filling nearly every spot of floor that was not the wall also top to bottom. A table was stationed to his right, with a few chairs, for sitting on and trying to find information or such. Usually wizards had secret spots in the room for books or scrolls that they didn’t want anyone else seeing, or just very secret handed down from father and son. He wondered if the Black’s did the same, but he doubted it, this house was warded with every known spell of Wizardkind.

“Who are you and what do you think you are doing here?” Molly demanded, bright red her wand out. Her face went even redder when she noticed that the wizard she spoke to had paid her
absolutely no attention.

Fred, George, Hermione and Ron crowded around the doorway, watching the scene in fascination, not truly understanding how someone they didn’t know could get in. Out of them all it was surprisingly Fred and George who realized that Sirius had obviously found a way around the Fidelius Charm to let the wizard in. Hermione was just indignant that he was there; it made Professor Dumbledore look weak, while Ron himself was hiding a smile, and he loved when his mother’s anger was on someone else other than him. He had been getting moaned at because he wasn’t ‘pulling his weight’ since he was trying to get out of cleaning this disgusting house. Nothing could turn this house into something anywhere near respectable, it was an impossible task and his mum should have realized that by now.

“I guess we will just have to take our time and get the books shifted, perhaps the House-elves could help, and two additional hands can’t hurt at any rate.” Blake informed Severus watching as the black haired wizards’ lip twitched in devious amusement at his actions. He knew soon that Molly Weasley was going to explode. He had never seen anyone ignore her so this was going to be a new and novel experience.

“Molly put your wand down!” Sirius commanded, catching up with her, sounding slightly out of breath but considering how out of shape he had been just a few days prior he was making headway. He squeezed through the children in the doorway, and entered the library properly, yet cautiously. If she went up against Slytherin there was no knowing what would happen. Considering he liked going the legal route in getting Moody and the others arrested he dreaded to think. Nobody deserved Azkaban, least of all Molly who was rather loud mouthed and quick to jump the gun.

“I am talking to you!” Molly demanded standing in front of him her hands on her hips.

“Excuse me?” Blake growled out coldly, his eyes narrowed in displeasure, “If you value your life I suggest you get out of my personal space before I force you.”

Molly stumbled back a few steps at the depth of the vitriol coming out of his mouth.

The Weasley’s were crowded around the doorway watching the scene with fascination. They’d never seen their mother react like that before, so needless to say they were stunned.

“As for whom I am, it is absolutely no concern of yours,” Blake stated sharply, he was honestly unsurprised by the way she had barged in and tried to demand answers it was just such a Molly Weasley thing to do.

“Kindly leave before I call upon the Headmaster,” Molly stated, pointing her finger to the door.

“Leave?” questioned Blake thoughtfully, “Are you the owner of this…property?” finally settling on a word but it was clear to all here that he hadn’t used the word he wanted to. He absently pulled books from the shelves and put them in a new box.

Molly narrowed her eyes, “I live here, now please leave;” she didn’t want this wizard anywhere near her children.

“Yes,” drawled Blake, “By Sirius Black’s say so, it’s hard to believe you were brought up by Pureblood’s from what I heard downstairs, this wizard has taken your family in, sheltered you from the Death Eaters who would love nothing more than to kill you all. Yet you thank him by treating him with distain? If you had said even one sentence of what you just did to Black I would have had you on your ass outside the property and left you to fend for yourself. This is not your home; you are a guest here, start acting like it,”
“How dare you?” Molly said inhaling sharply at the words, getting herself wound up.

“I just hope your disgusting attitude hasn’t passed onto your children, it’s hard enough being a Weasley in the magical world without thinking they’re entitled to say whatever they like - whenever they like.” Blake stated, his eyes going to the children in the doorway. “Judging from the fact your children seem to have gotten jobs in other countries it seems they barely stand to be in your odious and prejudice presence.”

Molly flinched back hurt flashing across her face at the words coming out of his mouth.

“You have no right whatsoever to come in here demanding answers as if you own the place, someone needs to take you down a few pegs, for a woman that has raised seven children in a chicken coop you’re seriously overstepping your bounds of propriety. It’s quite frankly disgusting, just because you open your mouth and spew things nobody wants to hear, it doesn’t mean they have to listen to you. Show some appreciation for the fact he’s opened his home to you by actually keeping your fucking mouth shut for once in your life and thanking him. I have no doubt the Death Eaters would have had all of you captured at this point if not for him. However, that doesn’t seem to have sunk into your brain, or is it an overstated sense of ego because you spend so much time around Albus Dumbledore that you feel you have the Merlin given right to boss everyone around? I’m surprised anyone can stand to be in the same room with you longer than five minutes.” he finished almost spitting the words out. “Sirius Black is Harry Potter’s godfather, you are his so called best friends mother, you haven’t been a mother to him, so please don’t pretend you have otherwise. There is no reason to wave that in front of a wizard who went to Azkaban WRONGLY convicted you are acting like a little child who wants to claim the dog because you knew it longer than someone that was mentally ill. It stops now, you can smother your own children to the point that they cannot cope with this war that’s brewing but you will not do that to him.” he trailed off vehemently.

Severus was in optimal position to watch everyone and everything that occurred; he saw the looks of shock, anger, denial and rage on Molly Weasley’s face. He had never seen her so quiet before and he found himself enjoying it a little too much, as Blake had stated earlier. He wondered if he hated the Weasley’s or if he had just hardened himself against all possible hurts when the war grew too great. Or was he just trying to distance himself from the people he had known due to the fact he had perhaps seen them die? His eyes flickered over to one of the Weasley twins when they spoke, Fred in fact, he was one of the rare people who could tell them apart - even when they tried to confound people.

“You’re Harry’s guardian aren’t you?” Fred blurted out realizing the truth of it before anyone else, despite how intimidating Blake was he hadn’t been able to hold his tongue, he flinched slightly when his face turned on him.

“I am indeed,” Blake said, his eyes glimmering proudly, nodding just slightly to the twins. Turning back to Molly Weasley, “One has to wonder if you are related to the Walburga Black’s side of the family with your attitude, because you are just like her in all ways.”

“You are a horrible person!” Hermione stated her eyes narrowed, feeling very brave all of a sudden. “You have no right to come in here and say those things! You took Harry away from Professor Dumbledore, where Harry is safe! You put him in danger; you should be ashamed of yourself.” Molly who had remained quiet suddenly felt a renewed sense of self, believing what Blake had said couldn’t be true.

Blake burst out laughing, but it wasn’t kind, it was just as sardonic and biting as the wizard himself was. “Safe?” he managed to chortle out, “Did you just have the audacity to say Harry is safe with
Dumbledore of all people? Have you been attending Hogwarts with your eyes and ears closed?” he drawled sarcastically.

Hermione flushed darkly, understanding what he meant without him saying any further.

“No, Hogwarts has never been safe for my ward; it was pure luck alone that he wasn’t killed by a fully grown mountain troll. Instead of teachers doing what they should they allowed themselves to be impressed and award points, if it had been anyone else other than Harry they would have had detentions and points removed immediately. Let’s not forget what happened at the end of your school year, which proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Hogwarts wasn’t the place for him. Awarding him points at the very last second, despite the fact it had happened weeks before, not allowing the other students a chance to catch up. You knew Dumbledore directly lead to that confrontation with…Voldemort.” Blake stated sharply, eyeing the girl, watching her get even more flustered, bloody hell it was weird calling him Voldemort. He was far from afraid, but he had learned long ago it was best to avoid saying it. “You even spoke about it, both of you were completely fine with an adult figure, the headmaster of a boarding school sending you after Voldemort just so Harry could ‘confront his parents killer’ that is just the first year do you really want me to go on about the next few years? How about Dumbledore actually being aware of the Chambers entrance and instead of asking Harry who had been found out as a Parseltongue he let it continue? How about the fact Dumbledore cast the Fidelius Charm, which means he had to be there for its casting - he knew who the secret keeper was. How about the fact he could have gotten Harry out of the tournament as his previous magical guardian but refusing to do so and forcing him to participate in a tournament that has killed seventeen year olds…which led to Voldemort’s return. I think a better question for you Miss. Granger is when was it actually safe?”

“What?” Molly rasped out, staring between Blake and the children, seeing confirmation in their gazes didn’t help her. She paled further still, unable to believe what she was hearing. “What did you say?” she asked without her usual grating voice. Twitching her gaze towards Sirius seeing him pale and clearly distressed.

“Ron…is this true? Did he know during your first year?” Molly turned to face her son, she felt faint, and she just wanted to go home in the warmth and welcoming of the Burrow. She wanted to go back before all this had happened, so she didn’t feel like this. It was taking everything in her not to break down and cry, but she was much too proud for that. Yet what that wizard had said to her was well hammered in and left her feeling vulnerable, she just wanted Arthur here.

Ron shrank back at the attention suddenly starting to feel like he wanted to flee.

And Severus saw it, the beginning of the crumbling of the Order and more important Albus Dumbledore.

“Er…” Ron muttered, looking at the twins to Hermione then back to his mum. “Yes,” he whispered quietly, not sure what to think about Blake Slytherin defending Harry so much - maybe he wasn’t as bad as everyone thought.

Molly stifled a sob before he raced out of the room unable to remain there without losing her composure completely. Her mind kept replaying every word of that scene as she rushed to her bedroom...no the guest bedroom she was using. She had tried to bring up her children the best way possible, they had wanted for many things sure, but never love. She had just gotten so used to being the one to punish them for any misdeeds, since Arthur would never do such a thing that she
hadn't realized she was doing it to everyone...well she had she just hadn't thought about her actions. Not until Blake Slytherin had forced her too, sitting down shakily on the bed she left the tears come along with the harsh sobs as she struggled to breathe through it. Everything she thought she knew was destroyed; Dumbledore had endangered both her youngest children that were totally unacceptable.

“Harry is safe where he is,” Blake informed them all, mostly the twins. “If you wish, you may visit on Saturday, I think he would like some time with his friends.”

“Was it true? Did Dumbledore know?” Fred asked, looking deeply perturbed.

“Accio Fidelus Charm books,” Blake murmured, seven floated towards him and he plucked the one that he had read from before so he knew where to look. Flipping the pages until he came upon the one he needed, and spread it out for them to see. Right there at the side on the square box of ‘requirement’s’ was the proof of his statement. Sirius wandered up, hesitantly, he wasn’t sure he wanted to see, but the gasping of the twins made him realize that the answer he was about to receive was going to shatter him irrevocably. It did. Even just changing the secret keeper required the casters presence. It hadn't just been Lily and James changing it from him to Pettigrew like he assumed all those years. All this time the Black library had seven books on information on the Fidelius Charm.

“I think I’m going to be sick!” Sirius whispered horrified before heaving violently, bolting from the room to the toilet where they heard him regurgitating whatever food he’d eaten that day.

Severus moved himself over to the other side beside them, his black eyes roaming over the words quickly until he landed on the information. The Fidelius Charm was not well known, in fact he was surprised to see so many books regarding that particular charm - but considering it was the Black library he shouldn’t have been. Even Hogwarts didn’t have a thorough explanation of the spell itself, just mentioning what it did in passing. As extensively as he had pursued all knowledge, he hadn’t known that particular titbit. His gaze turned to Blake wondering why he hadn’t made his public knowledge; this would quite frankly destroy Dumbledore. Although he hadn’t been the one to press charges on those who had tried to kidnap Harry, perhaps he was letting people do it for him. Quite frankly he was in awe of what he was doing. He didn’t even seen the slightest bit interested in seeing anyone’s reactions, how long had he known that he had been betrayed in the most horrific way possible? If the abuse was anywhere as bad as he was assuming, then the betrayal was so much worse.

Hermione gazed at the book her eyes glazed over as she processed what she was saying. She hadn’t even thought about anything Blake had said about Dumbledore and Hogwarts being unsafe. She was just so sure in her belief that as long as Dumbledore was there, Hogwarts was safe for them all. She’d always been fascinated with Dumbledore; he had accomplished so much and was in many of the books she had gotten for first year. She had aspired to be just like him and bring changes in the magical world. She started with making sure she had ended up in Gryffindor, but over the years she had despaired, it wasn’t going to be as easy as she thought - Muggle-Born students were like second class citizens in the magical world. She had believed in him so completely that she had stopped all common sense when it came to him. Now though, the words...Harry, it...it was just awful, poor Harry! Poor Sirius! She knew the Dursley’s didn’t feed him or treat him kindly, Dumbledore had stopped Harry from growing up with his godfather...she hated that Blake Slytherin was right...she found it difficult to acknowledge when she was wrong, or worse someone else other than herself was right.

Hermione turned to face Ron wondering if he understood what was going on, or if she would need to explain it to him. Considering how stark his freckles stood out on his pale face and the red blooming on his cheeks she knew he did. He was going to lose his temper, and very soon…
remembering what Blake had said to Mrs. Weasley…she felt it was best to get them out of there as quickly as possible. Which is exactly what she did, she grabbed him by the arm and urged him out, getting them to the bedroom Ron was currently using. “Just hold on,” she said quietly, her mind racing, wondering what was going to happen now. Did Harry know? Was that why he had gone with Slytherin so quickly? Trusted him so soon even? What was going to happen now? With Dumbledore? With the Order? Why hadn’t the Ministry figured this all out years ago? Why did it take this horrid wizard to figure it out? So many questions rattling around her brain and she knew she wasn’t going to receive an answer.

“Kreacher!” Blake barked, knowing the elf would have to obey him due to his Black blood. He was bound to the house of Black however reluctantly, and he had Black blood - Dorea Black was his paternal grandmother after all.

The House-elf appeared his bloodshot eyes gazing at Blake cautiously.

Severus stepped back in surprise when Blake got down onto his knees eyelevel with the House-elf, watching him closely.

“I know about Regulus’ last quest, Kreacher, I would like to help you with it if you wish?” Blake said softly, “I will make sure the curse on it is removed.” he wasn’t about to tell Kreacher exactly what it was, he didn’t know even to this day if Regulus had told him it was a Horcrux or not - he just definitely knew he had been tasked with destroying it.

“You know about Master Regulus?” Kreacher wheezed out, his eyes full of hope.

“I do, he was a very brave wizard, I am really proud of him,” Blake answered honestly, “Afterwards if you wish, you can come work for me, I know you will miss your Mistress and if you do wish to remain here then its your choice.”

“Kreacher will be right back!” Kreacher rasped out before disappearing on the spot.

Severus arched an eyebrow impressed; it looked as though the wizard definitely didn’t need him for this task at any rate. Although he didn’t regret coming, even if he’d had to endure Black’s presence, the fact he had been here for this had truly made his day. He wasn’t by any means a kind wizard and made no effort to be, he saw no purpose to being kind to wizards who distrusted him and probably thought all the names under the sun behind his back - most prominent that they believed he wasn’t a spy for the other side. It mattered little to them that he had sworn a vow on his life not just magic.

Kreacher reappeared with the locket clutched to his chest, as if he was fighting an inner battle whether to give it over or not. Kreacher had had the locket for a very long time, and all magic he had tried on it had failed. There were very few things that could destroy a soul piece, and both were extremely powerful in nature and all but unstoppable. Eventually he handed it over, eyeing it as if he suspected Blake to do something.

“Geminio!” Blake cast effortlessly, before another glow surrounded it but what he had done wasn’t known, and then he placed the copy around the House-elves neck. “There, nobody can remove it from you Kreacher; I’ve added a charm that makes it so only you can remove it.”

“Dobby?” Blake called again, once the House-elf appeared, he spoke immediately, “Everything in this house needs packed up as soon as possible, without risk of breaking them, you cannot touch them so you will have to pack them carefully with magic, and I don’t want you ending up with some obscure dark curse on you.”
“Dobby can have it done in a few minutes, nothing will be broken,” Dobby promised and with that he clicked his fingers and the books gently floated through the air dozens at a time, to slowly stop before the box and fall in one at a time, until the box was full then Dobby clicked his fingers and began a second one Severus hastily conjured.

“Well that settles that, all items other than couches, beds and curtains are to come with us, unless its infested with magical creatures, then you must inform me immediately.” Blake said.

“Dobby understands, Dobby will get to it right away Master Blake!” he said, as Blake and Severus quickly ducked from the room as books began to float all over the place. Dobby was obviously trying to prove his worth, by clearing out the house the quickest way possible.

“Are there any secret compartments with books within?” Severus asked Kreacher, testing the bounds to see whether the House-elf would respond to him.

“No, Potions Master Snape there isn’t, but Master Black kept a secret compartment in his office desk for delicate books,” Kreacher revealed.

“Master Black? I am assuming that’s Orion Black, yes?” Severus enquired.

Kreacher nodded his head eagerly.

“Then we will get around to it, everything is coming with us, I won’t leave any of the Black items to be thrown out by these people!” Blake insisted staring down at the elf, who stared back up at him in awe. Blake had a funny feeling he knew what the House-elf would say when asked if he wished to come when they left.

“Do you think they will have recovered before the next Order meeting?” Blake asked Severus, smirking wickedly.

“I don’t know, but I certainly won’t be missing it,” Severus insisted with a sneer, aimed at the Order of course and seeing as Blake didn’t even twitch he summarised the wizard realized this.

“I half expected to have to deal with Dumbledore, but that can wait,” Blake chuckled wryly, “I’m sure I will have plenty of opportunities in the future.”

“Indeed,” Severus replied, watching as the boxes disappear from the library leaving it empty bar the selves that lined the room. He knew without looking that Dobby was already getting another room emptied in record time, he noticed that Kreacher was also absent now, and wondered if he had gone back to his ‘den’ or if he was helping Dobby. It would take months to get through all the items and remove the curses, especially with everything else going on. He knew for certain though that he would be spending as much time at the cottage and learning everything he possibly could in the guise of removing the curses instead of being at Hogwarts or Spinners End. He was sure he could brew the potions he needed for the school year and do what was required of him. Right now the Dark Lord wasn’t demanding too much of him due to the fact he was ‘laying low’ all he’d done was give him potions to heal him, or at least build up his new but weak body. Using such strenuous magic upon gaining a new body hadn’t helped the Dark Lord at all. Although he was grateful he had, otherwise he knew he would be a lot busier than he could cope with.
Chapter 14

The Games They Play

Chapter 14

Blake sat on a chair right next to Harry’s bed, a book lay across his lap indicating at some point that he had been reading. Now he just stared over at the teenager an impassive look on his face. He still couldn’t believe he had been idiotic enough to say something about the Horcrux in Harry with the teen present. Not that he had planned on keeping it from him forever, he had just wanted Harry settled further and perhaps trusting him more before he lay that on his feet - and also having the required information to remove it so he didn’t need to be burdened with the knowledge and the soul piece within him at the same time. Just like him really, he had found out about it then went to his own ‘certain death’ which was laughable. He was hoping one of the books in his office from the Black library would hold answers or clues on what he could do. He wasn’t about to let Harry ‘die’ in order to destroy the Horcrux. No he would remove it, he just needed time to work on it, and he was hoping to get it done before Hogwarts resumed and Harry returned to the school. Harry had actually slept through the afternoon and night, it was now the next morning.

Clearing his mind, he forced his memories and thoughts as far back as possible; he did not want to dwell on those times. He was in the past now, he could and would create a new future. He would not allow the same thing to happen twice, he was no longer reliant on Dumbledore, neither of them, Blake thought as he gazed at Harry. He would do whatever it took, just to save the magical world, Merlin it had been so senseless, so stupid. His thoughts were interrupted as Harry began to move somewhat restlessly.

“Harry?” Blake said soothingly, pressing his hand to Harry’s shoulder to wake him before his nightmares did albeit more violently.

“What are you doing in here?” Harry murmured his voice filled with tiredness, as he yawned and sat up, glaring slightly at Blake.

“Don’t worry, I wont make a habit of entering your bedroom,” Blake informed him, understanding the question better than Harry could have hoped for. “How are you feeling?”

“How do you think?” Harry snapped, “Why didn’t you tell me? How could you keep this from me?” he demanded accusatory.

“Honestly? It wasn’t that I was keeping it from you, Harry; I was trying to find a way to remove it from you. I would have told you when I figured it out, I just didn’t want you knowing, who would? I certainly didn’t like it any better than you had. Although I must apologise for the manner in which you found out, it was stupid of me…” he just forgot Harry was there, he wasn’t used to him being so quiet.

“Remove it? You mean it can be done?” Harry said wide eyed with hope.

“Yes it can,” Blake told him seriously, “I just need to make sure that it is safe, your body is not a container, and that is what the spell is for, and I just need some reassurance that it won’t cause any adverse affects.”

Harry nodded slowly, he guessed he could understand that, Blake wasn’t one for jumping head first into something…and he was trying to get him to stop it too. He had said that it caused more
problems than he imagined, so he didn’t want to do those things, he wanted to be better and stop himself having so many regrets. He still didn’t want to become anything like him though, that didn’t mean to say he hated him or didn’t trust him, he just didn’t want to become so closed off… so angry all the time. Hell he’d felt angry for a long time before beginning Occlumency lessons and it left a bitter taste in his mouth. It was just awful being angry like that, how did Blake cope with it? He probably already had an answer to that - with Occlumency barriers.

“Do you need to talk about it?” Blake asked giving Harry his continued undivided attention, even the folder on his lap was set aside. “I know I can be curt and demanding but that doesn’t meant to say I don’t take your feelings into consideration, or your thoughts. You can come to me if you need me, any time, all you need to say is that you need to talk to me, and I’ll make time.” he promised the teenager sombrely.

“I…I don’t know what to think,” Harry admitted, he still hadn’t processed the information really.

“That’s to be expected, Harry, this isn’t just a small thing, but just let me reassure you, it hasn’t affected you in any way, it cannot possess you, hurt you or anything of the sort. It is simply immaterial, something that ended up inside you that wasn’t meant to be there, you can think of it like an appendix.” Blake replied.

“An appendix can burst and kill you,” Harry pointed out.

Blake’s lips twitched, “So it can, perhaps not the best description, fine, your wisdom teeth, they’re there and we don’t really use them.”

“But what about the visions?” Harry queried, “Is that why I can see stuff?”

Very eloquent, Blake thought amused, the things we had seen weren’t stuff, and it was murder, plots and plans. “Yes, but the visions cannot be used to find you; it’s more of a one way connection than a two way. In fact once you’ve perfected occlumency you will no longer be plagued with visions and your sleep will remain uninterrupted with the obvious exception of your own nightmares. And before you ask, no it isn’t why I was teaching you occlumency, my reason from before is true, he can possess people.” and does he thought with consternation.

Harry relaxed further on the bed, relieved beyond belief, “Good.” he didn’t once consider for a moment that Blake wasn’t being truthful because he did trust him and that spoke volumes since Harry didn’t trust easily. Then again if you couldn’t trust yourself…who could you trust? It was simple really - nobody.

“There is something else I feel you must see before returning to Hogwarts, I’m afraid your friends already know as of an hour or so ago.” Blake told him, watching surprise and suspicion bloom in familiar green eyes.

“You saw them?” Harry asked, not sure how he felt about that.

“Briefly, I went there to collect the items belonging to the Black family that your godfather was allowing everyone to throw out - prices pieces of wizarding history discarded like rubbish. I know right now you think all magic is black and white, light is good and dark is bad, truth of it is that it’s a little more complicated than that. If you wish to learn then I have no problem teaching you. Primarily I was there for the books; they might hold answers that we need. The Black family library is the biggest in existence, or it used to be, so I am hoping we can get information.” Blake told him, just as Dobby popped in. “I assume breakfast is ready?” he asked the quiet house-elf.

“Yes sir!” Dobby replied.
“And how is Kreacher doing?” Blake enquired.

“He is doing well, Master Blake.” Dobby told him, he was now officially the ‘Head House-elf’ now that they had more than one and he had been there the longest - Blake had told Kreacher he had to do as Dobby told him - his half of the chores which weren’t many.

“Good, we will be done in a moment,” Blake stated, nodding to the House-elf who understood and popped out.


“Yes, you’ll find his attitude a bit more pleasant now,” Blake smirked victoriously.

“Is Snape still here?” Harry asked as he reluctantly got out of bed. His stomach grumbling loudly, it wasn’t used to missing meals now that he wasn’t at the Dursley’s anymore. He would never be going back either, he thought with great delight, he would be staying with Blake.

“No, he headed to his own home to finish preparing a few potions that he’s required to make, but he wishes to return tomorrow afternoon which will be after our lessons. The twins wish to come and visit and I let them know they may do so on Saturday, and as you know Sunday is the day Sirius will be visiting - just don’t do anything outrageous with him. If he gets anything stupid in his head, inform me immediately.” Blake pointed out sharply.

“Okay,” Harry said in agreement, “But what is it that you wanted to see before that my friends had?”

Blake smirked, “Caught that did you? Good, you’re getting better at listening to everything I’m proud of you.” he informed him. Picking up the book, he opened it at the marked page and pressed it against Harry’s knees. “I think you’ll find the information you’re looking for without me pointing it out then. Just know that its…not good Harry, it will irrevocably change your opinion of the Headmaster. Do you remember what I said to him about how he could have avoided it all in the courtroom and how he paled?”

Harry blinked but absently nodded, “Yes,” he did.

“This is what I meant, this is what he fears everyone finding out,” Blake added.

“Oh, okay,” Harry answered, before he began to read the contents on the pages that had been placed in his lap. Eyebrow immediately rose, as suspicion wormed its way into his heart, maybe…just maybe…there was more to the anger at the Headmaster than just not using the pensive memories to prove Voldemort was back sooner. Just how much anger did Blake keep hidden? Was he hiding it or did he just not get as angry as he could due to his occlumency shields? Keeping his breathing steady, he read the information in front of him finding it easy to understand, after all he knew what the Fidelius Charm did, had done since he was thirteen years old, although only basics due to the fact there were no books on the subject that he had ever come across.

Harry had just finished reading both pages so turned to read further only to be met with a different charm, so flipped it back wondering what he had missed. Then he glimpsed the corner box…and his green eyes flickered up to read that as well, wondering if it would explain why Blake was being so odd about it. Then he swallowed thickly, his fingers tightening on the book until they were bloodless. He needed no further clarification, he knew, Dumbledore had known all along and sent Sirius to Azkaban prison. Sent him to the Dursley’s, and kept them apart for twelve years.

“Why?” was all Harry could croak out through his tight throat, trying to stop himself crying like a
Blake took the book from Harry, managing to snatch it from his fingers, before placing both hands on Harry’s shoulders, forcing the teenager to look at him. “He had your entire life mapped out before you were even born, the prophecy didn’t just become Voldemort’s obsession, it became Dumbledore’s - he wanted Voldemort destroyed beyond all reason, hated him since he was eleven years old, and just child. He couldn’t let you be raised aware of your place in the world; he needed you downtrodden and unloved. So desperate for attention and approval that you would latch onto him as a carer and see him as the world did - a benevolent omnipotent wizard capable of miraculous things.” Blake told him a sad glimmer in his eye.

Harry choked back the sob caught in his throat.

“He had to be the sole person you would ever go to in crisis. He suspects you are a Horcrux, scratch that he knows, it is why he has put you in his path every opportunity that it arose in. Now he knew if Black got custody of you, you’d learn of your place, be cocky and defiant, un-mouldable, un-reliant on him. You would know of your family, your history and you would not be the shy hero he needed. So he had you immediately placed with the Dursley’s and did nothing a day later when Sirius Black was arrested and immediately imprisoned. He then put him in Grimmauld Place in a bid to control him; in controlling him he also controlled you.” Blake added, squeezing his shoulders. “He knew of your…situation before you asked to remain at Hogwarts, he had two people spying on you your entire life. Arabella Figg in the immediate area, and a wizard if you went beyond the wards, he is in the Wizengamot and a very good friend of Dumbledore’s his name is Doge, you will have seen him at some point at Grimmauld Place.”

“He knows?” Harry muttered horrified.

“He does, he expects you to die when the time is right, but it doesn’t go quite according to his plans thankfully,” Blake replied sardonically, “I survived, but by then it was too late…the plan had went sideways through no fault of our own - Dumbledore was just overconfident as always. Now Harry, hear me, do not despair over him, or be angry about it, there’s nothing we can do, the public will probably find out and he will pay. We just have to make good with what we have, don’t we?”

“But why isn’t he trying to take it out? Like you are? Why does he want me to die?” Harry muttered still in shock.

“Because he doesn’t think it can be done, he believes it’s tied so tightly to you that only the Dark Lord can remove it by killing you. His belief that he cannot be wrong and is always right has created this mess. I am sorry that you had to learn this way, Harry, if I thought there was an alternative way I would do it in a heartbeat. Short of letting you experience it yourself there is no way.” Blake said, “Now come, let’s eat dinner if you wish to discuss it further then we can, just remember what I said - you can talk to me whenever you need to.” he got the teen to his feet and marched both of them out of Harry’s bedroom continuing the pace until they both sat down in the dining room table. Hopefully Harry would eat, he needed all the help he could get, but at least here he could get the potions for the missing nutrients.

Dumbledore wanted him dead, Dumbledore had betrayed him, betrayed his godfather…the calming draught must not have worked its way out of his system yet, otherwise there was no way he could possibly be taking this so well? Could he? But another part of him readily conceded the point that he had already began to lose faith in the Headmaster. Ever since Blake had appeared in his trial and spoke to him that way, he had just sensed he had done something seriously wrong. After all what else could have made him dislike his Headmaster so much? Who had up until that point been more than just a Headmaster but more of a mentor? Maybe that was what was protecting
him from this latest blow.

“Letters for Harry Potter, Sir!” Kreacher said, popping in and placing the letters on the table.

“Thank you, Kreacher,” Harry said, gazing at the House-elf, he wasn’t speaking under his breath about blood traitors and Merlin knows what else. He no longer had that horrendously disgusting dirty pillowcase on anymore, instead he had proper clothes on, a black t-shirt and shorts, and well maybe they were trousers on him (same as Dobby wore now instead of his old pillowcase). He also had a locket pendant on with a large decorated S looped on it proudly on display. That was as much as he was able to observe since Kreacher quite quickly left, without saying another word or waiting on Blake saying anything.

“It’s a good job I told you,” Blake chuckled darkly, staring at the pile, his green eyes glimmering in satisfaction; he knew the handwriting of each of those letters that he could see. “I think you’ll find Hermione is apologizing, the twins are curious, Ron is being Ron and telling you everything that happened and how bad I was. If Dumbledore’s is in that pile, then there’s already been an Order meeting.” grinning almost savagely, he wished he could be there when the Order realizes just how wrong they were about their precious leader.

Harry turned his gaze from the food to Blake blinking at him almost blankly. Was it just him or did it sound like Blake was actually enjoying himself?

“It is just a matter of whether you want to forgive them or not,” Blake added, “But do not feel you need to stay friends just because you fear you won’t find others, its simply not true.” there were others who would be even more suited to Harry at least emotionally and have a connection to each other that Hermione and Ron just couldn’t achieve with Harry due to the fact they couldn’t possibly understand what it was like to give through what he had without parents.

Harry nodded that he understood.

“After breakfast if you wish, we can do some more training, it’s the best way to get rid of residual anger, that and when the potion is completely eradicated from your system you’ll feel the anger and won’t have to worry about losing control of your magic.” Blake added it was how he dealt with things, punched the hell out of a punching bag or did training with the dummies.

“I’d like that!” Harry agreed immediately, he liked the lessons with Blake they were always hard yes, but informative. He loved learning new spells, and was determined to do his best since that was what Blake wanted from him. He’d never had anyone want him to do his best, so yes; he was going to do just that.
Chapter 15

The Games They Play

Chapter 15

Albus Dumbledore felt a strong sense of foreboding as he used the Floo Network to get to Grimmauld Place, Molly Weasley had sounded...well he couldn’t put a name to the emotion he had sensed within the usually overly emotional witch. She always went from one extreme to the other, but the woman he had dealt with just over half an hour ago had been neither. He as always brushed it off, secure in the knowledge that he was Albus Dumbledore, he could fix anything. It was probably something to do with her children or Sirius Black, it wouldn’t be the first time she’d complained about him which he found hilarious. The Floo whisked him into Grimmauld Place, and he was faced with the majority of the order sitting stone faced in silence. That feeling of foreboding began to circle him greater than ever before, especially as he observed Remus was standing at the back of Sirius with his hands on his shoulders as if to keep him seated. The usual coffee, tea and treats Molly made for the meetings were also noticeably absent. The only thing on the table was a book next to Fred and George Weasley.

“Is everything alright?” Albus asked the crowd his twinkle absent, as he observed them. “Has something happened?” beginning to feel oppressed by the daunting silence of the usually exultant group.

Albus moved to the head of the table, his heartbeat shooting through the roof, but he kept his gentle façade on, that was marred slightly with concern. “I cannot help if nobody answers my question?” he added in a soothing chiding tone.

“You knew,” Sirius hissed, his grey eyes flashing in raw fury. “All this time, you bloody knew!” he was prevented from standing by the tight grip Remus had on him, which made him curse inwardly. Panting outrageously, he dug his nails into his palms trying to do as he had been taught by his therapist and breathe evenly and occlude.

Albus waited patiently for someone to come to his defence - on something he still had no idea what he was meant to have done. Normally Molly would be the first to his defence but she was just sitting with Arthur shaking slightly in what he would guess either raw anger or sadness he wasn’t sure which one he preferred at this point in time.

None of the Order members reacted to Sirius’ words, just watching everything silently, having been stunned beyond belief having been called by either Sirius or Molly only to be told the devastating truths. They didn’t want to believe it, and hoped Dumbledore had a reasonable explanation it was perhaps why they weren’t jumping down his throat. But they knew deep down there couldn’t be an explanation, everything they thought they knew was shot to hell. They’d all squabbled over the book determined to see for themselves. To say particularly Kingsley, Alastor (who was basically a wanted man remained in either his home or Grimmauld Place) and Tonks had it hard was putting it lightly? Not that it mattered, they couldn’t tell, quite literally, anything to do with the Order was under oath. They would lose their magic if they even tried to tell anyone, but they weren’t Aurors for no reason - they were smart, dedicated and they knew ways around the oath it was just a matter of time.

“May I at least know what I’m being accused off before you judge me guilty, Sirius?” Albus demanded sombrelly, letting a small amount of his anger seep into his voice. “After all I did the same for you a few years my boy!” he added crossly.
“PFFT!” Sirius spat out, “You knew I was bloody innocent the entire time! I should have questioned it but I was just too damn glad to have someone on my side!”

“What draws you to that conclusion?” Albus asked forcing a bewildered look to cross his face as he felt his stomach pooling at his feet in worry.

Molly stood up abruptly turning the book over and true dread flashed through Albus’ eyes, he had made it so nobody, not even Hermione Granger had went into that damn library. He had wanted to get everything out of it, but between the cursed books, and absolutely everything he had to do - he just hadn’t been able to spare the time to clean out the library and throw the books away. He hadn’t thought the need to be concerned; the day Sirius Black picked up a book would be the sign of an apocalypse. The only real worry had been Granger but he had told her not to due to the curses and of course the good little Gryffindor would do as he demanded. As she always did, it was amusing really; she’d been obsessed with him since she was eleven years old. Denying her true house for Gryffindor because it’s where he had been, it was fascinating really, and all it had done was seclude her from getting friends and finding like minded people. Then of course, she had befriended Ronald and Harry, what better way to keep him in control than two students who revere him? Who would do anything he asked? It had come in handy when he had asked them not to write to the boy.

He almost, almost jumped when the book was slammed in front of him, the pages of a very detailed instruction of the Fidelius Charm was flashing before his eyes. He couldn’t help his natural inclination to pale at the evidence in front of him, his mind reeled with the ramifications, and he had to do damage control very, very quickly. “Ah, I see where you are coming from, I am afraid the information was Obliviated from me my boy, what good would it be to switch them if I myself was captured?” he pointed out; his defence was weak at best.

“Just who is powerful enough to Obliviate you, Headmaster?” Severus enquired his tone suspicious, he had his hand dangerously close to his wand suspecting the answer - and if he said who he thought he was, Severus would not be able to control his reactions. Lily while amazing at charms, wasn’t good at the memory charm, it was the only spell she found notoriously difficult. Hell she’d even had better success at casting the Patronus Charm. She had been a prodigy at Charms, receiving the best grade out of her year and even beating Dumbledore’s score. Just like he had been a prodigy at Potions.

Everyone knew the Headmaster was lying, he had paled, a liar couldn’t pale on cue, when he saw the book he had paled considerably, he knew he was busted but Dumbledore obviously wasn’t about to give up the game yet. Not that he had suspected he would, he’d never actually admit it even with the evidence in front of him.

“James demanded it and Lily performed the charm after the Secret Keeper was changed,” Albus sighed sadly.

“Really?” Severus drawled his sarcasm head all around the room. “She performed it did she?”

Even Sirius was giving him a curious look.

“She did,” Albus replied, already knowing that it was going to come down like a house on fire.

“Lily couldn’t master that charm, it was the one spell that she couldn’t do.” Severus growled at the thought of Dumbledore using Lily to cover for himself. He was furious, simply put and he made no effort to hide it not from Dumbledore or the other Order members.

“How would you know?” Doge snapped defensively, coming to Dumbledore’s aid. He was still
furious over the loss of his job and seat within the Wizengamot. He didn't dare go to the Ministry, he wouldn't survive Azkaban.

Severus arched an eyebrow as he looked the elder wizard up and down before dismissing him completely. He had absolutely no reason to explain himself, especially not to this group.

“I want you out of my house,” Sirius demanded coldly, “If I see you in here I will have you arrested for trespassing, remove the secret keeper charm and I never wish to see you again.”

“Now, Sirius, please think this through,” Albus cautioned him his eyes wide in surprise, “I have spoken nothing but the truth, I did not remember, but I gave you the benefit of the doubt, do me the same courtesy now,” he couldn’t lose this property, he had literally nowhere else to hold the meetings. “Harry will never forgive you if you put his friends and friend’s families in danger.”

“Do not use my family to worm your way out of this! Or Harry! You used them for your own agenda! You knew where the chamber was and you let my daughter’s life be put in danger. You also put my son in danger by association!” Molly screeched finally letting her anger go. “Let’s not forget the fact you made the poor boy participate in the Triwizard tournament when you could have gotten him out! You were his magical guardian! He could have been killed!” a piece of information they hadn’t known or realized.

“Voldemort might not have been brought back either,” Fred pointed out quietly.

“I did not have custody of him, his relatives did,” Albus said working his way around the words to defend himself. “I cannot believe you would think badly enough of me to think for a second I’d ever put a student under my care at risk.”

“Don’t give me that! You pushed Harry towards those confrontations!” Molly said angrily, her hands on her hips as she glared at the wizard before her. She had grilled the twins, Ron, Hermione and Ginny after she regained some sense of herself.

“I could not possibly keep Harry or any student under intense scrutiny while they resided within Hogwarts walls, I am but one wizard, I can safely assure you I had no idea what situations Harry got himself into until it was brought to my attention.” Albus once again insisted, his body was filled with defeat - and it was in no way exaggerated. He knew with grave certainty they weren’t about to listen to him.

“Take the spell down, and leave!” Sirius demanded trying to fight himself out of Remus’ hold.

“I suggest you do as he asks,” Remus growled, his amber eyes glowing ferociously, showing that his wolf was very close to the surface and he was about to lose complete control if the wizard who was responsible for the anger didn’t disappear and quickly. “NOW!”

“It seems none of you are in the mood right now to listen, so I shall give you a few days to cool off then we will have another conversation,” Albus said quietly, shaking his head sadly, he had to find out what had happened and how they had gotten their hands on that book to figure it out. “I shall do as you ask, and remove the charm.” hopefully he would be able to recast it once he caught Sirius alone and made the wizard see sense. Right now he was angry and nothing he said would get through, but some emotional manipulation would do the trick and Sirius would believe in him once more. Giving Doge a pointed look, he needed to speak to him and soon, not waiting to see if he understood he strode to the fireplace.

With one strong flick of his wand, the charm holding across the property dissolved into pieces. The added security they had on it was now null and void, and it was in danger of being discovered. He
hoped that Sirius would reconsider before any of the Black’s came knocking, the library was obviously still there and filled with a whole slew of information that could make things difficult for the light side to win. It was going to be difficult as it was with everyone watching him so closely when it came to Harry and specifically with Slytherin having control of his weapon. With that Albus was away from the Order of the Phoenix, the group he had founded to battle the darkness, never thinking for a moment that he would ever be found out like this.

“I can’t believe you believe everything a possible Death Eater is saying against the Headmaster! This might be all part of a plot to take him down and you’re all falling for it!” Doge insisted imperiously before striding out of the property, as always going where Albus told him to, nothing absolutely nothing anyone said could convince Doge that his best and oldest friend could do something so despicable. Those fools would soon see the light, but for now he would stay loyal and rub it in their faces at a later date. He failed to realize Dumbledore was the reason he'd lost his job and that the old man just didn't care who got caught up in his fight for the 'Greater Good'.

“How dare he lie to my face?” Sirius blurted out in frustration as soon as the door slammed closed behind Doge. Nobody was surprised by his strong defence of the Headmaster.

“What did you expect, Black? For him to confess all? He never will but he will most definitely stick to his excuses.” Severus insisted bluntly. “The question is are you going to buy it after seeing the obvious proof in his body language for yourself?”

Moody curled his lip; hating the fact Snape of all people was correct, Albus’ body language had given him away. He knew it to be true by 100 percent; he had seen that tell from thousands of suspects during his years as an Auror. He had seen Tonks and Shacklebolt cringe when they saw it as they got the proof they needed for their own piece of mind.

“Body language?” Fred enquired wondering what his Potions teacher meant by that.

“He paled, laddie,” Moody grunted, shifting his weight slightly. “He knew he was found out, if he had been innocent he would have been puzzled or perplexed by what was going on.” it was always usually an indication when someone didn’t pale, since it would mean they were aware due to the fact liars cannot pale on cue. He had lost his job, his freedom thinking Dumbledore could do no wrong, he wasn't sure what he could do now. Perhaps giving himself up to the Ministry might be in his best interests.

Fred cursed inwardly, so it was true then, he had put his little sister in harms way. He narrowed his eyes, glancing briefly at his twin who nodded viciously; they would find a way to make him regret doing that! Their sister hadn’t been the same innocent girl since the whole debacle in first year. Of course their angry looks were nothing on Bill and Charlie’s, they looked ready to go out and battle dragons in all honesty.

“What do we do now?” Tonks said her hair dark blue she gazed around looking as lost as they all felt really. Was there really an Order without Dumbledore? He had invented it after all…right now though it was probably the last thing on their minds.

“I just need to get out of here,” Bill admitted an ugly glower on his face, which was twisted violently just thinking about Dumbledore. His magic was leeching off him, showing just how furious he was without anyone needing to actually look at his face.

“I think we all do,” Severus replied smoothly, he wasn’t bothered by what had happened, well au contraire, he was, only to a certain extent and that was the fact Dumbledore had dare to use Lily to cover his own are. The rest he had enjoyed immensely, the looks of anger, betrayal, shocked disbelief, denial, indignant proclamation of ‘letting the headmaster speak’ and then the most
enjoyable moment of all, where Dumbledore had given himself away completely. He would have smirked and chuckled wickedly but he did value his life so refrained.

With that Severus was the first to stand; he honestly couldn’t get out of Grimmauld Place quick enough now that the entertainment was well and truly over. He needn’t be a Legilimens to know where Doge was, telling Dumbledore absolutely everything that had been discussed. He would be sorely disappointed with the information since Molly hadn’t brought Blake Slytherin into it - or Harry other than to defend him. He could feel others following him, it took everything in him to keep walking with his back unprotected with the feeling of angry magic so close at his heels.

He smirked at the lurching teenagers trying to pretend they hadn’t been listening in, everyone had been too furious and angry to even think of erecting silencing charms - he had noticed yes, he had also noticed the extendable ears and did nothing about it. It was time everyone realized what kind of wizard Dumbledore was - and seeing as those three weren’t Order members they could spread all the gossip they liked without ending up losing their magic. He was pretty sure they would write to Harry and tell him everything.

He took one step outside the property before Apparating away, not able to stand another second in the vicinity of anyone really. He had written to Blake to inform him about the meeting and that he would be by afterwards to let him know what occurred. He hadn’t asked of course, but he was sure Blake would like to know what had happened.

The cottage came into view, admitting him entrance where he was sure anyone else would be met with evacuation. Not that it would be easy to find, the wards were very impressive, there were a few he didn’t even know, he was assuming they were wards he had created himself or someone had in future. He swiftly stalked down the path towards the two storey cottage, it was very idyllic, quite honestly he would be happy to stand there and just take in the surroundings feeling at peace. It was definitely somewhere you could come to block out the world.

Not that he had been able to do much lately; he had quite literally just finished brewing potions when Molly had the audacity to call a meeting. Of course the impudence had washed away when he realized what kind of ‘meeting’ it was going to be, and sat back and enjoyed the show. Finally he was at the stoop he knocked firmly three times and waited.

“Hello, Master Severus, come in,” Dobby said opening the door magically of course, since it creaked open on its own with the House-elf standing just a few feet from the door so he didn’t end up smacking his own body with his spell to open it. “Master Blake and Harry are busy, I will let them know you are here…would you like some coffee while you wait?” Dobby asked as the door closed as he led him into the living room.

“Yes, please,” Severus said politely as he took a seat in the one he’d used the last time he’d sat in that room - getting his mind blown with information beyond his wildest dreams…or should he say nightmares? He couldn’t help but wonder what they were doing, he knew that Harry was being taught Occlumency it had been mentioned but other than that he didn’t know.

A few moments later a mug was being handed to him by an eager to please House-elf, “Master Blake will be through soon,”

“Very well,” Severus said nodding curtly. He wondered if the House-elf found the entire situation strange or if they were that resilient that Dobby was already over it? He wasn’t sure he cared enough to ask, but that decision was taken from him when he popped away presumably to do the rest of its chores if any required doing. The cottage seemed extremely well kept, not too big for a single….no there were two House-elves now he had forgotten about Kreacher. Although he wasn’t sure the old elf was capable of doing much of anything these days.
Leaning back, he let the brew cool as he thought on everything that had transpired. The way Molly had reacted was actually positively Slytherin in a way, she had told them everything in a cool, cold, and calm way that left no doubt in their minds. Her eyes gleaming with vindication the entire time until she had gotten so worked up after she got it all out that she sat down getter steadily redder in the face. She spoke of Sirius Black with a great deal more kindness? Respect? That he’d ever heard coming out of her mouth. His mind drifted to Blake and everything he’d seen and observed from the wizard in the short time he’d known him.

Sighing softly, he thought on what he had heard in Blakes voice when he spoke of everything that happened in the future. He knew Blake would do what he had to - to stop Harry having to endure the same fate he had barely survived before coming back in time. He would do all he could to help bring down Dumbledore and Voldemort - no matter what.

Five minutes later Blake wandered in clean, calm, power and presentable as always. He had just taken a seat when a platter of food and a coffee pot appeared on the table to Blake’s left. Mostly refreshing foods, fruit, crackers, cheese, sandwiches and biscuits in fact it was a mouth-watering platter that even he wanted to sink his teeth into.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting,” Blake said smoothly, “Help yourself,”

“Can I go flying for a while?” Harry asked hovering in the doorway.

“Have you removed the potion from the burner?” Blake questioned.

“Yes,” Harry said immediately.

“Then you may,” Blake said nodding his eyes gleaming proudly.

“Thanks!” Harry said grinning widely before hightailing it outside.

Blake shook his head bemused before turning back to Severus; even now Harry was still able to forgive too easily. He had already warmed up to Severus. Nobody could say that the wizard across from him was a good one, he was bitter, angry at the world, took his frustrations out on a young boy, but he had done right in the end, hopefully if they ended this war once and for all he would lighten up and enjoy life let go of the anger. Although the chance of that was slim to none, heck it would happen the day he let go of his own which wouldn’t happen - they’d been through too much. Changed too much in the course of their lives.
Chapter 16

The Games They Play

Chapter 16

Blake felt amused by the continued silence, it was just so unlike Severus Snape, who was paying more attention to his cup of coffee than was necessary. He obviously wasn’t going to like what was about to come out of his mouth, it was the only reason he could think for the hesitance from this wizard who wasn’t one for beating around the bush. Sighing audibly, he placed his own cup on the table, the noise distracting Severus momentarily. “You did ask for this meeting, Severus, spit whatever is on your mind out,” Blake stated, curious about what was on his mind.

“You may not like it,” Severus admitted slowly, “Do not get me wrong, I am only thinking of this as a way to keep the casualties to a minimum.”

“You have my undivided attention,” Blake told him firmly, “I shall give it my full consideration,” he added honestly, and he would no matter what he suggested. Good or bad, he knew some of the most reckless and seemingly idiotic ideas became the best ones, he should know he’d planned some of them out himself with the help of his Order.

“There’s a chance it may well backfire, and I would take the responsibly on to my own shoulders, but what if we restore the Dark Lord’s sanity?” Severus asked cautiously.

“Then what?” Blake replied curtly. “The Death Eaters would be left without a leader and rebel,”

“You’re thinking of your Death Eaters, not the ones in this time, you said it yourself they only continued because they knew they were too far in. The war hasn’t even started yet, he hasn’t gathered more followers, if we can nip this in the bud, and the Death Eaters would simply just integrate themselves back into society pretending just like the last time.” Severus argued, he had thought this through before even saying a single world.

“Agreed, it’s possible, especially considering the worst haven’t been broken out of Azkaban yet.” Blake agreed, “You’re forgetting one fundamental thing, the Dark Lord had followers before he even removed one portion of his soul, had only one goal in mind. We give back his sanity and with it full use of his magic, we start it all over again.”

“Agreed,” Severus conceded, nodding his head firmly. “Telling him is probably out of the question, but surely with your knowledge of the future, albeit without informing him, might change his ideals, the stigma on Muggle-born’s could be forever changed if you let that information out, they’re not ‘dirty blood’ not Muggle-born’s but rather…say regained heritage wizards and witches. There is nothing the Dark Lord hated more than the thought of the pureblood lines going dead; this is a way to prove all the lines are still here, still thriving. When he was younger there weren’t many half-bloods with superior magic like there are now. Which is also an added bonus, the Dark Lord loved nothing more than powerful wizards - even their background was immaterial if they were powerful. It would lessen the power of the Ministry of magic as well, the vaults that have been closed down for years suddenly being opened to family magic and blood once more. Which means less money being funnelled to the Ministry.”

“You think he would be in a listening mood after someone forcefully makes him mortal again?” Blake chuckled imagining the look on the Dark Lord’s face if such a thing did occur.
“True,” Severus sighed resignedly, “I honestly didn’t think that far, truthfully I thought you would nix the idea before I could put in a persuasive argument.”

“It is a good idea, but there are too many things that could go wrong,” Blake admitted wryly.

“Just like there are things that could go wrong with any other plan, your presence here has changed everything completely, events aren’t going to plan out like they did in your time, you could end up making the Dark Lord worse, there truly is no knowing what’s going to happen.” Severus stated thoughtfully. “The Order are soon to be rebelling against Dumbledore, I wouldn’t be surprised if word had already gotten out about the Fidelius charm, Dumbledore didn’t pick the Order sorely on talent but where they were in ranking positions.”

“That was his mistake,” Blake said with a grimace. “Ranking positions mean nothing, especially when you’re in a vigilante group and keeping it quiet. The pathetic way they’re going about to announce the return of the Dark Lord is as pathetic as watching paint dry.”

Severus snorted in amusement, his black eyes glimmering, “Indeed,”

“Even IF I did consider this, I don’t even know how Harry would react to it,” Blake admitted thoughtfully, or anyone else.

“Wouldn’t the fact he didn’t have to fight lessen the blow?” Severus suggested, nobody would know Harry better than Blake after all, since he was in fact actually him.

“At this point? Harry’s angry, at everything and everyone, and more importantly he’s tired of things being kept from him. Being expected to do what he was told without being let on in why he had to do it.” Blake professed reluctantly.

“Now or then?” Severus pointed out, things had changed.

“Perhaps a little of both, I am keeping things from him, things I’ve seen and done in my future, things I don’t even want to talk about let alone tell Harry. He might be angry about it, but hopefully he understands my reluctance to talk about it.” Blake revealed bluntly. “Why burden him with what happened when I hope that it never comes to pass?”

“Touché,” Severus murmured. He was an adult and he was finding it hard to process all he had learned, so he understood Blake’s desire to keep Harry as protected as possible.

“How long as this been on your mind?” Blake enquired, “You’ve obviously given it some thought.”

“Truthfully?” Severus said before continuing at Blake’s expectant look. “Ever since you said that the Dark Lord had been quite smart, it furthered when you mentioned his out, and I must admit he made a good teacher, he doesn’t suffer fools, could be quite impatient but while teaching I can’t help but notice he didn’t get curse happy. I wasn’t the only one that learned from him either.”

“No, quite a few of you did, you were his favourites, Lucius Malfoy hated that, hated the regard his favourites always got, even when Draco was tasked with killing the Headmaster he got no help from the Dark Lord, instead Bellatrix took pity on him mostly due to Narcissa and taught him a bit of what she knew.” Blake answered, “He still couldn’t do it, despite all his talk, and he was a coward. You made the Slytherins that way.”

“Excuse me?” Severus hissed out between clenched teeth furious beyond belief at his words, he had to literally keep the words he wanted to spit at Blake in, he didn’t want to go up against this wizard any more than he’d want to go up against the Dark Lord.
“I know it’s not something you want to hear, but you gave them so much leeway, let them off with so many things that they truly did feel superior to everyone else. Your preferable treatment led them straight to the Dark Lord, having gotten used to the preferable treatment they began to believe they were above the law…where else could they go to get away with everything and be able to treat everyone else like crap? Into his waiting hands.” Blake informed him his green eyes glinting with regret.

“So it was alright for everyone else to treat them with distain and you expected me too as well?” Severus snapped angrily.

“So Severus, the only one that does is Dumbledore, the rest of the teachers treat everyone the same, and hell McGonagall is harder on her own house than any other!” Blake protested, “Yes what happened in Harry’s first year sucked ass, Dumbledore shouldn’t have done it, but he shouldn’t have done a lot of other things either.” after a brief pause Blake continued, “Is it honestly that bad? Or are you just remembering your own experience?”

Severus frowned, it was barely visible but Blake knew the wizard all too well, “I don’t know,” he admitted quietly, they’d gotten largely off topic, but he suspected Blake would need time to think about it. Add the pros and cons up, like any soldier would do, and Blake was exactly that.

“I’ll be able to see for myself soon,” Blake informed him.

“You’ll be at Hogwarts?” Severus blurted out in surprise.

“Of course, I’m not sending Harry there alone without keeping an eye on him, especially with Dumbledore so unpredictable, who knows what he will do now that he’s lost control of Harry, someone he sees as a weapon to end the war.” Blake replied.

“You want to become the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher?” Severus muttered incredulously. “Knowing that it’s cursed? Knowing what it’s done to dozens upon dozens of teachers over the past few decades?”

“Are you honestly surprised by my actions?” Blake enquired, lips twitching in satisfied amusement.

“Slightly, not so surprised you wish to keep an eye on Harry at Hogwarts, but becoming the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher has put me off kilter I must admit.” Severus conceded, “Dumbledore wouldn’t want you to influence Harry at Hogwarts, the chances of him letting you close to keep an eye on you is very slim.” he added thoughtfully, and it was slim, when it came to Harry it seemed Dumbledore didn’t take any chances.

“I am not going to do it through the Headmaster or Hogwarts,” Blake revealed, gazing at Severus shrewdly, but he knew he could tell him without it going back to the wrong ears, the vow had ensured that. “Fudge will still be Minister while they work on a new one - even if it is only for a few more days, I can get him to sign off on it, since he already had the paperwork, all it will require is a change of name.”

Severus arched a curious eyebrow at that statement.

“Dolores Umbridge. Woman from the Ministry, she became the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, forced me to use a blood quill for a year.” Blake grimaced, glancing down at the writing still visible on his palm; even now he could still feel it slicing into his palm as he wrote and wrote and wrote ‘I must not tell lies’ again and again. “I’ve already threatened to expose her, so she will have stepped down.”
“Why?” Severus asked taken aback, his mind whirling as he tried to figure out why anyone would do such a thing, what the end game was.

“Fudge thought Dumbledore was trying to take over his position,” Blake shrugged understanding why Severus was asking, “So he had Umbridge go to Hogwarts, spy for him, making the school completely unbearable. In the end she threatened to use the Cruciatus Curse, gave the Slytherins even more inflated egos, by letting them run amok, mostly just those who had parents that were high up in the Ministry. In the end she was removed from Hogwarts and Dumbledore was allowed back, Fudge didn’t last long as Minister after the truth got out.”

Severus nodded slowly, understanding the full picture despite the fact Blake hadn’t given it, the titbits were the pieces of the puzzle that joined together showing a clear theory. He could only imagine just what his snakes had done with such a woman in the school, and wondered at his own reaction, whether he had one or not - well that anyone had seen of course, since obviously he had to have some sort of reaction. Pinching the bridge of his nose, things were getting very complicated very fast.

“If and that is a big if,” Blake started off saying, “We do this, it will be before the Dark Lord releases the other Death Eaters from Azkaban.” he knew it wouldn't work, but he had promised Severus to think about it fully, and so he would.

“Yes I was thinking that myself, I had meant to ask when exactly it happens,” Severus nodded curtly.

“In a few months time,” Blake replied idly, his tone thoughtful as he thought on it, could they really be thinking this through?

“That will get you enough time to collect the soul shards, decide for definite if its something you want to do,” Severus nodded solemnly; he didn’t begrudge him having to make the decision once and for all. It was one thing to discuss the idea, but to be the one to decide for good? Having to be the one solely living with the consequences? As they’d discussed it could backfire big time, but all ideas and suggestions could, after all look at what had happened in Bakes future? With him here now though things were changing, how long would it be before Blake couldn’t predict how things would turn out leaving him in the dark just like the rest of them?

“True,” Blake conceded, “Alright, I will think about it, but do not be surprised if the idea is rejected, he's much too unpredictable.”

"Considering what you've been through...I am surprised you didn't shoot the idea down, but I am having second thoughts myself now that I've actually spoken.” Severus admitted all the things that could go wrong were circling his mind...maybe they were better off defeating him as quickly as possible.

"Since it's the start of the weekend and Fred and George are coming here, I will be visiting the Ministry as well as locating a Horcrux, we can meet up during or afterwards and lay out the pros and cons and truly decide together once and for all." although he wanted to just say no and nix the idea, Voldemort was too deluded and filled with grandeur to be allowed to live. Severus having second thoughts so soon, he suspected Severus would say the same as him when all was said and done.

"During," Severus stated, that was only if he wasn't called, the Dark Lord did have bad timing. "I also have the memory of the Order meeting, I'm sure you will enjoy it." with that he placed the vial on the table, a smirk on his face as he remembered everything.
Chapter 17

The Games They Play

Chapter 17

Blake sighed in satisfaction, that was another box full of items from the Black family home been cleaned of any curses. Anything that wasn't a book had been repacked in individual boxes and packed securely with paper to keep them persevered and safe. They went into the wooden box he had on his desk in his office, he had spelled it bottomless so it all fitted in easily enough. They were priceless items, he still had a tough time getting his head around the fact most of the stuff had been thrown into black bags to be discarded like yesterdays rubbish. Whether he used it or not, it still deserved to be looked after with the appropriate amount of care. Despite the fact so far he'd managed to get through three boxes his office was still overflowing with all the items they'd brought from the townhouse. He suspected this was going to take him months in between everything else he had to do.

Stretching out groaning as his bones popped, he glanced at the small clock on his desk, it was going on eight o'clock. He had been up since five, which was his usual time had also written to Severus as well. His body no matter what, was so used to getting up early that he couldn't shut his mind off again and try to get more sleep. Before he came back they usually hunkered down at night usually as soon as it got too dark to see two feet in front of them, and remained until first light, which happened around 4-5 o'clock in the morning, after a quick breakfast, they were on the move again it was the only way to stay one step ahead of the Death Eaters and Voldemort. It hadn't been easy, especially with children new to magic, who they managed to save. No, Blake thought sternly to himself, he wasn't there, and it would never happen. Even doing a little training and clearing curses couldn't make the remnants of his nightmare disappear.

Picking up the boxed item he had just rid of curses he put it beside the others, standing up he picked up the Potter estate folder, and his ink box, the folder he had slowly been dredging through. It wasn't something he had done in his future; Gringotts had been overtaken just like everything else. Although he had removed a lot of money before that happened, he hadn't been interested in running the estate just surviving. This time he could do both, easier than he'd assumed due to the fact there was nothing invested in the Slytherin estate, or rather there hadn't been, he had already informed Griphook of various organizations both Muggle and magical in nature that he wanted to invest in. He planned on doing the same for the Potter estate just as soon as he managed to get through all current investments, or as current as one could be, since the last investments were near enough fourteen years ago unsurprisingly.

He closed his office door, making a mental note to put the best safety measures on it, the twins couldn't have put their noses where they have no business being. He didn't want them to end up cursed so he would definitely make sure his office was warded to the maximum before he left.

"Does Master Blake want breakfast cooked?" Dobby asked as soon as Blake sat down on the dining room table.

"Yes, thank you, Dobby," Blake stated, opening the ink box and removing black ink and a quill, ensuring it was sharp, he began to write out a letter to Griphook under both Slytherin and Potter acting for both estates. He smirked just imagining Dumbledore's reaction when he was unable to
withdraw money from Harry's account. Sighing his own name at the end of both letters, one adding executor for the Potter estate to the other.

Removing the small metal cup, which had over a dozen small holes in it, he sprinkled it over both documents, allowing it to soak up the ink. Replacing it as he waited a few moments to give it time to do its job, he then flicked his wand getting rid of all traces before folding them up. Removing a red circular mount of wax, he tapped it and watched as it began to melt onto the paper, sealing them together with wax. Quickly grabbing the seal from the box he placed it down firmly into the wax mould and left it for a few seconds before removing it. Nodding in absent approval, he repeated the process with the next one, using the Potter seal for that though. The second he had received custody of Harry and alerted Gringotts in the change of magical guardian they had sent out a letter for a meeting and the ring (which is supposed to be given to the heir on their seventeenth birthday once they accepted it they took on responsibility as Lord) once he was done he placed all the items back into the box satisfied. Now the Potter estate should be mostly up and running, the properties and land were still untouched, he would ask Harry whether he wanted them rented out or not. They even had a ranch in Texas, beautiful place the picture made him want to really visit.

For the Slytherin estate he had given Griphook permission to also buy properties of any kind, including those that weren't in move in condition, it would be easy enough to decorate and get it up and running then rent it out. It would ensure a steady income, including all his bets and investments he was going to be well off. He glanced up when he heard footsteps and only relaxing when he saw Harry coming through the door.

"Good morning," Blake commented, "How was your sleep?"

"Morning, it was fine," Harry gave him a confused look, then he realized what he meant, "I didn't have any nightmares, meditation really helps." he no longer had nightmare after nightmare about Cedric.

"Good, glad you're continuing with the meditation exercises," Blake nodded his approval, "I do as well," he added, you were never too old or experienced enough to stop meditating.

"You do?" Harry gaped in surprise.

"I do," Blake confirmed, "There are a lot of horrible memories that I wish to forget, Harry, and meditation and occlumency are the only things that can help and even then it isn't all the time." like last night.

"Oh," Harry murmured quietly, he shouldn't be surprised about that.

"Breakfast for Master Harry and Blake," Dobby said, putting the plates in the centre of the table since Blake had a lot of parchment and things surrounding him. "And mail," he added removing it from the apron around his middle section and placing it neatly beside everything else. "Can Dobby do anything else?"

"Yes, please go to Griphook and hand him these letters, you don't have to wait on a reply," he informed him, handing over the two letters he had spent fifteen minutes working on.

"Yes sir," Dobby said taking them and leaving with a barely discernable pop.

"Fred and George will be over soon," Blake informed him, just in case he had forgotten which was possible given the circumstances of the last day or so, finding out he was a Horcrux had hit Harry very hard. Much harder than it had been on him, but he'd matured a few years before he found out.
He'd been more pissed off than scared at that point. He put the equipment he'd been using on his seat and pulled his food towards him and began to eat.

"Fred and George? Why not Hermione and Ron?" Harry blurted out in surprise.

"Fred and George are off age, they can come and go as they please, the Order doesn't trust me, I doubt Mrs. Weasley would allow her son to visit and I'm afraid a visit from Hermione would just result in numerous fights something I thought you'd want to avoid…at least until she has had time to come to terms with what happened. She has trusted Dumbledore, to the extent that she went against all she believed in sometimes, so this will have knocked the wind out of her sails."

"Against what she believes in?" Harry asked bewildered, it seemed as though Blake knew his best friend better than him.

"She used the time-turner to save Sirius and Buckbeak, wanted wizard and dead animal, going against Ministry and the school rules, rules she had promised to uphold when she sighed her agreement to use the time-turner." Blake told him, "She did it because Dumbledore had told her it was the right thing to do; she wouldn't have even conceived doing so otherwise. She didn't even tell her two best friends about the fact she was using a time-turner just like she'd promised." snatching up a piece of toast he quickly ate it and placed his cutlery on his now empty plate.

Harry couldn't conceive Sirius not being saved, would Hermione really have let events play out if Dumbledore hadn't told her to? It was a horrifying thought, since he would have ended up kissed along with Sirius.

"I'll be going to the Ministry, so I won't be here," Blake told Harry, knowing he didn't like information being kept from him.

"Why are you going to the Ministry?" Harry asked curiously.

"I am going to speak with Cornelius Fudge, about taking up the Defence Against the Dark Art's post," Blake said honestly, "It shouldn't take long," picking up the mail he shifted through it, nothing of grave importance by the look of things. He would sift through it later today. "Eat up, they'll be through in a few minutes," he added before standing up, grabbing everything and made his way to his office and dropped it off. Once he made sure he had everything he'd need, he closed his office door and erected the strongest wards he knew.

Returning to the living room, he grasped a handful of Floo powder and flung it into the flames, calling out for Grimmauld Place. Once the connection had made, he stuck his head through, waiting on someone coming into the kitchen. For once Molly wasn't lording over the kitchen as if she owned the place much to his amusement. She'd rarely left the kitchen if he remembered correctly, always in there doing one thing or another.

"Slytherin," Sirius said in surprise, "What do you want?" he'd already cleared the house out completely, the only area that had anything in it now was the kitchen and the bedrooms the Weasley's and Hermione were using.

"Good morning to you too," Blake said sarcastically, still a rude inconsiderate jerk, the quicker he grew up the better. He didn't have time for Sirius when he was in his childish temper tantrum phrases. "I would like to speak to Fred and George Weasley, if you would."

"Alright, hold on," Sirius said, sounding a little sheepish, he was going to have to stop it otherwise he truly feared that the wizard would stop him seeing his godson. "FRED, GEORGE!" he called out in the lobby, the silencing spell around his mother was holding obviously or she would have
started screeching.

"They'll be there in a moment," Sirius commented.

"Do you wish to know a few contractors that will help Grimmauld Place?" Blake enquired smoothly.

"Why?" Sirius snorted.

"You wish to remain under that roof with the house in the condition it is in?" Blake stated blankly.

"It's only until the war is over," Sirius replied, he held no love for Grimmauld Place and honestly if he could get out he'd do it in a heartbeat.

"And if you could get another property?" Blake trailed off deliberately.

"There wouldn't be another anywhere near as secure as here," Sirius shrugged in resignation.

"I have a property that would suit you if you wish to take it, its brand new, has every ward conceivable mixed into the foundations of the wards. Including the Fidelius Charm, which hasn't been harnessed yet," Blake informed him, "It's considerably more secure than Grimmauld Place, for many reasons, it has more wards, its secluded and thirdly nobody other than me knows about it. It has three acres of land surrounding it; the wards are layered into them too. It's a proper wizarding home, including a Quidditch pitch."

"Why don't you live there then?" Sirius asked confused, it sounded as though the property was a traditional manor, something he hadn't been in since he was seventeen years old and living with the Potters. From what he saw Slytherin's home was a two story cottage, just a small place.

"Until now I lived alone, Black," Blake said sardonically, "I had no need for more."

"How much do you want for it?" Sirius asked suspiciously, something that big would be costly.

"Five million galleons," Blake informed him of the price, "Remove three million for the purchase of Grimmauld Place, I will renovate it, and the decision is yours. I'll take you to see it tomorrow if you're interested." and three million galleons was a good price for a seven or eight bedroom townhouse. He wasn't sure how much it was in Muggle money, he wasn't sure the conversion rate in this time.

Two loud pops distracted them, as Fred and George Apparated into the kitchen.

"You called…" Fred started.

"For us." George finished, both gazing expectantly at Sirius.

"Not me," Sirius informed them, grinning in amusement, he really liked the twins, he pointed towards the fireplace.

"Oh, look who it is Gred," George pretended to swoon.

"I see Forge," Fred pretending to hold his brother up.

"Quite finished?" Blake asked his lips twitching in amusement. "The Floo will be open for three minutes only, Sirius knows what its called, come through quickly." he told them before he nodded at them and disappeared, the greenness fading and the fire began to spark once again.
Once that was done, Blake gathered up his usual things from the front door, he never went anywhere without his weapons, they were great because wizards didn't expect you to use them. They'd saved his life more times than he cared to remember, and this might not be a war zone yet, but it would soon become one so he would never drop his guard. He heard the Floo activating, and the twins hopped on through.

"The cottage is going to be in lockdown until I get back, so I would seriously suggest not trying to Apparate unless you want caught in my wards." Blake told the twins smirking quite viciously, he wasn't taking the chance that Fred and George felt compelled to return Harry to Grimmauld Place whether by manipulation or genuine concern. "You can go outside but remember where the wards end, alright Harry?"

"I remember," Harry replied, refraining from rolling his eyes, he wasn't stupid, but at the same time he felt warmed that someone cared enough to express it, even if it was just him older.

"I'll be back before lunch, but if I'm not or you get hungry, call Dobby," Blake said, snorting at the look on Fred and George's face, honestly, did they truly think he was heartless? Perhaps he came across that way, but he didn't have the time for nonsense. He did sound like a mother hen, he turned and grimaced, but he knew Harry wouldn't eat unless he was told to get something - he just wasn't used to anyone letting him eat that it would take a while for him to get used to life in the cottage.

With that he strengthened the wards and locked them down before Apparating out himself.

Blake reappeared at the atrium within the Ministry of magic, and wondered briefly if Fudge was even still using the Minister's office while the Wizengamot tried to find another, which will probably be Scrimgeour again, hopefully he would last a bit longer this time around. Honestly you'd think having been an Auror for years he would be more suspicious and tighten up on his security with the war waging but no.

Fudge probably wouldn't be happy to see him, he thought wryly, as he made his way to the elevator, quickly pressing it closed despite people rushing towards it, grabbing hold so the lurching didn't cause him any bodily harm. These elevators really were extremely unsafe he grumbled to himself as he finally exited it once it stopped.

He noticed that his secretary was nowhere to be seen, was she off doing a errand or was she no longer with the Ministry now that Fudge would be gone? There wasn't even any security; he was beginning to suspect they just didn't care. Knocking loudly, he waited, wondering if he was perhaps at a Wizengamot meeting trying to save his job?

"Come in!" Cornelius Fudge called, his voice strained and tired.

Blake opened the door and closed it behind him, standing there waiting for the inevitable words.

"You!" Fudge said his face filled with hate. "GET OUT BEFORE I CALL SEC…"

"No need to be like that, surely you must realize it would never have gone well? You weren't targeting just anyone after all, but the Boy-Who-Lived, you were willing to play the game, you must be willing to pay the price for engaging in a game above your ken." Blake pointed out, "Don't try and say it wasn't, your problem was you should have stuck to Dumbledore instead of tangling with Harry Potter, he does have a habit of coming out on top against all odds."
Fudge scowled petulantly, grudgingly nodding his head; didn't he damn well know it? Ever since the meeting he'd been cursing himself for his actions, cursing Umbridge too, she was supposed to help, she'd been behind the idea as well after all.

"If you do me a solid I will do you one back," Blake stated as always getting straight to business.

Cornelius scoffed, "How am I to do that? Haven't you heard I've been fired?"

"Yes, you have, but I will help you try and regain your old job back, by giving you suggestions on what to say to the Wizengamot during your meeting I assume he hasn't been held yet?" Blake spoke calmly, sliding into the seat opposite him regarding him shrewdly. Fudge was a player, he would do anything to get back in the game in any way he could.

"What do you want?" Fudge sighed resignedly, leaning back eyeing Blake just as obviously.

"Nothing you cannot get me before I leave," Blake admitted, "Those forms to have a teacher inserted at Hogwarts, I wish for my name to be put on them, I want the position."

Fudge arched an eyebrow, "Why?" he was genuinely surprised. This man was obvious one for politics, he didn't just start up yesterday, and he'd been trying to find out where he had lived but no luck. So why on earth would he suddenly want to become a Defence teacher? Other than to piss Dumbledore off, since Slytherin definitely hated him.

"Tell me; what's the most important subject of a child's education, especially seventh years, like your nephew, during a war?" Blake commented offhandedly.

"Defence, charms, potions," Fudge replied, not surprised he would know about his nephew, he obviously did his homework, he was very good, and he had definitely tried to work beyond his ken.

"Exactly, now two out of the three have very good teachers," Blake ignored the snort, already knowing why he was. "I want to ensure the students at Hogwarts leave with the ability to defend themselves against the Death Eaters. Do not snort, Snape might not have a pleasant demeanour but if you look through the achieves for those that taught potions in the past and the injuries you'll find that the injury rate for his entire career is lower than a single year when it comes to all past professors."

"Very well," Fudge agreed grudgingly, if nothing else it would afford his nephew some additional protection since Umbridge was acting extremely oddly lately and had withdrawn her desire to teach at Hogwarts. He could have forced her, she was his under secretary but as soon as he was gone, she could just get the new Minister to retract it. Summoning the paperwork which flew out of the pile on his desk, he picked up his self inking quill and filled it in, signing it at the bottom. "And your advice?" he questioned, the paperwork still on his desk.

Blake leaned forward, interlaced his fingers and rested his elbows on his legs and fingers on his chin. "You're best defence is saying that you reverted to your Auror training, that you brought a Dementor when you heard about an escaped inmate, that you didn't give the Dementors explicit permission to kiss him you just wanted to contain the situation seeing it was a school full of children. The best way to subdue an Azkaban convict is to have a Dementor in the area guaranteed to subdue them until he could be transferred to the Ministry for interrogation. The incident with Harry and his cousin will give them credence to believe that the Dementor acted without full permission. That you truly believed that Harry was lying about Voldemort's return. he ignored the flinching Fudge did, "That you believed Dumbledore was lying, after all he had left a fourteen year old participate in a tournament despite the fact he could remove him...you believed it was a mental problem rather than just general lies." Blake finished sitting back smugly, there was no way Fudge
would keep his title as Minister and he might actually be a help as an Auror. Whether he retained his job working at the Ministry remained to be seen, it didn't affect him or Harry anyway.

Fudge nodded a twinkle coming to his eyes, he hadn't thought of those ideas he must admit.

"Now will Dumbledore know it's me that's going to be the teacher before September?" Blake queried, still smug.

"No, he will just be informed that we have picked a teacher for him," Fudge revealed.

"Good, now seen as business has been done, I shall leave you to it," Blake stood, silently waiting on the paperwork being handed over, which it was quickly when he realized it was still on his desk.

Giving a nod of gratitude as he handed it over, Fudge was grateful for everything truly. Who would have thought this would be the outcome when he saw the wizarding standing in his office ten minutes ago?

Taking the paperwork, Blake left the Minister's office and made his way back to the Atrium, it was the only place you could Apparate to and from. Same as you only being able to Floo that area unless you knew the passwords for the offices which changed in regular intervals.

The reason he had picked today to go after a Horcrux was because he planned to get the one from the Room of Lost Items. The others were going to be tricky to get, mostly Nagini, he knew how to get into Gringotts having done it in the past, it would be a piece of cake. His cloak, no Harry's cloak, the cloak of invisibility was truly invisible, the only reason Dumbledore had known where he was, was because he was Headmaster and he could hear his footsteps, in other words if he used the cloak he would be invisible to even the goblins as long as he was under it.

Just as he was Apparating away he saw Dumbledore stumble through the Floo and into the Atrium, Dumbledore saw him judging by the widening of his blue eyes, he didn't get to savour it further unfortunately as he was yanked away to the place Dumbledore had no doubt came from - Hogwarts.

He couldn't help but stare at the only place he'd ever called home, with the exception of his cottage, Merlin his heart jerked, he loved this place he thought, his green eyes greedily taking in the sight of the beautiful splendour he hadn't seen in decades. He hadn't dared to come near Hogwarts; it was just asking to be caught.

"How long has it been since you saw her?" Severus' voice cut through his thoughts. And yes, Hogwarts was a her, and always had been at least to him. Blake looked as though ghosts were running rampant. If he was able to see into his memories what had become of the school? Surely it hadn't been destroyed; the Dark Lord wanted it too badly to destroy it.

"Decades," was Blake's reply, his shutters coming down completely cutting off all expression on his face.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you will forgive me for not making this a Harry/Tom story, or even a Tom's sanity returned, the muse completely left me when I decided to go down that route, so
I gave it a doing over and edited those parts leading up to it, so its only mentioned in the one chapter, the next chapter will discuss it, and they will decide they need to work on destroying him completely...if you want to see a Tom going down the political route but still being Dark Lord-ish (and Tom/Harry) then read my story Lord Of time :) but for this one i'm going to have to have it go the way i mentioned above otherwise the muse will just continue to elude me. I'm sorry if you're all feeling let down. R&R
Chapter 18

Despite his expressionless face, Severus realized that Blake was heavily affected, he was still standing there staring and his green eyes gave away more than he most assuredly liked. He decided against asking what had become of Hogwarts, he truly had no desire to know, given what he'd already been told regarding the school and those (Death Eaters) within her walls, marring the sanctity she offered to all those who entered her halls. He waited patiently, knowing nothing would have Blake moving before he was ready, and who knows how he'd react if pushed, there would be a time for finding out, but not while hunting Horcruxes. He had wicked fast reflexes, he, a spy, had a dagger imbedded in his still very tender chest quicker than he could see it coming. He didn't relish a repeat experience, and he knew it had been a warning, he hadn't intended it to be a kill shot.

"Let's get this over with," Blake said finally coming back to himself, cursing the fact he had let himself feel vulnerable, it was just a castle, it wasn't his home anymore. It hadn't been for a long time now, or so he tried to tell himself - it wasn't easy to ignore matters of the heart. Even for him who had been forced to harden himself against all measures, even seeing the people he cared about die during battle in front of him or massacred in safe houses they thought was safe.

Severus said nothing and began to lead the way towards Hogwarts, for appearances sake, and it seemed Blake was willing to play along as he followed one step behind him the entire way.

"Is there anyone here?" Blake enquired, giving none of his curiosity away.

"Quite a few professors have chosen to remain behind this year given the circumstances, far more than the normal head count," Severus answered, which was usually Trelawney who never left her tower, the squib caretaker Filch, Hagrid normally remained as well, but there were a few instances during his tenure as a professor that Hagrid did indeed leave the castle for more than a few days. Then there was Dumbledore of course, who never left the school overnight. Minerva always went home to Scotland for the holidays but returned a month before Hogwarts started back up, only because of her duties as deputy to the Headmaster. She had to visit all the Muggle-born's homes, convince them magic was real, then return once the signed authorisation allowing the child to attend Hogwarts was accepted so she could help them gather the necessary materials for their schooling. He didn't envy her duties; he certainly would never take the post himself. "How did your… task go?" finally deciding on a word as they passed many portraits - who all watched them passing curiously. He was taking the routes with the least portraits to give them as much privacy as possible, and make sure there was no known way for Dumbledore to figure out where it is exactly they went if he found out.

"Extremely well," Blake admitted, smirking a little just remembering Fudge's reactions to his presence the entire meeting, how he had gone from anger to reluctant admiration and excitement. The stairs had remained docile during their trip, it was almost disappointing really, he wouldn't have minded a few more minutes stalking the halls of Hogwarts. Well, soon he would be able to do it for far longer, he would be a teacher of all things. He also idly wondered if Dumbledore would be so inclined to ignore Harry this year now. Blake seriously doubted it; Harry probably wouldn't be at Hogwarts longer than a day or so before he would be approached by Dumbledore to visit his
"I'm going to assume then that you were successful?" Severus asked, mirroring Blake's moves so it looked as if he knew where the hell he was going.

"Very," Blake confirmed, before he walked back and forth three times, ignoring Severus' raised eyebrow silently asking why, he would find out soon enough. Both his eyebrows rose when he saw the door materialise, then both of them made there way in. "You did not know about this room?" Blake asked staring intently. Blake also realized that Severus had probably had little to no sleep judging by how tired he looked.

"I did not," Severus answered gazing around at the endless room with piles upon piles of furniture and junk sky high.

"Interesting, you must have found out about this room later, perhaps when you became Headmaster…it explains how Dumbledore knew about it for sure." Blake mused, his eyes zoning in on the bust and making his way over, moving various items to clear a path not wishing to climb over anything. He no longer believed anything that had come out of Dumbledore's mouth, unless he had tangible proof, so his conversation on how he found it meant nothing to him.

"I still find this disconcerting," Severus stated bluntly, "I have no desire to be the Headmaster and I have no idea what could force my hand."

"The Dark Lord I assume also mixed in with a desire to save the students." Blake shrugged as he Wandlessly levitated the bust off the small square blue velvet box lying innocently underneath. Sighing softly, Blake undid the latch and opened the box, Ravenclaw's diadem lay innocently in its box the gemstones still gleaming proudly. "Hard to believe something so disgusting is inside this, isn't it?"

"Considering this is the most sought after founders relic, due to its status as lost I'm gong to go with yes," Severus said wryly, the Dark Lord had found this against all odds when nobody else had had was simply amazing, he could have been anything but he chose the path of least resistance.

"It was a shame they couldn't be saved in my world," Blake admitted, his fingers brushing against the diadem feeling the darkness emanating from it, and yes, it was his world, he was determined that the atrocities that he had suffered in his life would never happen here. "I do hope to save them now." closing the box back up, securely latching it, he shrank it down and slid it into his pocket. "Do you have an excuse ready if Dumbledore finds out?"

"I am always prepared," Severus stated immediately.

Blake refrained from saying anything on that subject, Severus was never as prepared as he would think, and otherwise he wouldn't have ended up dead when he did. He knew he died so hopefully he would take greater care of himself. "Then lets go, you and I need to have a conversation where its secure." judging by how sleep deprived Severus was he believed he'd suffered from nightmares just as he had last night.

"We should be able to get out of Hogwarts no problem, Dumbledore will be gone for a few more hours." Severus informed him.

"Yes, the Wizengamot meeting regarding Fudge, despite the fact he's no longer a member," Blake said sardonically.

"I believe he is trying to influence things to get his position returned to him, there is no knowing
whether he will succeed or not," Severus revealed.

"Ah, that is new, it did not happen until the Dark Lord was announced to have returned at the end of the upcoming New Year." Blake said, opening the door and exiting the room of requirements, Severus followed and then the door melted seamlessly into a wall once more, leaving nothing behind to suggest it had ever been anything else. It made sense that now his plans were crumbling around him he would do damage control.

"Everything has come undone around him, he is trying and failing to play catch up," Severus added, his voice extremely low so nobody could hope to overhear him.

Blake just hummed quietly as he and Severus took a leisurely stroll back down seven floors, without being even slightly out of breath. It took them just as long to get to the gates as it had to get down the seven flights of stairs, but neither man was pressed for time, for the moment at any rate, but there was no telling when the Dark Lord would decide to call.

"I will have to Apparate you," Blake informed Severus, not giving a reason as to why but he would bet Severus would at least have an idea.

Severus nodded curtly, allowing Blake to grasp his forearm and Apparate them both to the cottage. As soon as they were inside, Blake began to remove the lockdown, and as usual remove his weapons and left them at the side of the door. Sighing softly, he made his way to his office and dismantled the wards he had also put up there to prevent two nosy twins from entering.

Blake made his way to his safe and placed the box containing the diadem inside, right next to Salazar Slytherin's locket and the Gaunt ring. As soon as he closed it the darkness he could feel crawling all around him was blanketed completely. The others weren't going to be as easy to retrieve or remove in Harry's case. "Would you like a drink?" he then asked, moving towards his desk, removing a bottle of fire whiskey, hearing the affirmative he took two glasses and filled them only a quarter of the way and handed one to Severus.

Severus manoeuved around the boxes, shifting some here and there until he could get to a seat without bumping into boxes. He did observe that there seemed to be fewer boxes than were taken from Grimmauld Place. It seemed Blake had been busy, and he once again hoped that he would get to see the books, perhaps even lucky enough to read a few.

Blake took a small sip, relishing in the burn, he didn't drink too much or too quickly, he didn't have much tolerance for alcohol. Mostly because he had never drunk much, being drunk made you sloppy, careless, and it was something he hadn't been able to afford. "I gave your idea some thought," he told the wizard.

"Ah, about that..." Severus murmured quietly, while wincing.

"Nightmares?" Blake summarised, he knew all too well since he'd had them all night.

"Indeed," Severus answered, surprisingly not embarrassed to admit it to Blake, anyone else he would have downright refused and snapped at them. He barely knew Blake, had only seen him a few times, he didn't include Harry's past in that equation, yet he trusted him? A lot more than he trusted Dumbledore for sure and he had no idea why.

"Yeah, I know the feeling," Blake sighed, rubbing at his eyes, but it was something of a norm for him, some worse than others naturally. "I assume it's safe to say you have no wish to go down that route now?"
"Definitely not," Severus replied.

"Good," Blake nodded, relieved that it wouldn't be dragged out for hours.

"How bad was your childhood?" Severus asked, finishing off his drink, after days finally working up the courage to ask the question and get answers he knew he wouldn't like.

Blake suddenly wished they were still talking about returning Voldemort to sanity, anything would have been more welcoming than dredging up ancient history - and it was to him he was in his thirties after all and hadn't seen them in a long time. "That has no bearing anymore." he insisted, the Dursley's weren't part of Harry's life, and they wouldn't be, not unless by some miracle Dumbledore managed to find them and even at that they had signed over their right to have any say in Harry's life. Not even Dumbledore could overturn the decision.

"It does to me," Severus informed him grimly, glancing at the bottle of fire whiskey.

"Help yourself," Blake said snorting in amusement, now that hadn't been subtle at all.

Severus didn't need told twice, he would get his answers and he'd be damned if he left before getting them. "Tell me,"

"You do realize it's not just my secret to tell, it's Harry's as well," Blake pointed out, trying to dissuade Severus from probing further.

"I am not in the habit of blurring our secrets to everyone," Severus retorted, and Blake damn well knew that surely.

Blake groaned and pinched his nose in agitation, apparently Severus wasn't going to get a clue and keep badgering him for information. "Fine, you can ask five questions after that we're done." Blake's tone booked no argument.

Severus nodded, knowing it was probably the best he was going to get, which meant he would need to phrase his five questions correctly in a way that would get him the most information overall. His finger tapped against the glass, a thoughtful frown on his face, he began to realize it was much more difficult than anticipated. "How far did the abuse go?" finally deciding on a question. He took another gulp from his glass, waiting for a reply.

"There is more than one facet of abuse, which one?" Blake asked, his tone sharp, annoyed as hell at having to discuss this. He should never have brought up how different they were when compared to Ronald Weasley.

"You better not consider this one of my five questions," Severus informed him, "All of them," he wanted to know everything. Judging by the flaring nostrils though Blake was getting seriously pissed off.

Blake refilled his own glass, gulping the drink down trying to stem the anger, he felt backed into a corner and he didn't like it. He knew Severus though, he would continue his digging until he got his answers. He was better off just telling him in hopes of getting this over with. "From the moment I ended up on their doorstep they made sure to tell me every single day that I wasn't wanted, that I was a burden and more importantly a freak. For the first ten years living with them, I lived in the cupboard under the stairs, had only a few outfits that belonged to Dudley, they were ten times too large for me, and the only toys I had was a few broken crayons, some paper and a few broken soldiers I managed to get my hands on. They completely alienated me from everyone at Privet Drive, making me seem like a dangerous delinquent. I never received a birthday or Christmas gift,
except the odd year where they tried to trick me, second hand clothes and Marge Dursley even had
the audacity to give me a box of dog biscuits. I also grew up believing that my father was an
unemployed drunk and you do not want to hear what they said about my mother believe me.” he
would rather Severus' magic didn't explode in a room filled with already cursed objects, now that
would be asking for trouble.

Severus' hand curled into a fist, magic surging just imagining all the things he knew Petunia was
capable of saying about her sister. She was such an embittered horrible old hag, had been since she
was a child and it had absolutely nothing to do with her being a Muggle. He had thought she'd
grown up, grown used to the fact her sister had magic, that she was no longer envious, it was a
blow to realize how wrong he had been, the picture Blake painted wasn't a good one. Clearing his
throat uncomfortably, he asked the question he was dreading, "And did it ever get physical?"

"On and off, when I was a kid it was usually just backhanders, knocking me around into walls and
doors, or a frying pan if Petunia was in one of her moods. Got way worse when I found out I was a
wizard when I was eleven, but it was never the beatings that got to me…not the way the constant
starvation did." Blake stated giving him a generalised idea without digging into his childhood; it
wouldn't do anyone any good anyway.

"Why didn't you tell anyone?" Severus asked, hating to use up one of his questions asking that
when he already suspected his answer, but Harry wasn't just anyone, he was the boy who lived,
surely he knew if someone was informed he'd be pulled out of that home, wards be damned they
were no good if his family killed him.

"You of all people feel the need to ask that question? Didn't you find it strange that I agreed to
readily to go with an escaped convict minutes after finding out he was innocent?" Blake pointed
out, "That alone should have had alarm bells ringing for you, and probably would have if you
weren't still hanging onto the hatred,"

Severus' eyes narrowed sensing more to it than that, he hadn't denied telling someone. "Who knew
about the abuse?"

"The squib, Arabella Figg, Dumbledore and Dumbledore's little pet Doge, two out of the three kept
an eye on me ever since I was dropped off on Privet Drive." Blake revealed, his face twisted in
anger, oh he had been furious when he found out about that, and the three of them were dead at that
point so he couldn't even get a little revenge or better still curse the fuckers to hell. As soon as he
had enough money and influence he was going to make their life hell, and enjoy every minute of it
and maybe one day he would actually tell them why it was happening. Not about him of course,
just what they'd done to 'Harry' so to speak. "One last question."

"Did anyone suspect at least? Other than the aforementioned three," Severus asked, scowling as he
mentioned them, Dumbledore had made him swear a vow and then went behind his back and
ensured he broke his word. When he gave his word he meant it, to know he had been used and
broken his word so infuriated him.

"There is a slight chance that Molly and Arthur do," Blake replied, Wandlessly and wordlessly
levitating one of the boxes towards him, opening it and levitating the book and cast a charm over it
to reveal the spells on it. "When the twins and Ron took Harry from Privet Drive they broke him
out and drove all the way back to the Burrow with metal bars hanging from the car. That and they
send him food, it's the only thing stopping him from starving actually, now and again they'd put a
soup can through the cap flap."

"For someone who has only been here a while…it's disconcerting to hear you speak of yourself in
third person without a problem." Severus pointed out, having no fear of them being overheard; the
"Considering neither of us wanted to be Harry Potter it isn't as hard as one would think," Blake admitted sardonically, putting the glass on another part of the table and removing the curse on the book. It was ironic; he knew how to remove the curses from these books but didn't know the one that would remove the curse on the Gaunt ring. Thankfully he knew Severus did, or at least knew how to deactivate said curse when it was already active on someone. "Or rather the moniker they've given us, which is heavily co-joined, given half the chance Harry would change his name, change his identity if he could," he was the one that had a chance to live without the name and title. Severus had nothing to say on that front, instead he flicked his wand and levitated out a book and joined Blake in removing the curses.

"The curse that's on the Gaunt ring, it's one I believe you're familiar with," Blake said as he continued his work, "It's an extraordinary powerful curse, it is designed to quickly kill anyone who tries to wear it. In fact without a very quick counter curse it pretty much causes you to wither to death within a minute or two,"

"That sounds like the Necrosis curse," Severus said shrewdly, "I would need to examine it to know for certain, but that is the guess I would go with."

"Of course, premature cell degeneration and death," Blake nodded, "That sounds exactly right, if you have the book on how to remove the curse I would appreciate it."

"There will definitely be a book about the curse in this lot, of that I have no doubt." Severus assured him, "However, I'll bring the book here before Hogwarts begins again." understanding why he didn't want such a cursed item in his home, although it surely explained his reason for keeping it in a box and never showing it and the added precautions of putting it in a safe with too many spells for Severus to identify in the short time the safe was open.

"Take your time, I have to get the others, and as I said before, they won't be destroyed until the last minute." Blake informed him, "Hopefully I won't have to destroy them full stop, just remove the soul shards." all into one container would be even more helpful, and then he could literally destroy it just before he killed Voldemort for good this time around.

"Letters for Master Blake," Kreacher said popping in, handing them to his Master before popping out. His voice was no longer wheezy, and he wasn't hunched over, he stood proud and straight, and looked quite a bit younger than he had in Grimmauld Place. Either that townhouse wasn't good for ones health or being free of the burden had eased something in Kreacher.

"She's obviously found out the twins are here," Blake mused wryly, ripping the letter open and reading it. His eyebrow arched as he did so, well that was unexpected to say the least.
kidnapping? Or will Blake merely let Moody off and the others forced to bear the consequences? It could be the way he gets back at Doge after all :P heh R&R please
“It seems the Order is willing to play nice, they wish for me to dine with them tonight, both Harry and I to sort out the differences. She went into great detail to ensure that I knew they didn’t approve of anything Dumbledore did and of course the results of the Order meeting.” Blake informed Severus, his green eyes gleaming with vindictive mischievousness. “I have little doubt they are going to try and force the issue of my getting Moody, Doge and Diggle off the charges they’re arrested with. Using Dumbledore as a scapegoat and reason they can’t risk anymore of the ‘Order’ being arrested.”

“What do you plan on doing with Dumbledore anyway? I get the sense you’re up to something in regards to him.” Severus asked, asking outright than trying to be subtle about it, quite frankly he didn’t want to beat around the bush, which was admittedly very unlike him but he was tired and in no mood for games.

“Quite frankly? I intended on having him arrested on a list of charges, in the kidnapping of a minor, withholding information of Black’s innocence, assisted child abuse, theft, violation of a will. The charges will of course indict Arabella Figg and Doge as well since they were a part of it and obviously the Dursley’s. I planned on waiting until I had retrieved all the Horcruxes, as well as removed the one from Harry, without Dumbledore at Hogwarts I believe the Dark Lord might actually move up his plans to attack, and then I would do what is needed.” Blake explained, refraining from shrugging his shoulders.

“I believe that you are correct, is it something the Dark Lord would take advantage of, although why people believe the Dark Lord wouldn’t attack just because Dumbledore is there is quite idiotic when one thinks about it.” Severus nodded thoughtfully, it was a good plan.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if Dumbledore actually spread that himself, to make Hogwarts seem even more impenetrable than it really is, so others would see it as a sanctuary, a power base for the light side.” Blake pointed out wryly, “The Horcruxes themselves aren’t a problem, it’s the one in Harry, perhaps I’m being stupid in accepting the post at Hogwarts when I could be searching for a way to remove it.” he admitted, sighing in frustration, he was trying to do everything at once, when he knew he couldn’t, it was beginning to take its toll on him, and this was coming from a man on a mission, one who had been on a mission for so many years. Admittedly he might not sleep very long but he was in a bed every night without fear that someone could get at him.

“So I’m being told,” Blake said with an amused scoff, “Harry has decided in all his wisdom that he trusts you and wants you to help me, he’s already thinking differently from me at that age, I would be concerned if it wasn’t a good thing…I think.”

“Yes,” Severus drawled absently, “I have wondered about that, what exactly have you told him about me?” he wanted to be angry about that, but the truth is with how things were going…it
seemed as if Harry trusting him was a good thing, perhaps one of the most important things, which was odd, since just last month he wouldn’t have considered such a thing. He would give his life to save Harry’s, there was no doubt, and it wasn’t just because of the vow, but he’d never considered being nice to him, or gaining his trust. It was disturbing to him how much had changed in such a short time. He wasn’t even going to start on his feelings for the wizard sitting across from him. He felt a kinship, an understanding, something he didn’t feel with anyone else, not ever.

“The truth,” Blake admitted, only slightly abashed, “When I saw Sirius…old feelings came to the forefront, I thoroughly laid into him, revealed all the lies he had told Harry, feelings I wasn’t ever given the opportunity to express. Don’t get me wrong, I grieved for him, cared for him a little, but it wasn’t given a chance to grow, quite frankly in the time Harry’s known about Black, its Harry that’s been looking after him. Giving him food from Hogwarts, but all Sirius did was listen to Dumbledore and discard Harry like old news. Perhaps this time around it might be different; hopefully my words will have an affect on Sirius and let him build a relationship built on trust and truth.”

“I was under the impression you—he adored Black,” Severus admitted, was he truly that blind that he couldn’t see things clearly? Was he truly seeing only what he wanted to see?

“More like he adores the image built up in his mind,” Blake corrected him, “Sirius was his chance to leave the Dursley’s, the abuse, it wasn’t until he ended up back at the Dursley’s did he realize it was nothing more than a pipe dream and nothing would allow him to leave. Oh he tries to rationalise it, blaming Pettigrew for escaping…doesn’t truly understand the working of the Ministry or magic itself, he was kept very blinded, Dumbledore wanted him ignorant of a lot of things. Things he would have known from the get go if he’d been raised in the magical world. I think he’s beginning to comprehend Dumbledore’s reprehensible inactions now.”

Severus merely nodded solemnly, he had never fully trusted Dumbledore, perhaps it had been due to the time he’d been a Death Eater, or it could be because he ignored the actions of the Marauders, perhaps both? But the extent of his manipulative tendencies? That had been a surprise, it had never hurt him the way he presumed it would hurt Harry, since Harry worshiped Dumbledore; it had been quite a disgusting sight to see, for him and his Slytherins.

“I cannot tolerate the Order, but one cannot deny that some of them are very good duellers, I will need them when the time comes.” Blake grudgingly admitted, not liking it but it was nevertheless the truth. “Especially Molly Weasley as annoying as she could be, I always thought she was more bark than bite, saw a whole new side of her during the battle at Hogwarts.” Severus snorted derisively not believing it for a second.

“She killed Bellatrix Lestrange,” Blake stated, knowing that it would surprise Severus, and it did, he gaped however momentarily, and smug satisfaction shot through him, it was difficult to get Severus to show any genuine emotion, so each time it happened he felt undeniably smug.

“Surely you jest!” Severus choked after he managed to regain his senses.

“I do not joke,” Blake replied sardonically, “I reiterate my previous statement some of them are very good duellers.”

Severus just arched an eyebrow, for some reason he didn’t think Blake would be able to tolerate them, he barely managed himself…and Blake had no reason or the desire to hold his tongue and not say what he feels. “You would feign a comradeship with the Order?”

Blake snorted, “I think not.” he stated dryly, “I can still make use of them whether I am friendly with them or not. This is a war, not a competition to see who makes the most friends.”
Severus nodded curtly, “Then if you are to accept their invitation, you should leave now,” he added, aware of the time, and also aware when they eat their dinner, since it was usually followed by an Order meeting, sometimes he got there in time to be annoyed by Dumbledore wishing for him to join the meal despite knowing he didn’t wish to partake in any festivities. Although for the first time he actually had a desire to go, the prospect of missing out on what was happening didn’t sit well with him at all. Even if it was only half a chance of someone saying something incredibly stupid he’d take it. Who was he kidding this was the Order, the stupid, idiotic, speak first think later morons he had to deal with, of course they would say something to enrage Blake - he wasn’t that difficult to wind up actually, from what he could see. He had a chip on his shoulder the size of the damn iceberg that took out the Titanic.

“Well, then,” Blake murmured thoughtfully, trying to think of a valid excuse not to go, but he was indeed curious about it.

“But first…would you like my aid in figuring out a way to remove the Horcrux from Harry?” Severus enquired. He wanted an answer; there was no point to him wasting his time going through books or ideas that Blake may have already had, so if he was going to help then he would like to know where Blake was in regards to finding out.

“Can you spare the time?” Blake asked sitting up properly, staring at him seriously. He would be a fool to turn down Severus’ help, he was extremely smart, dedicated, and quite frankly as good as he was at Potions there was little doubt that Severus was better than him. He was the Potions Master after all, although he had one…technically, he hadn’t gone through an official Mastery, just a forged one, that would successfully dupe anyone no matter how much intense scrutiny went into it. It was one of the subjects he had gotten very good at on the run from the Death Eaters. He had to create an entire life for himself, and just school transcripts would have looked suspicious so he had added Mastery for a career.

“I can make the time,” Severus replied firmly, pleased that Blake understood that his time was extremely valuable and limited he could tell by the way he asked and how seriously he was taking his offer.

“Then yes, I would be honoured to have your help,” Blake answered honestly, a little weight falling from his shoulders. “Perhaps we can discuss it more later tonight, if you aren’t otherwise engaged.”

“Nothing planned, but it doesn’t mean that it will stay clear,” Severus conceded, the Dark Lord could call any given moment and Blake understood that judging by the nod he received in turn.

“Excuse me,” Blake said, standing up his gait smooth before long he exited his study, and made his way to Harry’s bedroom where he could sense Harry and the twins were. He knocked loudly on the door three times, he had promised Harry privacy and he would give him that. It wasn’t something Harry was used to, and he should know.

“Come in,” came Harry’s muffled voice.

“We’ve been invited to Grimmauld Place for dinner, would you like to go?” Blake asked the teen, ignoring the look of surprise and confusion on Harry’s face; it wasn’t as prominent as it would have been his occlumency lessons were seeing to that.

“You want to go?” Harry asked incredulously.

“Whether I want to go or not is redundant, would you like to see your godfather and…friends?” Blake’s lip curled just a tad at that, all three teens saw it, and while Harry understood the twins couldn’t help but frown at it despite their excitement, they loved nothing more than mischief, and
this wizard had changed their mother, well it wasn’t something that happened every day so yes, they’d love to see what he would do next.

“Um, sure?” Harry murmured, still surprised.

“Good, then get ready to go, we will be leaving in three minutes,” Blake informed him, before closing the door and leaving Harry to it, even through the door he heard Fred or George asking why Blake didn’t like Hermione and Ron.

Blake wasn’t surprised by the fact that Severus didn’t remain in the office, but rather was leaning against the wall beside the door.

“Ready to go?” Blake enquired when Severus wordlessly nodded, Blake went to the table next to the front door and he began to get ready for his outing. His daggers, sword, potions kit, the whole shebang, Severus didn’t need to wonder why he would take all those precautions, because he did the same thing, minus the daggers of course, but it was an intriguing notion.

“When did you decide to use weapons?” Severus asked, not daring to touch them just in case they were cursed.

“I was attacked by Rowle, big fucker, lost my wand, there was no way he was going to let me get back at it,” Blake revealed a smirk on his face, “He took it and all I could do was dodge his curses and hexes, we were in the wilderness, while I was scrambling around I found a blunt rusty knife, it was quickly introduced into Rowle’s stomach, snatched his wand and stunned him, took my own wand and fled. It gave me the idea, and I must say the beauties I got saved my life more times than I can count.” he was fonder of these ones though for some reason.

“I see,” Severus replied, his tone thoughtful and contemplative.

“You should get one yourself, carefully concealed that nobody can detect it, might just save your life.” Blake stated, twirling his cloak around letting it settle on his back as he clipped it around his neck, he was ready to go now.

“Blake? We’re ready to go,” Harry said, eyeing ‘Blake’ and Severus, they were standing rather closely, and neither Blake nor Snape like to be near other people. Was he beginning to trust and relax in this time? Or was the whole thing just a coincidence and he was looking too much into it? Ever since he began occlumency lessons with Blake, he tended to notice things he wouldn’t have before. It was almost like his mind was clearer and he could concentrate on things.

“You know the way, we’re to Floo over,” Blake stated, his head jerking in the direction of the living room, it was the only room that had a fire connected to the network. “Fred, George you go first, your professor will join you shortly along with Harry and I.”

Fred and George nodded solemnly, they knew better than to antagonise Blake after the way he’d spoken to their mother. Truthfully this afternoon had been a great deal of fun, normally they wouldn’t be able to spend time with Harry without Hermione and Ron, and neither of the twins could stand Hermione’s irritating haughty ‘I know better than you’ presence, and the fact she was constantly reprimanding them for their jokes, not seeing just how much work they put into them. Ron was always annoying too, but he was their little brother and nothing like Hermione. The fact Blake didn’t like them either warmed the twins up more. The fireplace was large, as was the one in Grimmauld Place, allowing Fred and George to step into the fireplace together and fling the powder into the base and they were gone.

Severus didn’t speak until he too was in the fireplace and disappearing after calling out
'Grimmauld Place’ with a grimace on his face.

“Why are we really going there?” Harry asked gazing up at Blake; he just knew there was something more to it.

Blake stared down at Harry, smirking quite viciously, he really needed to get Harry more potions, and he was still too short for his liking. “They might be useful in the long run,” he conceded, “Let’s get going; I don’t want to be there for too long.”

“Alright,” Harry said in agreement stepping in with his guardian, feeling rather pleased with himself, not only had he been right but Blake made no attempt to hide anything from him...at least not too much, just stuff from the future. He liked this, being included, it was so much better than being kept in the dark about everything. Just being able to sit in his own bedroom, hanging out with his friends, it was completely weird since he’d never done it before but at the same time strangely liberating. For the first time in his life he felt normal, and he would never be able to repay Blake (his older self) for that. Harry forgot to hold his breath, so he stumbled out into Grimmauld Place coughing and spluttering, wagging his tongue in distaste trying to get rid of the horrific taste of ash and soot from his mouth. A few seconds later his mouth was washed out, the taste gone, and Blake was smirking at him, he huffed quietly, mulishly.

“Next time you’ll pay attention,” Blake said, bending down and whispering it into Harry’s ear, chuckling a little before he stood back up, no sign of amusement to be had on his face. His eyes narrowed on the sight of Moody, Doge and Diggle, his lip curling in repugnance, Moody was the only one who would meet his eyes, Doge and Diggle looked away, but only Diggle looked ashamed, Doge just looked self-righteous. Blake noticed that Harry had taken a seat next to the twins. The Weasley’s were the only ones there, Molly kept her focus on the food, not even once turning around to greet Harry, Arthur wasn’t there yet, but the rest of them were (minus Percy but that was nothing new), Bill, Charlie, the twins, Ginny and of course Ron as well as Hermione.

“Ironic isn’t it?” Blake said to Severus, making no attempt to lower his voice.

Severus glanced at him, from where he sat (with great reluctance that was now beginning to vanish) his amusement carefully concealed, arching an eyebrow, wondering exactly what he was up to now. “It depends on what you’re talking about,” Severus replied dryly, as if he knew but didn’t know exactly which ‘irony’ Blake was talking about.

“That Dumbledore has his own spy, in his own order,” Blake chuckled darkly, his gaze still boring into Doge’s, “It would be quite pathetic how loyal you are to the old fool despite all evidence pointed out to you, if the majority of the people in the magical world weren’t exactly the same.”

“You owe him respect! Do not insult Albus Dumbledore in front of me,” Doge said his voice strong despite his old age.

“I will do what I damn well please,” Blake spat, his magic unleashing against the old man causing him to flinch back, eyes wide, Doge would know he was more powerful than Dumbledore and he honestly didn’t care in fact he relished in the knowledge getting out. “Kreacher?” Blake called.

“What can Kreacher do for great Master Blake?” Kreacher asked eyes wide with utter adoration.

Blake leant down and said to the creature, “Take Doge to the Ministry of magic, make sure he’s seen by Amelia Bones, once he’s apprehended return to the cottage.” while he was annoyed at both Moody and Diggle, the feeling of hatred he felt for Doge was more than even the hatred he felt for Voldemort and that was saying something. Voldemort just wanted to kill him, while Doge had watched him from the shadows his entire childhood, ignoring the systematic abuse he suffered.
Kreacher’s eyes gleamed wickedly, he nodded before with two single pops, and he and Doge were gone, not giving anyone a chance to do anything. Moody hurled himself to the corner of the room, wand out his magical eye moving at a dizzying pace. Diggle just hunched himself further into his seat resignedly; he’d known it was only a matter of time.

“What the hell did you just do?” Shacklebolt questioned, standing himself, despite the fact he wasn’t one of the ‘wanted’ wizards he was still leery, it made them realize just how vulnerable the town house was now without the Fidelius Charm.

“I would think, especially to an Auror such as yourself it would be obvious,” Blake said dryly, “I had my house-elf transport Doge to the Ministry. The longer you leave it, the worse it’s going to get, chances are you will not even be sentenced to Azkaban, you didn’t actually kidnap him, only tried and failed.” this he told Moody and Diggle with smug satisfaction. “If anything it should be an embarrassment to you, how many dark wizards have you caught in your career?”

Severus’ lips just couldn’t remain pursed as Blake continued to take dig after dig at the Order. He wondered if they even got half the veiled insults he was throwing their way, he decided not, they were a dim bunch, not a Slytherin thought in their mind, so unless it was an outright insult he doubted it processed for them. A smirk wormed its way onto his face, but Severus made sure to keep it hidden as Moody snarled angrily like a wounded bear.

“HARRY!” Sirius shouted happily, as he entered the kitchen to see the newcomers. He hadn’t expected to see him until tomorrow, that’s if Blake lived up to his word and didn’t actually deny him access to his godson. Harry stood up and embraced his godfather, genuinely happy to see him despite everything he’d learned. “What are you doing here? When did you get here?” he asked in surprise, as always good at not realizing how tense the situation he’d walked into was.

“I believe we were invited,” Blake informed him, claiming a seat next to Severus, at least he would have someone to converse with. “Let me guess you had no idea?” he sighed resignedly. Molly Weasley hadn’t completely learned her lesson, she had invited him without the say so of the owner of the house now that was just irritating.

“Er…yes, I just had no idea it was so late,” Sirius proclaimed, trying to prevent another shouting match between Molly and Blake, whether he was right or not, he wanted to spend time with his godson.

Blake scoffed at the blatant lie, how on earth did he get away with things at Hogwarts if his lies were so weak? “Don’t give up your day job,” he muttered sardonically, his lips twitching in amusement.

Sirius just grinned sheepishly, compared to what Blake could say, that was pretty damn mild and he’d take it.

“Dinner is ready!” Molly said, her voice strained but she tried to be cheerful, plates began to float over to the table and arrange themselves so everyone could eat. Moody still hadn’t moved from his corner, but when it became apparent the House-elf would not return he slunk out and reclaimed his seat between Tonks and Shacklebolt. Nobody said much as the food was served, except Sirius who was just content to actually see his godson.

Blake immediately checked both his and Harry’s dinners, making sure they weren’t tampered with, both food and drink before he nodded briefly at Harry.

Molly turned red, as she strained in her seat, trying to prevent herself from saying anything, the words from the last time she saw Blake ringing in her ears almost as a warning. She was distracted
and relieved when her husband made an appearance through the fireplace; she immediately made a fuss over him, before plating up a large pile of food for him.

“Ah, Harry, good evening,” Arthur said pleasantly, beaming at him, as he always did when Harry was at dinner with them.

“Hello, Mr. Weasley,” Harry replied, before he dug into his dinner utterly famished.

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“Alright children, time to go,” Molly said, flicking her wand causing all the dishes to sail over to the sink and begin washing themselves. It was time for the adults to speak, as always she ignored their grumbling and complaints, unfortunately she couldn’t demand the twins to leave, since it had been pointed out numerous times that they were of age. “Harry why don’t you join the others up stairs? It’s only for a little while!”

Blake pressed his hand against Harry’s shoulder, preventing the teen from standing up - not that he had been standing as it was. “I do believe I’ve made it clear that you are not responsible for my ward,” Blake informed her sternly. “Which means you do not speak for him, any direction will be dictated by me, do I make myself clear?”

“Mr. Slytherin, we only want what’s in Harry’s best interests,” Arthur said, his voice soothing as if he was trying to placate his sons or daughter.

“Is that so?” Blake stated sharply, his eye twitching in irritation at being spoken to like a child. “Tell me, if you had Harry’s best interest at heart, why did you do nothing when it became apparent that the Dursley’s locked Harry in his room and refused to feed him? Do not even attempt to deny it, you sent him food for Merlin’s sake; I do believe the bars keeping him imprisoned are still in your shed? Your own children tried to tell you how things were at Privet Drive but you ignored them. How about those on watch who watched Harry before he was picked up to be brought here? If you even think to deny that you didn’t overhear the words uttered to a young boy you won’t like the consequences, lets not forget the obvious bruises and if you expect me to believe an Auror didn’t notice how disgusting his room was, the tin cans and disgusting stale bread…no, you all knew and did nothing. Keeping him safe from Voldemort’s followers by Dumbledore’s say so was more important than his wellbeing, than deciding enough was enough and trying to do something about it. Technically I can have you all brought up on assisted child abuse charges.”

Arthur went pasty white, looking ready to be sick, and his gaze going to his eldest son who had been on guard duty, trying to see if it was true. He glanced at Harry as well, but Harry had sunk into his seat half mortified, half happy of all things, nobody had ever really defended him - not the way Blake was. He didn’t like anyone knowing about the abuse he’d suffered, he was embarrassing, yet he couldn’t bring himself to hate Blake for saying those words - it would be like hating himself, ugh, the whole thing with him and Blake was really mind twisting.

“I’m done here, I want to go home,” Harry said standing up, just because he didn’t hate Blake it didn’t make the situation any easier to bear and he did not like the looks he was getting from everyone, especially Ron and Hermione, at least the twins weren’t giving him looks of pity.

“I think it’s best,” Blake stated, obviously they weren’t going to get much conversing done, he realized, he was still too damn angry at them all.

“Um…I’m still getting to see Harry tomorrow right?” Sirius asked, or more appropriately begged as Harry standing closer to Blake brought him out of his thoughts. He couldn’t believe it, and his
mind was spinning wondering if it was the truth...if his godson had been mistreated...abused, he would never be able to forgive himself...was that why Blake hated them all? He thought in mind numbing horror. He wanted to shout, rage, demand answers but he just couldn’t, couldn’t face the prospect of it being true...despite the fact it was staring him in the face with how those in the Order weren’t even trying to defend themselves.

“Yes,” Blake replied coolly, urging Harry to the fireplace, giving Severus a nod before he was whisked away they didn’t see what followed.

“WAS ANY OF THAT TRUE!” Sirius bellowed as if finally found his voice, panting in both suppressed rage and pure unadulterated fear.
Chapter 20

Sirius' entire body was quivering from head to toe as he gazed at everyone in his home, grey eyes filled with fire that nobody had seen since the death of Lily and James. For the first time since this all happened, Sirius thanked whatever god was out there that Blake Slytherin had interfered, who knows what would have happened to Harry or continued to happen to him if Slytherin hadn't bloody well made sure he got his head out of his arse. "WELL!?!" Sirius bellowed furiously, his gaze sharpening even further at the silence.

Still nobody spoke - and despite the silence their quietness spoke volumes.

Severus snorted derisively, "All anyone needs to do is look at the boy to see something was wrong,"

"What does that mean?" Sirius asked with deceptive softness suspecting that it was even a kick at his own inactions.

"He was the shortest and not for forget thinnest first year I've ever seen during my tenure at Hogwarts. Considering neither Lily nor Potter was that short it should have rung alarm bells."

Severus sneered derisively at them; in fact Lily had matched him in height, not easy to do since he was tall like all his Prince ancestors. Even Potter had been shorter than him by the end of their Hogwarts years, albeit but not by much.

"Why didn't you do anything then?" Sirius spat trying to reign in his anger but it was slowly building.

"What exactly did you want me to do? Befriend the boy? Give up my duties as spy when I was demanded that I do all I could to ensure my place when he returned which he did," Severus stated sharply. "I informed both Poppy and Dumbledore of my suspicions, you can no doubt tell how that turned out, and I was assured he had been spoiled and treated like a king. Something concocted by Dumbledore no doubt to ensure I truly did play the part he wished me to," like a fool he had believed him and all and any concern had been wiped away, so much so that learning that he had been abused had taken the wind out of his sails so to speak. He had done his barest minimum to uphold his vow to keep Harry safe, well no more; he would keep them safe - both of them. "At the end of the day I was not responsible for him, not his head of house, I was not his guardian, magical or otherwise, I did not spend time with the boy outside of class." informing them that they were truly the ones to blame not him. As dim as most of them were, they probably didn't catch his underlying meaning.

"And you. You knew and all you did was send him food when you could be bothered? When you so loudly proclaim that he's like another son to you?" Sirius hissed, turning his ire onto Molly, he could find no hole in Snape's story, no further reason to keep his anger on the man, as much as he would have liked to thrust all the blame at him he couldn't. His heart was breaking that he hadn't noticed his own godson's abuse was partly what was fuelling the fire. "So help me if you mention Dumbledore…I swear…" Sirius added with a growl.
"Molly? Is this true? Did you know?" Arthur asked his wife, aghast at the accusations that were going around. He didn't even want to think that his wife knew, nor did he want to believe that Bill had stood aside while Merlin only knows what happened in that house.

"I…well, I thought they were exaggerating, the twins always like to exaggerate everything," Molly hastened to explain, flushing red in embarrassment and hurt. Truthfully she hadn't even listened to half the things they'd said, "I thought they were trying to get out of trouble with the car incident, I know I should have listened…I really should have."

"Damn right you should have. I've kept you safe, fed and watered you, kept a roof over your head and for nothing but received nothing but disgust from you in return," Sirius spat, "I should have you thrown out for this! I could tolerate your disgust towards me but my godson…that is unforgivable."

Hermione gasped in shock, "You can't!" she exclaimed, "The Death Eaters would kill them! You know that!"

"And you two? Did Harry ever tell you anything?" Sirius turning his ire on someone else. Glancing between Ron and Hermione, surely his two best friends knew something.

Ron paled and turned green, he didn't even want to look up into those searing grey eyes, Sirius was furious and he'd never seen the usually joyful man quite this way before. Fred and George were just as pale as him, but they had spoken up when nobody else had, at least they could defend themselves, Ron could not.

"Yes, we knew!" Hermione snapped still reeling at the thought of the Weasley's being thrown out. "He made us promise not to tell anyone!"

Sirius flinched, "And you thought that was alright?" he asked her his voice low and broken. "You thought it was alright for you to keep your silence that your best friend was being abused?"

Hermione didn't answer, but she held her head up high, despite the looks she was getting from everyone, she'd only done what her best friend had asked of her. She didn't see anything wrong with it, she was a good friend, and had helped Harry whenever he needed it.

Sirius slammed his fists onto the table causing everyone to jump, "You kept your silence on that! But the second you thought his broom was cursed you ran to a teacher!" he screeched out infuriated beyond reason.

Ron swallowed thickly, but actually had to concede the point; it was true and made them seem like the most horrible friends. Was that why Harry didn't want anything to do with them anymore? It seemed as though he was spending time with the twins, and even when he came this evening it was to sit by the twins and completely ignore him. It made him feel even more awful.

Sirius inhaled sharply, looking around the room of people who he had thought so loyal to his godson, at those who he thought would help Harry defeat Voldemort. Those he had bloody ran to as fast as he could to reconvene the order instead of staying when his godson needed him. Between the healer and Blake he was beginning to understand what he'd done wrong. Only for more information to be shoved at him while his mind was in a delicate phrase of trying to cope with everything. His emotions were playing catch up; talking to someone every day was bringing them to the forefront, forcing him to confront them instead of shoving them to the darkest corner of his mind.

"Anyone could have sent that broom to him, it could have been cursed," Hermione said, her voice
"Get out!" Sirius stated sharply, "Someone take her back to her Muggle family, she's not welcome here."

Hermione's eyes immediately began to mist as tears formed, opening and closing her mouth wordlessly, unable to think of anything to say that might make things better - there was a first for everything.

"Sirius…please, she will be in danger," Arthur cautioned Sirius against anything drastic.

"One more word and your family is next," Sirius told him grimly, "As for the rest of you, get out of my house, the Order is no longer welcome here, its no less what you deserve for ignoring my godsons suffering."

Arthur himself still at the threat, now if Sirius had said this a week ago he wouldn't have taken it seriously. Unfortunately the wizard standing in front of him was not the man he was used to dealing with, he meant everything he said, Arthur could see it in every line of his determined face. Feeling the hand gripping his arm, warning him against saying more, he realized his wife understood the gravity of their situation as well.

Once the room cleared as the Order trudged out of Grimmauld Place reluctantly, including Moody and Diggle, who were wanted by the authorities. Sirius turned to Hermione who had tears pouring down her face, eyes wider than normal in fear, face paler than he'd ever seen it. "You have five minutes to gather your possessions and leave before I force you out."

Hermione sobbed before rushing out of the room, cursing the appearance of Blake Slytherin who seemed to have caused discord amongst everything and everyone. Now she was returning to her parents, a place she had no protection, a place she couldn't use magic.

Of course, even Hermione had no idea just how right she was to curse Blake Slytherin for he had started it and would continue it for many years to come.

Sirius didn't feel anything watching her flee, glancing around the room he realized he had to take Slytherin up on his offer. He did not want to stay here, he would offer the Weasley's sanctuary, but they would stay well out of his way if they knew what was good for them. Damn them to hell, damn Dumbledore who had caused everyone to ignore the suffering of his godson. What made them think it was alright? Breathing heavily, he pinched the bridge of his nose, he turned and exited the kitchen, he would pack, be ready to leave this place as soon as possible.

Just as he entered his bedroom, he heard the front door close presumably one of the Weasleys taking Granger home.

The Next Day - Sunday

"You didn't eat much breakfast, and you are very quiet…it's not like you," Blake commented shrewdly, his sharp green eyes looking at Harry curiously. He could remember only being absolutely furious at that age, it was only mildly concerning to see something different, only mildly because he was getting used to being in this time, but complacency was a dangerous thing.

Stepping outside the door closing to Harry, "I meant it when I said I would be here for you, talk to me," Blake stated, it sounded like a demand, but Blake was a hardened man, he tried for Harry's sake to be softer spoken but most times he failed. Fortunately for Blake, Harry understood, both
had things that annoyed one another about each other, Harry's naivety and Blake's battle hardened frankness and demanding behaviour clashed, but somehow they were making it work. Harry was learning what he needed to in order to survive and thrive and Blake was helping him, giving him what he wanted more than anything else in the world.

"It's just I've never spent time with Sirius before, I mean alone or for longer than a few minutes," Harry admitted, utterly perplexed why he was even feeling like this - it was Sirius! He should be overjoyed; he knew he would have been just last year so no, he truly didn't understand it.

"You're worried he won't like you, worried that he will continue only to see James Potter when he spends time with you," Blake finished for him, finally understanding what was going through Harry's head.

Harry scowled a little petulantly, "I don't even know why!" he'd always looked forward to spending time with Sirius.

"Because you want to avoid the awkward questions that will be asked, about the Dursley's, about why you never said anything, about how you really feel, albeit if he even brings it up, he may go the other way and choose to pretend nothing has happened." Blake informed him, sitting down on the steps, gazing out at the sea and cliffs, listening to the birds squawking in the distance, it was very peaceful here. He could have sat here for hours just gazing out at the peaceful horizon, Blake scoffed a little derisively, complacent indeed, but after being in cold dark abandoned places on the run…one couldn't really blame him.

Harry couldn't help but hope that Blake was right, but neither he nor Blake actually knew Sirius that had been made abundantly clear. Maybe things would change now, with Sirius getting much needed mental help from a mind healer, he could grow up and be the godfather that Harry so desperately wished to have.

"I will be in my office for most of the day, if you need me do not hesitate to come to me," Blake told Harry, "I only ask that you stay here, Sirius can be extremely impulsive, and probably wouldn't notice that he is being watched, which he is, everyone knows he's your godfather, the second he goes into public with you…they'll plan an attack most likely, they even know his Animagus form and about Grimmauld Place. It has housed generations of Blacks and Pettigrew knew about it, and everything Pettigrew saw or heard over the course of his life…is now in Voldemort's mind." while Voldemort didn't have his full inner circle right now, and wasn't at full power, it didn't make him any less dangerous. Admittedly Voldemort's main concern right now was the prophecy, unless that had changed as well, but he seriously doubted anything could change Voldemort's course of gaining its full contents. He'd spent thirteen years as a spirit with naught but a half prophecy and probably cursing himself for not getting the entirety of it before acting. Not that it truly stopped him in the end prophecy or no.

"I know," Harry said nodding, not elaborating on what he 'knew' but judging by Blake's nod it was enough. He did pensively wonder if it was that simple, did Blake honestly trust him or was he just extending that trust in hopes he didn't break it? After all if he died, it was probably a safe bet that Blake would fade out of existence too…no wonder he was taking such immense precautions. Harry didn't mind, since Blake was giving him a reason why it was to happen and not just expecting him to blindly follow his orders without a thought of what he wanted (which was answers, to know why).

"Just be yourself, Harry, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised…if not…he doesn't deserve you in his life." Blake said, squeezing his shoulder, "You cannot be who people want you to be, you have to be one and whole otherwise you will lose yourself…become a stranger that even you do not
recognize in the mirror. Trust me, that isn't what you want.” Blake told him, his green eyes
tortured, he prayed that Harry didn't have to become the man he had.

Harry met familiar yet so very different eyes, and nodded, he realized his was bringing up difficult
memories for Blake, he could see that. He felt a seed of anger at his own stupid feelings when
Blake had been through so much but was still standing, strong and sure of himself. If Blake could
do it why couldn't he face Sirius without worry? Stiffening his spine drawing strength from his
older self just as he had been doing since the moment he appeared in that courtroom. He had a
strength about him, an aura that he didn't even see in the elite Purebloods like Malfoy. Then again
after seeing them bowing before Voldemort…they weren't much of anything, servants really, there
was nothing proud of about that.

Blake's lips twitched, "I'm proud of you, you know, you've come a long way in such a short time,"
sure he knew Harry was capable of it, but that didn't diminish the pride he felt. "Go on, head in, I'm
sure he'll be through…” pausing briefly before adding, "Scratch that, is through," feeling the wards
granting Sirius Black entrance into the cottage.

Blake followed Harry back into the house, closing the back door behind him, and making his way
to the living room. "Black," Blake stated, nodding.

"Er…Hi, thank you for letting me see Harry," Sirius said awkwardly, he doubted he'd ever be
friends with Blake but he could appreciate all he'd done for him.

"As long as you continue to honour our agreement, you'll get to see him every Sunday," Blake
replied, as long as he continued to see the mind-healer until he was given the all clear, but Blake
suspected it would probably take years to get Sirius sound of mind.

"I will," Sirius murmured quietly, truthfully it was helping, having someone to confide in who
wouldn't pity him helped a great deal. Although he was slightly annoyed that he had to go six days
a week. He wasn't stupid either, he knew Blake was paying for it out of his own pocket; no healer
would work for free.

"Good, I'm pleased to hear that," Blake replied.

"About the property…is the offer still standing?" Sirius asked.

"It is," Blake assured him, "I am not one for going back on my word, you'd do well to remember
that." 

"Then I'd like to move in," Sirius said, his tone sounding more than a little desperate.

"Very well, I shall show you the property later this evening, before dinner," Blake informed him,
"Why don't you show Sirius around Harry? I'll be in my office if you need me."

"Alright," Harry said, wiping his sweaty hands on his clothes, the fireplace flared to life before he
could do or say anything.

"Ah, Severus, I'm glad you could make it," Blake said, genuinely happy to see him. "The books are
in my office," turning around without another word he swiftly left the living room, he wasn't the
slightest bit surprised that Severus followed him immediately, neither Black nor Severus would
ever want to willingly stand in the same room or exchange pleasantries.

"I know it's a bit early, but whiskey?" Blake asked him, already heading for the bottle.

"Its night-time somewhere," Severus said sardonically, having no problem accepting the drink.
"Very true," Blake chuckled dryly; once the drinks had been poured he replaced the lid and handed one of the glasses to Severus. The room was once again different, more boxes and the contents of them had been dealt with. "Alright, the books on the left have been read, the books on the right have been dealt with curse wise but not yet read and are the kind of books that might have information we seek. I also have a dozen scrolls coming from Egypt about soul magic…when it comes to money the goblins of Gringotts can be very helpful indeed. I also believe they're searching other magical communities for me as well, the finders fee is guaranteed to make sure they do their best."

"Egyptian scrolls? Not the originals surely?" Severus rasped out his eyes wide with awe.

"Eight of the scrolls are the originals yes, but four of them are copies from museums or personal collections," Blake revealed, "A goblin himself is actually collecting them and taking them to the main branch here, I'll get word when they're ready to be picked up."

Severus gulped down the whiskey, suddenly even more glad he had offered to help…original texts from Egypt…scrolls, original scrolls…he'd never imagined being able to lay eyes on such a thing never mind reading it. Egypt was the oldest of all magical societies, where magic was openly taught and practiced before people began to fear it. They had been revered, coveted, showered with gifts and money in return for aid of any kind. It would be difficult to decipher unless it already was…but the knowledge was wondrous.

"You're Ravenclaw side is showing," Blake teased him, his lips twitching in amusement at the wide eyed wonder that had been briefly splayed across his face.

"Indeed, can you blame me?" Severus said wryly, truth be told the hat might have deemed him a Slytherin but it had said his thirst for knowledge almost outbalanced his cunning but it had been obvious where the hat was going to put him despite his thirst for knowledge.

"No, I suppose not," Blake mused, he would never have the kind of thirst for knowledge like Granger or even Severus, but when he put himself to a task he researched it thoroughly, and this was part of it. He wanted to get that Horcrux out of Harry, he also wanted to get the other Horcruxes out without damaging parts of their history.

"Then let's get to it," Severus stated, he didn't know how long he had before he'd be summoned - or who by either Dumbledore or the Dark Lord.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry I've not updated in a few days, I've just been in too much pain to write, I was at the hospital a few days ago to get an operation but hopefully i'll be better soon...ironically enough the day after - i managed to get a chapter up but it probably had something to do with the pain killers lol anyway enough about that hopefully i'll get back to normal soon enough :D the next chapter of this will probably be time skipping about a week or so and then of course the revelation that he's the defence teacher :) haha that's going to be so fun to write! will Blake find something that will transfer the horcrux before hogwarts start between Severus and himself going through everything or do you think its just a bit too quickly? what about Azkaban? will we see Blake managing to pull something off and stop Voldemort getting them? Last thing anyone wants is the lestranges loose ;) R&R please
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Games They Play

Chapter 21

Nothing but flipping of pages could be heard as Blake and Severus read through the books that they'd brought over from Grimmauld Place. Sometimes they got lost in new information, forgetting exactly what it was that they were meant to be doing in the first place. Severus more so than Blake of course, since Blake's single minded determination helped. He knew what would happen if he didn't succeed, and while he'd painted a picture for Severus…he couldn't truly know just how bad it was - he hadn't experienced it - and wouldn't have at any rate the war had been dark yes but compared to its overall? Pretty mild considering all things, and he should know he'd lived through the experience.

"I don't think we're going to get the information we need from these books, the Ministry had too much of a say for a long time, burned thousands upon thousands of books because the information contained within wasn't something they approved, it's been happening since the dawn of time, even the Muggle world did it, all in the name of their god especially against information about science." Blake mused, despite his words he continued to read, he wasn't about to let any information slip by him. "Secrets of the Darkest Arts didn't hold information about removing them from receptacles, but it held a lot of other information…useless to us."

"You have a copy of that?" Severus asked surprised, he wasn't sure why he was. Even Hogwarts didn't hold a copy of it anymore, since his tenure he knew of approximately ten books had been removed. Irma Pince complained lengthily about it, and since he seated near her, it was usually him she spoke to about it. He understood her anger and frustration, he felt it as well, Hogwarts was a place of learning, removing the books…well it took the students right to learn away from them. To make a decision on what magic they truly wanted to practice, unfortunately it mattered little the Wizarding world in Britain was pro light, anything dark was considered evil.

"Two now, one I bought myself and the other is from the Black library, there are around an estimated seven or eight left in the world, Hogwarts has one, or did until Dumbledore in all his wisdom removed it and kept it in his office. It wasn't the first book; the library he has in his office is filled with them. The so called books he abhors he displays so proudly. Thankfully though the thought of destroying the books wasn't appealing to the old fool, he just didn't want anyone else getting their hands on the information, firmly believing only he has what it takes to make an educated decision on whether to use that sort of magic or not." Blake said derisively, he probably shouldn't have taken out his feelings on the entire order, it wasn't all their faults, its just the children he'd seen having to fight for survival…all because they'd listened to Dumbledore and then placed the weight solely on his shoulders expecting him to do it, and doing barely anything to help.

"You can double that figure, most ancient lined pureblood's will have a copy, and would never willingly admit to having it," Severus said absently, "I am however, surprised you know about Dumbledore and his penchant for removing books from the library, I wasn't under the impression was it was common knowledge…"

"When Dumbledore died all his secrets came out of the woodwork, but that's not how we learned, we searched Dumbledore's office and found quite a lot out of place." Blake sighed, letting the book
close, placing it amongst the books that had been scoured for information, before he picked up the next in line. "He truly thought himself above the law, how he got that way…I honestly do not know."

"He liked to have his nose in everyone's business, even before he defeated Grindelwald; I believe he was always like that nobody took the time to see it." Severus revealed, "He is a master manipulator, and he didn't get that way overnight."

Blake snorted, "You've got that right." his green eyes began to quickly read over the next book, flipping from page to page, it became glaringly obvious it had nothing to do with Horcruxes, but he prevailed. This was too important to be impatient and screw it up; he had learned patience a long time ago. Anything worth doing was worth waiting for.

"How long ago did you request the scrolls?" Severus asked, as he closed the book with a thump and put it aside, grasping a hold of the next in the pile, which was steadily getting lower. He actually hoped the scrolls would be here before Hogwarts started, and it was guaranteed, there was weeks to go yet before the school started back again.

"They've been at it since I was well enough to get to Gringotts when I got here, but the scrolls were ordered last week, they should be here any day now." Blake admitted, stretching out, his bones cracking satisfyingly before he got back to his task. "I sincerely hope we can do this, I really don't want to have to tell Harry the only way it can be removed is if he stands in front of Voldemort and allows himself to be killed."

"I'm assuming that's how you got it out?" Severus conceded, thinking back trying to remember if he had been told that titbit, but honestly? He'd been forced to digest the most horrific news…it wouldn't surprise him if he had forgotten one or two pieces of information that had been shared.

"Yes," Blake replied, absentmindedly distracted by the fact he was actually enjoying his conversations with Severus. While he had respected him in the past…they'd never gotten on overly much. Certainly never had a proper conversation, and the time he spent with Severus allowed him to relax, he oddly felt safe, safe knowing someone had his back, and content, which he assumed mostly came from the fact he wasn't in this alone. Even back in the other time he hadn't really been alone although he'd felt it at times, or on the other scale wanted to be alone feeling it would be better than watching anyone else die. "Didn't I tell you?"

"I do not know, I'm still digesting the information," Severus admitted wryly.

"Yes," Blake sighed, "It's a lot to ask of anyone to take in isn't it?" but he didn't regret it, it had been liberating telling someone.

"Most times, it depends on whether they can take it or not," Severus mused thoughtfully; many wizards would deny what Blake was saying due to their inability to take the information in.

Blake gave a sound of agreement, sitting up straighter and began to read more carefully, when a word caught his attention. A sigh of disappointment leaving him when he realized it was not anything worthwhile, just information he already knew phrased differently, from a different decade. Shaking it off, as he was so used to doing, he began reading once more.

The next thing either was consciously aware of was the smell of food wafting through the closed door; Blake glanced at the time in surprise. They'd been at this for hours, without success, but Blake had known it was futile, they needed older books, older information that was far too valuable to burn even by the Ministry's standards. Or kept in very secure locations, like the scrolls that had been pilfered from the library of Alexandria and such before it was burnt down of course.
"You can eat in here if you wish," Blake said abruptly, knowing Severus would not wish to dine with Black; their hatred towards one another truly knew no bounds.

"And give Black any satisfaction that he has me hiding away to eat?" Severus sneered, "I think not."

Blake laughed in amusement, shaking his head, a grin on his face; well of course, when he put it that way he had been silly to suggest it. "Very well then, lunch will be served in around ten minutes." he summarized, before he buried his head in the book on his lap, wishing to get it finished before he left his office.

He got his wish, he thought to himself, as Dobby popped in not even a second after he closed the book. "Lunch is on the table, Master Blake,"

"Thank you, Dobby, please move these to the library," Blake demanded as he stood up, pointing towards the books in the middle. "Only those ones, none of the others, I still have research to do." not elaborating but Dobby didn't expect him to, he merely clicked his fingers and the allotted books were gone, and with another click the House-elf himself disappeared. Giving another stretch, both he and Severus exited his office, and Blake firmly closed the door, like he did each time he left his office. There was a lot of information in there that would draw a lot of wrong conclusions if anyone was to see.

Unsurprisingly they were the first ones to sit down, as Dobby's Master and Lord of the property, he was here Dobby's attention would be first and foremost, after he had informed him, Dobby no doubt would be going to inform Harry and Sirius. Not waiting just in case Sirius was going to be forever, which wouldn't surprise him, Blake began to eat his salad which was already on his plate, he definitely enjoyed the homemade still warm sourdough bread the most, he definitely had to request Dobby to make it more often.

Both he and Severus were almost done with the starter before Harry and Sirius came through, Harry at least had the grace to look a little ashamed of himself, but Sirius just sat down as if he couldn't careless whom he offended. Blake bit his tongue savagely, stopping the words on the tip of his tongue, apparently leaving home at sixteen he had also forgotten all the manners that governed all purebloods.

Blake shared an irritated look with Severus that dissolved into understanding between them. In that time their starters disappeared and their main meal came through, roasted chicken with roasted potatoes and carrots. Sunday dinners were always the best, and Dobby was making sure that this was the case. The beef Wellington they'd had last week had been utterly divine. He did get a feral sense of amusement at the look constantly on Sirius' face as he reluctantly ate the salad in front of him. To finish off the delicious meal, Dobby had baked a cake, strawberry and cream, sandwich sponge cake and a side of ice cream.

"Do you have potions that need brewing?" Blake asked, turning to Severus curiously.

"Always," Severus replied dryly, "Especially at this time of the year," it wasn't as if he could do it during the year, he was much too busy, plus he had to replenish Poppy's stores during that time.

"I can help you with that after I show Black around the property I have that he's interested in." Blake informed him, "I have everything you'd need down here as well." wishing to help take the strain off Severus as he was trying for him.

Severus gaped, he couldn't believe what he was hearing, although he had to grudgingly admit past or future Black was Blake's godfather - not that the wizard would probably ever find out.
"He is giving me Grimmauld Place in turn, which pays for most of it," Blake explained further seeing the look on Severus' face.

"You're moving out of Grimmauld Place?" Harry asked quite shocked, "But what about the others? The Weasley's and Hermione?" they might not be his favourite people right now but he'd never wish harm on them.

"Yes, Black…what about the Weasley's and Granger?" Severus drawled, black eyes gleaming maliciously unable to help himself.

Sirius' look took on a 'caught in the headlight' so much so that he didn't even respond to Severus' words. "Um…" utterly blindsided, he hadn't expected it at all.

Blake watched with an amused air around him, his eyebrow raised just slightly, drinking some wine from his goblet, he and Severus were the only one with wine, which complimented the meal they just had, but Harry and Sirius had pumpkin juice. For once he was completely in the dark; Severus seemed to know what was going on though.

"Sirius!" Harry said trying to get Sirius' attention and tell him what was going on.

"The Weasley's are still at Grimmauld Place," Sirius said hastily once he came back to himself.

Harry's eyes narrowed at the omission, "And Hermione?"

Sirius cleared his throat, glancing at Blake with a pleading expression, when no help was forthcoming he sighed and admitted, "She's gone home to her family."

"How could you do that?" Harry asked horrified.

Blake suddenly cleared his throat, "It is not up to Sirius to save everyone, not only does Granger have the ability to defend herself, but the Weasleys' could have as well," giving Harry a pointed look. "Do you see me looking to Dumbledore or Black for aid in keeping our home secure?"

"But she's in danger because she was my friend; it will be my fault if anything happens to her!" Harry protested, "Her family cannot defend her either!"

"You forget she's already in danger, whether she was friends with you or not," Blake stated, "She is a Muggle born witch, every single student with Muggle blood in them are in serious danger."

Harry stared at Blake with an accusatory look on his face.

Blake growled low in his throat, he had enough to do without Harry's bleeding heart getting in the way. "Fine, I'll bring the Grangers to Grimmauld Place, does that satisfy you?"

Sirius gulped; a few moments ago he had just been glad that Harry wasn't accusing him of anything, only to tense when Harry started on Slytherin. The wizard was bloody scary; he didn't know how Harry could stand up to him if he was honest. Despite the growl and obvious annoyance, Slytherin didn't seem all that…violent. Sirius said nothing about Grimmauld Place since technically it would be Slytherin's by the end of the day with a little luck, he would take the place he was offered whether it was liveable or not.

"Thank you," Harry said quietly, feeling horrible for laying it all on Blake when it wasn't his fault, he knew the wizard had a lot to do, and was trying to stop terrible things from happening along with everything else he had to do. It was unfair of him to ask, but he didn't want anything to happen to Hermione. Despite the fact she had ignored him since they left Hogwarts until he became a ward
of Blake's and she then began begging him to listen to Dumbledore, it didn't mean he would leave her to die.

"If you want to see the property then we leave now, I can only spare ten minutes," Blake then informed Sirius curtly, still annoyed.

"That's fine," Sirius said warily.

"Do you wish to wait here, Severus?" Blake asked, turning to the wizard who was still watching the scene with hidden amusement. "Or do you have other things that need seeing to?"

"I will wait, if I am not here then I'm sure you'll know why," Severus said easily enough, reclaiming his goblet of wine.

"I will," Blake replied giving him a single nod, standing up he exited the dining room.

"I'll be right back, Harry," Sirius said, giving him a soothing smile, as if he was scared that Blake had somehow traumatised him.

"Alright," Harry nodded, smiling sheepishly, no worse off for the way Blake had spoken to him, he knew Blake would never hurt him, and often got annoyed at him, although really it was happening a lot less these days.

"This Portkey will take us there and back," Blake informed Sirius as he stalked back into the dining room with a small wooden statue in his hand. "Hold on." he added talking to Sirius like he was an idiot that didn't know what to do when he was presented with a Portkey. Sirius had the guts at least to give him a very droll look, but it didn't escape anyone's notice that he quickly pressed his finger and thumb against the wooden statue either eager to get it over with or not wishing to push his luck.

Sirius didn't even hear the phrase for the activation before he and Slytherin were gone without a single sound as the Portkey transported them to the property they were about to see.

"Wow," Sirius said gasping in astonishment, gazing at the manor, it was modern, larger than the townhouse to be sure, but not as gaudy and large as some of the estates he'd seen as a teenager. "It looks amazing," he said dazedly, and he was getting to live here? This place would be his? It meant giving up nearly everything he had saved but he didn't mind. He knew right there and then though that this place was worth more than Blake Slytherin was offering to him even with Grimmauld Place thrown in. The mind boggled how much he was shaving off the price of this place. "Why are you going so far to help me? I mean it's obvious you can't stand me."

Blake stared off into the distance, "I don't hate you per se, it's your actions that have made me quite disgusted with you," he admitted as he began walking. "You are supposed to love your godson and put him first above all else, yet I cannot name a single instance where you've done just that. There was always someone more important, Pettigrew, Dumbledore, the Order the list is quiet frankly endless. Then there's the fact you just head first into situations, I mean from all accounts, you are smart, you just don't seem to care to use those smarts, especially when it counts. You could and can be so much more; you just need people to see that, this insistence on listening to Dumbledore has gotten you into many precarious situations."

"What does that mean?" Sirius asked frowning, not really getting what Blake was trying to tell him.

"You do realize that if you hadn't been one of Dumbledore's favourites at Hogwarts you would have been arrested for attempted murder don't you? Dumbledore letting you off without so much as
a slap on the hand…well it gave you the idea that you were untouchable, that nothing and nobody
could harm you. Even James grew a conscience, grew up and became a man who would do
anything for his wife and son." Blake shrugged his shoulders, "It seems to me that you're trapped in
the past, part of me can understand why, you spent years in Azkaban trapped in your own worst
memories, but if you want to see your godson grow up…become a man you have to think before
you act, don't rely on others all the time and do your best to let the healer give you what you need."

"I know," Sirius said grimly, his face looking ten years older, "I trusted Dumbledore with my life,
and I often wonder if James and Lily realized Dumbledore couldn't be trusted to a certain extent,
they turned him down when he wanted to be their Secret Keeper, blatantly refused, without even
pretending to think about it for a minute. It was weird, it was only a day later that Dumbledore
came to me and suggested I might be too obvious for them…it got to me and I suggested the
switch." and of course, Dumbledore knew about the switch all along, he had been a fool to trust the
old man so much.

"A lot of people have been burned by Dumbledore, you're not the only one," Blake conceded
tiredly.

"Then why are you so hard on the Order? I mean you only just met Harry right? Unless…you knew
him in the Muggle world?" Sirius queried, but even as he asked he knew it wasn't true, it couldn't
be true. Harry was far too ignorant of the magical world and all it entails or was before Blake came
along, there just wasn't a chance that Harry had known him before.

"Honestly? To get them to open their goddamned eyes and fight, this war is going to get bloody;
you remember last time don't you? How many of the Order was killed? In turn how many of HIS
followers did you take down? If my guess is right…I would say that Gideon and Fabian Prewitt
took down the most Death Eaters before they succumbed to their injuries… the Order did nothing
of consequence, other than paint targets on their backs." Blake said bluntly. "They can't keep
listening to Dumbledore spew the peace loving crap he likes so much, this war isn't going to be
ended politely, it's a kill or be killed world out there Black, and their actions against Harry are
inexcusable."

"You blame them all…are they to blame? Every single one of them?" Sirius asked pensively,
remembering the shocked looks half of them wore, thinking back he suspected that they weren't all
to blame but still it didn't ease the anger he felt at them all and himself any.

Blake opened the front door, unsheathing his dagger, he slashed Sirius' palm ignoring the
indignation and exclamation of pain before pressing his hand against the door and muttering in
Latin, Blake could feel the wards crawling over both of them. Once they settled accepting Black
into the wards, only then did Blake remove their hands, absently healing Black before opening the
door to show off the beautiful manor.

"Welcome, this place…it hasn't been named yet," Blake mused, before getting back to their
original topic as he showed Black around the ground floor - he only had ten minutes after all and
refused to be longer. "No, not all of the Order were party to keeping an eye on Privet Drive, just a
few members, they knew and did nothing again Vernon, well Moody did I suppose, he threatened
Vernon at the train station which just wound the disgusting Muggle up further…they just listened
to Dumbledore when he said the blood wards were important…which of course they aren't. Sure it
prevents Death Eaters from getting in but so does Grimmauld Place…there was absolutely no need
for Harry's continued return there…” he said as they made their way through the kitchen.

"Wait what?" Sirius turned to face Blake, his face demanding an explanation for his words, cursing
himself for being distracted by the manor. "What do you mean by the blood wards?"
"Use your brain," Blake said sternly, opening the door to the bedroom, letting him see inside. "Do you not know what happened at HIS rebirth?"

"Just that he came back, Dumbledore didn't go into detail…why?" Sirius asked intently.

"Blood of the enemy forcefully taken you shall revive your foe, why do you think Harry feels responsible for his return? He wasn't just delivered there to be killed you know." Blake shook his head exasperated, how could he be so clueless about everything that happened? "Although it didn't prevent him being cursed with the Cruciatus Curse twice, and undergoing extreme humiliation at the hands of wizards who had kids his own age as they laughed at him."

Sirius cringed, his guilt furthering, how much of a failure was he? By Merlin, as much as he hated to admit this he was glad Blake had taken Harry when he did…as more and more evidence was thrown in his face about how much he'd failed…how they had all failed him.

"Well, there you have it, it's entirely up to you, let us return," Blake said, leaving the bedroom he had shown him swiftly making his exit.

"It still doesn't explain why Harry trusts you," Sirius said running to catch up.

"How long did it take for him to trust you? All of ten minutes in the same room? Surely Harry agreeing to move in with you should have made you realize how bad his life was at that point." Blake pointed out wryly. "Why Harry trusts me is between he and I, I doubt he will tell you even if you asked, Harry's entitled to have some secrets, just know this that I will never harm him, I will do all I can to ensure he survives this war, and let him experience as much of a normal life as he can get at this point, he isn't a weapon to me…not like he was to Dumbledore." closing the front door, they continued to walk back towards the edge of the wards.

"No offence, but you're bloody scary and Harry isn't scared of you…" Sirius admitted, "It must be something quite big for him to trust you like this."

Blake snorted in amusement, stopping abruptly, gazing at Sirius, he was beginning to like the wizard again, and "You're scared of me?"

Sirius flushed a little, "Well, you can be quite terrifying."

"I've not had an easy life," Blake replied honestly, going no further to explain himself.

"No wonder you get on with Snape then…although…you do know he was a Death Eater right? Still attends meetings, spies on Voldemort for Dumbledore…although I'm beginning to doubt that now…" Sirius said bitterly, catching the look on Blake's face he hastened to explain his remark. "Nothing he's done, really, it's just I…I'm doubting everything Dumbledore has told me."

"Good, always be that way, as for Severus…you can trust him with your godsons life, believe me, he would die before hurting him." Blake stated seriously. Gave his life trying to protect him too, something else he hoped to prevent this year. "Take the Portkey,

Once they both had a hold of the small wooden statue, Blake muttered the words, "Sanctuary," and they were gone.

They reappeared in the cottage almost immediately.

Blake blinked at the sight before him, Harry had never willingly played a game of chess, and he merely did it to keep Ron happy…mostly because he wasn't very good at it. Yet here he was, sitting playing a game of chess with Severus, both of them bent over the board studying it intently.
Perhaps he was beginning to enjoy the game itself now that he was actually using that brain of his. Gone ten minutes and they were immersed in a game that could be played for hours.

"I'm going to head to the Grangers while you play your game," Blake stated and Harry didn't even so much as jump, he was getting better at reading the magic in the air, he must have been aware that they'd returned.

"There have been only two moves, one each, it is Black's day today, I will come with you, he can finish the game, and if Mr…Harry is amendable I shall play him another day?" Severus suggested, standing up, not doing it out of the goodness of his heart, he honestly would rather play Harry without Black glaring at him every few seconds for taking 'his godson' away from him.

"Okay," Harry agreed, returning the two pawns to their starting positions, ready to play against Sirius next. He found he much enjoyed playing these days as Blake often explained things to him while they played. He was beginning to be able to get a grip of how someone played within three or four moves and counter them.

Severus merely nodded curtly.

"Do you know where Granger lives?" Sirius asked, "Her address is…" he managed to get out before he was cut off.

"I know." Blake stated, giving a wordless nod of thanks, "Lets get going then," grasping a hold of Severus' shoulder, he Apparated them both out, missing the look of astonishment on Sirius' face that Snape had actually let anyone touch them without either flinching or backing away from their touch as if they were diseased.

"Hmm," Blake huffed a little, gazing critically at the house, "When exactly did Black return Granger to her home?"

"Yesterday, why?" Severus was albeit a little confused, he couldn't see what could be asking the questions.

"Lack of curtains and netting on the windows," Blake said, swiftly moving up the path he began to thump on the door, getting steadily louder, he could hear a dog barking from one of the next door neighbours. He began to grow suspicious over this, he had a funny feeling he knew what she had done.

Suddenly a woman around the age of thirty-five peered around her door, to see what the commotion was. "If you're looking for the Grangers they're not here, they've put their house and practice for sale and left last night, just up and left! The odd thing was when we asked about Hermione they just looked at me as if I was a stranger and got into their car."

"Ah, thank you very much," Blake said giving her a smile, with that he knew he was correct in his assumptions, sighing in exasperation he left the property entirely.

"You suspect something… imperious curse?" Severus asked staring blankly at the house.

"Oh, no, Hermione Granger has Obliviated her parents of all their memories of her and charmed them so they wish to leave…to go to Australia," Blake said angrily. "Stupid bloody girl, always thinking she's better than everyone else…that is what it led to."

"So quickly?" Severus' felt shocked by the girls actions, "She's still under-age," he pointed out a flaw in the whole situation.
"That she is," Blake said shrewdly, "Either the Ministry has been in touch or her property isn't registered, nor has it ever register underage magic...or it's within a radius of a magical family thus gone undetected. I do know that the Ministry of magic has never been near this property...Granger had no idea she was a witch until she actually got her letter."

"If she's on her own she'll go to the Leaky Cauldron most likely," Severus suggested thoughtfully.

"That's a good bet, yes," Blake admitted, sighing in resignation, so much for this being quick as well. Now he was going to have to hunt Granger down, things were beginning to be different, much sooner than he anticipated and he wasn't sure how he felt about that. "Let's get away from prying eyes and get to the Leaky Cauldron." noticing that the neighbours were looking out of the windows, it seemed no matter where you went there was always at least a few busybodies in the streets.

Once they were safely away from anyone noticing them, they Apparated away.

Chapter End Notes

There we go! another chapter for you to enjoy...now since it's done so quickly I'm going to have a looksee and choose another story...I'm thinking Willing it definitely needs done and its so close to its end! So will Granger have obliviated her own parents? Will she be able to find them after the war is over? What do you think of Blake mellowing a bit? and his real reason for being so curt and angry with the Order? Will Sirius ever know the real reason Harry trusts Blake or will Harry, Severus and Blake only be the ones that ever know? Will the scrolls contain information about piecing a soul back together completely again? Will it be able to form? Voldemort's already lost a part of his soul...or will they be able to get it back due to the fact its still on earth just not in a receptacle like still in the chamber? R&R please!
Blake smoothly made his way between the full tables of people sitting at the Leaky Cauldron eating dinner, never once banging into any of them. He did relax once he was passed everyone, and made his way to Tom the innkeeper, annoyance was his primary emotion. He couldn't believe what Granger had gone and done! He'd assumed he had a few years before he had to damn well deal with the stupid things she'd done. Waiting impatiently for Tom to deal with his other customers, he felt Severus join him watching everything with blank eyes.

"Can I help you?" Tom asked, staring at Blake expectantly, ignoring his sour mood, he worked at a pub he'd seen worse.

"Which room is Granger staying in?" Blake demanded, his tone booking no argument.

"I'm sorry?" Tom blurted out taken aback by this wizards blunt and insulting manners. There was just no need to speak to him that way and he didn't appreciate it at all. As he did this, his hand continued to clean down the counter absently, something he was used to doing constantly.

Blake pinched the bridge of his nose, exhaling sharply, "Hermione Granger, she's staying here isn't she?" he asked with forced politeness.

"I'm sorry, but who are you?" Tom asked suspiciously, not about to give out the girls room number.

"Harry Potter is my ward, he's concerned about his friend, she's gone and done something… stupid," Blake informed Tom, giving him enough information so he could get the room number from the wizard. "I'm sure you know Severus here, since he's her teacher, we mean her no harm but we do need to get her to safety."

"Oh," Tom said his mouth forming the perfect 'O' as he stared at him, finally understanding his foul mood, obviously that something 'stupid' was something quite dangerous to cause such anger and concern. "Room 12," he informed the two wizards, curious to know what the girl had done but refraining from asking due to their obvious urgency, and it was obvious since the second they got the room number they turned and made their way swiftly towards the door to get to the rooms.

"I assume she did something like this before?" Severus asked, his voice barely above the smallest whisper.

"Yes, although it was probably for the best, considering how it turned out, but back then she couldn't have known that." Blake said bitterly, stupid, stupid bloody girl, always thinking she knew best.

"Why an Obliviate? There are many other spells capable of doing..." Severus started, but didn't get to finish.

"You already know the answer to that, Severus," Blake sighed resignedly, "She's so sure in her
mind that she knows best, about everything that she cannot conceive being wrong."

"Are you implying that she doesn't realize what she's done is permanent?" Severus asked, slightly aghast.

"Not implying, I'm stating it outright," Blake informed him, giving him a look that said he was tired of it all. Stepping up to the door, Blake knocked three times, loudly. His anger getting the better of him for a few moments causing his magic to flare erratically before he got it back under control.

Hearing movement inside, both of them stepped back automatically, hands going to their wands subtly as they waited. A moment later, the door opened revealing a dishevelled Hermione Granger, who's eyes widened comically upon seeing both of them.

"Gather your things, you're coming with me," Blake snapped, glaring at her just begging her to start anything.

"You can't force me," Hermione said in that I-know-better-than-you tone of voice that was just winding him up further.

"Unless you wish to end up in front of the Wizengamot and quite possibly Azkaban, you will pack your things up immediately and move." Blake informed her coolly, standing straight in her face, intimidating her and not caring that he was.

"What are you talking about?" Hermione protested, and both men did not buy her innocent confusion, they could see a glint of worry in her eyes that couldn't be easily concealed.

"For Merlin's sake!" Severus muttered exasperated, he flicked out his wand and with a single packing spell, had everything that was Hermione Granger's packed neatly back in her trunk, which he promptly summoned and shrunk down to a matchbox size and slid into his robes pocket. "Let's get moving." he had better things to do than deal with Granger, especially during the summer holidays when he definitely didn't want anything to do with students.

Blake just smirked in amusement, it seemed they were more alike than he had anticipated since he had been about to do just that before Severus bet him to the punch. Paying no mind to Hermione, he took a hold of her and Apparated, knowing that Severus would more than likely follow closely behind.

"You have no right to force me here!" Hermione protested indignantly.

"And you had no right to Obliviate your own parents you stupid little fool!" Blake snapped, "Do you even realize that they'll never remember? You've removed fourteen years of their lives as if it was nothing! That spell is permanent! If the Ministry find out you would be sentenced to Azkaban! You fiddled with your parents memories at the age of fifteen! An underage witch performing such unstable mind magic! There are only five people qualified for that kind of work within the Ministry themselves!" he roared at the girl.

Hermione swallowed thickly, tears beginning to brew in her eyes as she finally understood the gravity of her own actions. "But the book..." she whispered, believing Blake when he said that it was permanent.

"As usual you think you know best Miss. Granger," Severus stated sharply, "You'll be lucky if you ever see your parents again, and even if you do succeed in tracking them down, they'll never acknowledge you, let alone remember you." shaking his head in disgust, he'd never had such a
student as foolhardy as Granger before, and he sincerely hoped not to see one again.

Sirius who had been playing and getting his ass kicked at chess had stood up when the others appeared only to watch everything wide eyed. His jaw had dropped when he learned what Hermione had done, that spell wasn't one to be taken lightly. It had been created for one reason and one reason only, commissioned by the ICW to help them in wiping the memories from the Muggles so they couldn't remember seeing magic performed. He would have been awed at the fact she had successfully cast the spell if he wasn't so horrified.

"You want the property?" Blake said completely changing the subject much to everyone's confusion.

"Um, yeah, I thought I made it clear?" Sirius replied, slightly confused, Blake Slytherin didn't let up on his anger easily.

"Then take her and get her out of my sight, there's a smaller house on the property, more of a servants quarters, I had it done up, put her and the Weasley's there. That way you will have your privacy, not having a woman dictating your home and not feeling like a bastard for not taking them in." Blake informed him, glancing at Harry as he spoke. "Go before I say something I will not regret." he added when Sirius didn't move, gritting his teeth his hands balled into fists.

Severus dug into his cloak pocket as Sirius approached Hermione, handing over the shrunk trunk without any emotion on his face. Which was quite unusual, since they always glared at each other, as if they could kill each other with just looking. Sirius took the trunk, and without a word, took a hold of the still sobbing Hermione, glancing apologetically at Harry and Apparated to the place he had only just been introduced to not even half an hour ago.

"She really Obliviated her parents?" Harry asked quietly, not sure what to think.

"Not only that but she forced them to give up their home and their practice and compelled them to go to Australia," Blake sighed, sitting down rubbing his temples. What he needed right now was peace and quiet, brewing potions would be perfect for that.

"She has always been ahead of herself," Severus stated, "But even I couldn't have predicted such a move on her part,"

"I should have realized," Blake grumbled in annoyance, "I may have suspected if I knew she had been sent home, but there is nothing further that can be done. She will need to bear the consequences of her actions for the rest of her life,"

"But the spell can be broken, can't it?" Harry said, remembering Bertha Jorkins and how Voldemort had gotten the information about Crouch from her mind despite the fact she'd been made to forget.

"It can," Blake confirmed, knowing what Harry was referring to. "But there would be nothing left of them when the spell was broken, the Dark Lord completely obliterated Jorkins' mind when he got that information. Severe torture fractured her mind, and his magic unleashed the hidden memories for him to view them. When Crouch used that spell, he caused damage to her, she became forgetful, and was never right after what he did. We have no idea what on earth Hermione has done to them, one thing we do know is that they will never be the same, they'll wonder constantly why they have an empty feeling in their lives, and I pray that is the only side-affect of her spell."

"Oh," Harry murmured, looking a little sick as he digested the news.
"Severus and I are going to make some potions, would you like to join us?" Blake said, standing up, already knowing the answer, but considering he'd seen Harry playing chess today maybe the answer would be different. Harry was already becoming someone else, a new improved version, one he hoped one day would be happy, he didn't really see any happiness for him in the future. He was too damaged, too jaded, too cynical and paranoid to enjoy anything. He was certainly in for a surprise.

"No, it's alright," Harry said, a tinkle entering his green eyes as he observed them, they were quite alike, both of them comfortable around the other, which Harry noticed neither were with other people. Snape wasn't even comfortable near him, he always held himself stiffly, which he did not for Blake. He had a funny feeling that he'd be seeing Snape all summer and when Hogwarts started back up…Blake would follow them. He did wonder if they were attracted to each other, but he had no idea of Blake or Snape's sexual preferences so did not speak up about it - and decided he would continue observing. Not that they two were particularly thinking about that right now. Blake was more affected by what Hermione had done than he was letting on…or more than he could deal with, it's why he planned on shutting himself away. To deal with it.

"Alright," Blake said in agreement, erecting his mental barriers, trying to bury all his memories and emotions. His Hermione had missed her parents severely, had never been able to find them, she often spoke of the bitter regret, but relief that she knew they were safely away from the horror at what was happening in Britain. Not that they had particularly been close before she died, but he'd still mourned her just like he'd mourned Ron and the others they had been part of his life after all. He'd done enough mourning, he was here now, and things would be different. He was determined that the horror that occurred in his time would not happen again.

Blake slid out of the room, making his way towards the dungeons which he hadn't been using much lately, not since he fully recovered and went to get his younger self from the Ministry. Opening the door, he left it open as he immediately flicked his wand getting everything ready, the cauldrons flew onto worktops, jars sprung out of their racks and plopping in a neat row.

"Did you buy the property with the room like this or order it done?" Severus enquired, it was a beautiful lab, even better than his own one in Hogwarts if he was honest.

"I grew very fond of potions later in life, I told them what I wanted and they saw it through, took two days, but that's the beauty of magic isn't it? It takes Muggles weeks if not months to create this," Blake said, his fingers running over the silver marble worktop. On the run he'd imagined settling down, what his home would look like, but it had been just that, a pipe dream…or so he thought. Now he was here, living life, without the constant far and more importantly with a beautiful home he loved and had expertly protected.

"Your hatred for Muggles is showing," Severus commented, as he stepped forward, pouring water from his wand into the cauldron before lighting it up, he knew from the ingredients Blake had in the centre table what potion they'd be brewing first. Since it wasn't one he had done yet, he was content to do it.

"Do I need to conceal it?" Blake enquired amused, staring at Severus with a single eyebrow arched questioningly.

"Considering my…actions during my youth, you know I am not particularly fond of them…albeit not in the same way as you, however, if I had been there when it all happened, I believe I would have hated them aggressively, its always one of our fears that Muggles would find out about us…we grew complacent due to the fact we have spells that could Obliviate them." Severus said dryly, plucking out ingredients and cutting them even as he spoke. "Even I am still coming to terms that
they could find us out, their technology must advance rapidly in the next ten years or so,"

"It does," Blake said in agreement, relaxing completely now as he got into a familiar rhythm.

There was silence for a good while, as they chopped, ground, sliced up ingredients and stirred the potion.

"Will Fudge inform Dumbledore that you are to be the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher?" Severus asked when there was a break in the potion requiring it to sit for half an hour.

"I have no idea," Blake said, crossing his arms, as he waited patiently. "I doubt it though, I mean Dumbledore had no reason to bother him with him not being Minister now, my guess is Dumbledore will try and get the next minister to listen to him, follow his light side propaganda. He will try and server the guardianship agreement between me and Harry but it won't work. He'll be desperate to regain control of Harry, even more so when it becomes apparent that I will be at Hogwarts with Harry thus severely limiting the contact the old fool has with him."

"I have a feeling this year will be either quite entertaining or torturous," Severus chuckled dryly, Dumbledore hated not getting his way, used all and any means necessary to get what he wanted up to including emotional manipulation.

"Both," Blake decided, rubbing his chin ruefully.

A sudden pop startled them.

"Master Blake, you is telling Dobby to come if anything came from Gringotts," Dobby said quickly, explaining why he had come down to the potions lab. He handed over the letter, waiting expectantly for any orders or being told to leave.

"Thank you, Dobby, please go to Gringotts and retrieve the items for me, and bring them straight back to my office but be careful they are delicate items." Blake ordered, Dobby like all House-elves could get around all wards, thus the wards in his office would be absolutely no problem for him.

Dobby blinked, give an enthusiastic nod, realising he was being trusted, with a pop he was gone leaving the two wizards alone.

"Well, here's hoping the scrolls are good news," Blake said quietly.

"You know your hieroglyphics?" Severus questioned after a few seconds of quiet contemplation.

"No, not very well," Blake admitted, "It's why I paid extra for the goblins to translate it, I'm also going to translate it myself to make sure no mistakes have been made." even if it did take him a while. "If its promising it will just be a certain part I'll translate," with a little luck it would prove fruitful.

"Understandable," Severus nodded his agreement. Plucking the lid of the jar, he removed the ingredient and placed it in the mortar and began to grind it down to a fine powder using the pestle. As he did so, he began to wonder if his position was compromised, he hadn't been called anywhere near as often as he expected to this summer. He hadn't been given 'false' information to give to Albus, nor had he been let in on much of the plans he had either. Unfortunately his position was always precarious, and he wasn't even going to go off on what Blake informed him about what happened in his time, things changed, as obvious with Granger and the little things - like the magical world being aware that Voldemort was back, Sirius Black being innocent and Pettigrew being wanted now for the death of those thirteen Muggles and of course betraying Lily and Potter
to the Dark Lord. So much had already been changed, that this was an entire new world, while
some things would still happen, other important factors would not. It was something he suspected
Blake had wished to prevent, so he could know what was coming, Granger's actions had thrown
him slightly off he could see that.

"You do understand that things will inevitably be different, don't you?" Severus told him
cautiously, he wasn't afraid of Blake, but he wasn't familiar enough with the wizard to know how
he'd react to either being questioned or being told something he didn't wish to hear.

"Whether I want it to be or not, it definitely seems to be the case," Blake snorted, his exasperation
still obvious as he ground the ingredient down a little more harshly than was needed. "No, I knew
things would begin to change the second I stepped foot in the Ministry of magic and declared Harry
my ward." resignation coating his voice.

"Regardless of whether you did or not, you ensuring the Ministry of magic acknowledged the Dark
Lord's return…His plans will have changed almost immediately." Severus said thoughtfully. "It's
perhaps why I've not been called often."

"I can't help you there I'm afraid," Blake said bemused, as he added the crushed ingredient into the
cauldron, watching as it turned blue, automatically clasping the stirrer he began to stir the potion
counter-clockwise twenty times, counting carefully, not wishing to look like a fool and destroy the
first potion he had made in Severus' company. When it went purple he felt a rush of satisfaction
thrumming through him, he spelled the fire to go out and removed the stirrer, placing it on the
chopping block which he used to cut the potion ingredients or herbs. "Perfect," he stated smugly.

"It is adequate," Severus informed him staring at the potion.

"It's your process I used," Blake replied, "So I think it's better than adequate,"

"What do you mean my process?" Severus quirked an eyebrow.

"Property of the half-blood Prince," Blake said with a smirk.

Severus paled, "You found my book?" he'd misplaced it a long time ago, and had yet to find it, he'd
been hopeful it was somewhere in Spinner's End, to think it was in Hogwarts? At least he was
operating under the assumption it was, he couldn't see any reason why Harry Potter would have
ever been anywhere near his home. "Where is it?"

"Worried about those nifty spells you cast being used by idiotic school children without realising
exactly what they were doing?" Blake said, with a knowing look.

"Yes," Severus answered, eyes shadowed with worry.

"As you should be, and I was the one idiotic enough to cast the Sectumsempra spell at Draco
Malfoy." Blake informed him, moving to gather enough vials to put the potion in instead of looking
at Severus, the time he had actually cast the spell was enough. "Fortunately for all concerned, you
just happened by and used the counter-curse to save his life otherwise I would have come a
murderer…again," he had killed Quirrell after all but that had been in self defence.

"Again?" Severus echoed, his heart pounding erratically, he had to find that damn book before
anyone stumbled upon it.

"Quirrell," Blake said absently, as he filled the vials with the potion, corking them and putting
them aside.
"That is hardly the same thing," Severus sneered, "Quirrell was an idiot, you merely defended yourself, while Draco's...it would have been my fault." for leaving his damn book lying around.

"It's in the potions cupboard with the other sixth year books," Blake explained. "You should have published your version, it's much easier to brew potions with your suggestions and they are exceedingly more potent."

"Perhaps," Severus murmured quietly, his move mirroring Blake's as he bottled the potion.

"Do you even invent anymore?" Blake queried, he didn't think he'd be surprised by either answer.

Severus blinked at the unexpected question, "No, I haven't done since I was sixteen years old," he admitted.

"Why?" Blake enquired, having a sudden desire to know things about Severus that he didn't already. Flicking his wand, causing the cauldrons, stirrers, and chopping blocks to sail through the air and land neatly in the sink, which abruptly turned on, filling the sink full of bubbles, then a scrubber began to scrub at the potions.

"I didn't see the point," Severus admitted, he had been in a dark place, "I had befriended the other Slytherins and lost Lily, planned on joining the Dark Lord and gaining a Potions Mastery. Then things just went from bad to worse, truthfully I've not felt like doing much of anything other than getting revenge on the Dark Lord."

Blake stared at him, guilt, depression, and disgust at himself had prevented Severus from living. "Lily knew, you know, about you being the one to warn them. During their year on the run, going from safe house to safe house, trying to stay one step ahead of the Death Eaters, it was a lot of reflection time, she wanted you back in her life, she'd forgiven you, now you need to let go off that guilt before it consumes you."

"Impossible." Severus stated sharply, "I made Dumbledore swear never to reveal that information."

"Right," Blake said wryly, "Because Dumbledore does whatever you tell him to doesn't he? Let me ask you this...how do you think I know?" moving around the table, he exited the potions lab, giving Severus time to think as he made his way to his office. Placing his hand on the door, feeling the wards acknowledge him, he left the door open as he sat down on his seat and began to delicately open the parcel.

Once he opened the outer box, he found a pair of white gloves, presumably to be used when handling delicate scrolls, not that he'd know he'd never imagined being able to buy them let alone touch them. Now they belonged to him, he probably should feel guilty playing the market but he didn't, it was expensive running a war - especially one you intend to win. And Blake definitely did intend to win, consequences be damned.

There was a letter from Gringotts in the box, removing it he broke the wax seal and began to read the missive. Apparently, they didn't need to translate it, a spell did it for you, approved by the ICW and verified by five independent companies, as well as Gringotts themselves. Each of the scrolls had been spelled for his perusal, for a fee, of course, bloody Goblins were greedy buggers he thought without much bite. Opening the other box, he slowly extracted the folders, leaving the others in a pile while he placed one in front of himself.

He heard footsteps entering his office, he glanced up and saw that it was just Severus, copying the set of gloves he'd received he handed a pair to Severus giving him a nod, which was returned and just like that they continued on as if nothing had happened. Severus claimed a seat on the other
"We will be using the actual documents, there is a translation spell on them," Blake explained, handing over one of the folders.

"Won't it damage it?" Severus enquired, as he slowly slid scroll out of the folder, there was clear plastic surrounding the scroll preventing any damages, he was going to assume the spell had been placed on the clear sheeting. "Apparently, not" he said mostly to himself. He felt a flicker of excitement thrum through him, as he looked at it. Taking a deep breath, not used to the emotions, he let it linger for a brief moment before he gathered himself and concentrated.

"It's like reading Parselscript," Blake admitted, although he doubted the translation spell would work on Parselscript, the translation spell would only work for known languages, so dead languages would be still just that dead. He could still see the hieroglyphs under the haze of reading the words in English.

"It's definitely difficult to concentrate, I'd imagine too much reading would give you a headache, it's like reading it through the wrong prescription of glasses." Severus admitted thoughtfully, it definitely required a lot of squinting.

"Actually I would say its easier to read this than read with the wrong prescription, and believe me I do have experience in that area," Blake stated, "I went more than ten years wearing the wrong prescription, couldn't even see the back of the classroom, let alone read your writing. It's actually why the first thing I did was correct Harry's eyesight. That and it was hindrance, and in a fight, you don't want someone dislodging your glasses leaving you vulnerable."

Severus made a noise of agreement, not really paying one hundred percent attention to what Blake was saying - too busy reading the scroll. His eyes alight in fascination, the way they worded things was quite unusual and Severus was actually having fun trying to decipher what it was that was intended to be said.

Chapter End Notes

Hmm, there was something wrong with this chapter I just don't know what it is, perhaps because the story is moving so slowly? which it is but all my stories move slowly these days :) at least a few of them are nearly finished :D anyway will they be back at Hogwarts before either of them begin to notice an attraction to the other or will they begin to notice things about each other over time until it builds up to more? This story is a bit like Fixing Past Mistakes, concentrating on someone that isn't 'Harry' or in this case younger Harry...I'll have to try and stop that, especially before Hogwarts starts back up unless...do you actually prefer it this way? R&R plaese
Chapter 23

The Games They Play

The rest of the summer holidays flew by for Harry and everyone else involved with Harry's new guardian. Blake continued to wake him up early apart from on Sundays, they'd train in the mind arts, have breakfast, then two hours of their day was spent training except the day Sirius visited, Harry learning new spells, and spending the time perfecting them, three days out of the week before lunch they would do a mock duel to hone Harry's skills further. After lunch Harry would do his homework then do whatever he pleased for the rest of the day while Blake (often time with Severus) stayed in his office or the library. Later at night Harry and he would play chess and debate, or rather Blake would debate and Harry would protest, inevitably he would be beaten by pure logic, which wasn't quite the way Hermione did it, he got no satisfaction out of it just a desire to teach to make Harry see magic wasn't good or bad, magic itself was pure, it was the intention behind it, and over time had gone on about areas of magic that the Ministry had deemed 'banned' or 'evil' spells and potions that could actually help those in need.

"Good morning," Blake said, as Harry entered the room, already dressed in the clothes they'd bought the first day he'd went to Diagon Alley. He looked a hundred times better with them on instead of the rags the Dursley's had given him. More sophisticated and not to forget he looked as if he belonged in the magical world.

"Morning," Harry murmured, still half a sleep, don't get him wrong this had been the best summer holidays of his life, not only was his life worth living, he hadn't counted down the days until he was at Hogwarts, he was getting to know his godfather! He knew he wouldn't have had that chance without Blake which made those days very precious to him. The only shade in his otherwise perfect holiday was the knowledge he had a piece of Voldemort's rotten soul inside him.

Breakfast was brought through by a beaming Dobby, before he left to do his chores, which were cut in half with Kreacher keeping him company and helping. Now Blake didn't even touch upon the difference to the House-elf it was quite frankly like looking through a portal to an alternative dimension, extraordinary weird and he'd seen a lot of things. Kreacher had changed; in fact it had been at least three weeks since he'd insulted anyone.

"Are we duelling today?" Harry asked as he made his way through his breakfast with gusto.

"No, not today," Blake replied, "In fact you won't be doing much today," he confessed as he spread butter over his piece of toast.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked scooping up a forkful of beans, giving a quick glance at Blake before eating them, he already suspected what was going to happen today, but life with Blake could sometimes be unpredictable so he'd rather have confirmation. Just thinking about it made his stomach churn uncomfortably.

"We will be doing the ritual today," Blake stated, confirming Harry's suspicions. Seeing the queasy look on Harry's face, Blake quirked an eyebrow before speaking again. "You shouldn't feel a thing, don't look so worried." he had searched and better researched when he and Severus had figured out
what ritual to use, finding out all information on it, what they had managed to piece together from different sources was good news. He wasn't about to risk his life, and if anything happened to Harry, Merlin only knows what would happen to him, he suspected he'd just cease to exist.

"You can't know that," Harry pointed out, the 'shouldn't' from Blake told him even he wasn't one hundred percent sure, Blake never lied to him but he was getting better at sensing omissions.

"I don't," Blake conceded, "But it is my best guess," that and he hadn't felt anything when the Horcrux in him died him along with it however temporarily it was.

Harry nodded in understanding, putting his fork down unable to eat another bite as anxiety clawed at him. He wanted it out, most definitely; he was just worried about the unknown. Blake was about to do a ritual on him, to extract the soul piece, it wasn't something easily done.

Blake glanced at the uneaten plate, under normal circumstances he'd tell Harry to eat it all, but he understood his apprehension. He'd just make sure Harry ate more at either lunch or dinner if he was feeling up to it. It just depended on how much magical energy was required of Harry to aid in the removal of the Horcrux. A mental ping alerted him to an incoming visitor just before the living room glowed green briefly, then a black clad figure stepped out of the grate, with a wrapped bundle in his hand.

"Severus," Blake said, letting the wizard know where they were, "Breakfast?" he enquired once he stepped into view giving both him and Harry a nod who had murmured "Professor" in greeting, he just didn't feel comfortable calling his professor by his given name, even if he had been in his home nearly all the time all summer.

"I have already eaten," Severus replied, his voice smooth. "If you don't mind...I'd like to get set up while you finish," he gestured with a nod of his head to Blake's food. He didn't know how long he'd have, so it was best to get the ritual done as quickly as possible. The Dark Lord rarely called before lunch, but it would just be the thing for it to happen mid ritual, things always tended to get screwed up at one point or another.

"I'll be with you momentarily," Blake informed Severus, giving him the go ahead and letting him know he would be through soon enough. "Don't worry about it Harry, it won't change the outcome." Blake advised as he turned to see the look still on Harry's face, from the corner of his eye he observed Severus leaving. He was always aware of his surroundings, and it was something he did not intend to lose just because the war wasn't at its greatest right now.

'Maybe we should wait...' were the words that Harry so desperately wanted to blurt out. Feeling trapped, like he had done that night he'd been Portkey'd to the Graveyard at Little Hangleton. Desperate, afraid, cornered, and it wasn't even Blake making him feel this way, he had agreed to the removal of the Horcrux. His stomach was twisted in a knot, no, he thought to himself stamping down his emotions, he needed this, he wanted this, and he would not let his fear rule him. He never had. All would assume it was his Gryffindor abilities shining through but really it was Slytherin self-preservation that prevented it. Only a fool would show anyone just how scared they were of anything and let it be used against you.

Blake finished off his breakfast, he was nervous himself, anything could go wrong. Sure they had read everything they could about the ritual, including old diary clippings and writing of those who had performed it in the past. Harry's case wasn't as unique as one would think. Magic was as old as the human race, it had been around since the dawn of time, while the magical world thought Voldemort and Herpo the foul were the only known people to create a Horcrux it just wasn't true. That wasn't to say reading the information wasn't sickening, Horcruxes had been deliberately created and placed in relatives, mostly their children, or grandchildren in a bid to have their
Horcrux overtake them giving them a 'new life' but they were found out and the soul shards were removed, placed into receptacles and destroyed. They being roman generals, much like Voldemort they feared death before they accomplished all their goals which were either pathetically childish or just down right rotten. It was greed, selfishness and fear of death that led them on their path.

"Come through when you're ready," Blake told Harry, gripping his shoulder to let him know someone was there, before he went to join Severus in setting up everything for the ritual.

Blake made his way through his cottage, stepping into the unused bedroom, which was bare, Blake didn't see the need to decorate something that wasn't getting used and might not either. It was a good thing though, since they'd have made a mess of it, tearing up carpets and the like. "I see you got the candles," he said, as he picked them up, he rolled his eyes, smirking a little when he noticed they were black go figure. Picking them up, he began to place them around the rune design Severus was drawing out in chalk in the middle of the room.

"I did," Severus commented, straightening out, giving the drawings a once over with a critical eye. They were sufficient, they had memorised the ritual from top to bottom and were confident it would work. "Do you have something for the Horcrux to go into?"

"I do," Blake informed him, "A silver trinket box," metal would make the Horcrux easier to contain in something, it's perhaps why the Dark Lord had mostly used metal items added by the fact he desired them. The diary, Nagini and Harry being the most notable exceptions, the diary had been his first and hastily made with the first thing on hand at that point Tom probably hadn't had anything other than his diary. Nagini had been out of fear and necessity, no doubt worried about dying after living as a spirit for so long. And he (and Harry) had been an accidental Horcrux.

"Kreacher?" Blake called out, as he got the rest of the ritual ready to get it over with.

"What can Kreacher do for Master Slytherin?" Kreacher asked appearing with a pop.

"Bring me the silver trinket box, it's in my bedside drawer," Blake requested, normally he wouldn't ask the House-elves to retrieve things he was capable of himself but they needed to get this over with before Harry got too worked up and worried over the impossible number of outcomes that wouldn't go in their favour. He wasn't alone in his fears admittedly, but the sooner this was over the better.

"How are we going to do this?" Harry asked cautiously from the doorway, watching the two wizards finish up.

"You're better off kneeling or lying down, we can't risk the Horcrux going back into you or worse leaving the cottage," Blake said "If you fall out of the line," Blake demonstrated by rotating his hand in a circular motion around the runes Severus had drawn. "The Horcrux could go into anything, go anywhere, and we wouldn't have a clue," he warned Harry. It was something they could not allow.

Harry's eyes widened a little at the words, glancing at the circle he nodded grimly.

"I do wonder if he will lose his ability to speak to snakes," Severus mused thoughtfully, as Harry stepped into the circle, taking care not to disturb anything. They were doing things differently; the manner in which the Horcrux was being removed was different from Blake's.

"I hope not," Blake said dryly, "Otherwise it was a great waste of time teaching Harry Parselmagic."
"I am right here," Harry grumbled from where he lay on the cold floor, which was uncomfortable but it wasn't going to be forever. He'd been told the basics of what would happen, to not fight his magic as it expelled the piece, since they suspected the Horcrux would fight him. Perhaps even show him images.

"Ready?" Blake said, speaking to both of them.

"We're set," Severus stated calmly.

"Let's get this over with," Harry answered tensely.

With a flick of his wand, the candles were lit, both wizards took up their positions, no book in hand - they had no need for it.

"Anima sunt manifesta teipsum Horcrux," they chanted in sync, their magic began to course through the room, the runes glowing brightly, before the light shot through the air from each rune and into Harry.

Severus and Blake watched the teen arch up, his face screwed up as he fought the Horcrux inside him. Each second that ticked by was tense, both of their hearts beating much too fast. They couldn't do the second part of the chant until they saw some visible sign of the Horcrux in Harry. So far no sign of any soul or magic of any kind, he just continued to writhe without a single sound coming out of his mouth.

'Come on, Harry, come on,' Blake mouthed unconsciously; he had to draw it out.

"NO!" Harry shouted, arching up.

Blake glanced at Severus, both of them beginning to fear that Harry wasn't strong enough to go against it. Had they been expecting too much? He was just a teenager, and even if it was just a soul piece, it still had sixty years on him if it was conscious. The Dark Lord could make even the strongest of wizards break with his cutting tongue. Shit, what if this did all go wrong? What would happen to Harry? What would happen to Blake?

Blake was suddenly struck with an idea and crouched down, not letting himself go into the circle but close enough. "Harry, think on your parents, your friends, your godfather, they love you, fight for them, I know you can do this, you're strong, stronger than even you know."

Severus arched an eyebrow curious to know why he'd gone down that route.

"I have been possessed by the Dark Lord," Blake murmured standing back up, "The first time I successfully managed to fight him off, the Dark Lord cannot stand positive emotions, and it's like poison to him. If the main soul cannot bear it, I am hoping it will have similar results and ensure that the Horcrux doesn't want to be near so much positive emotions."

Severus curled his lip, "Love," he sneered, thinking on Dumbledore explaining that this would win the war…perhaps he hadn't been that far off.

Blake chuckled dryly, "Don't try and proclaim you're above such notions, or feelings, you've experienced it, for only one person at least as far as I know."

Severus just dismissed the statement, having no desire to have a touchy feely conversation, at least of all with Blake who he liked a little more than he should or desired to. Especially if his dreams were anything to go on, and nothing he could do stopped them unless he took some Dreamless Sleeping draught. "Good boy," he said with a smirk.
Blake looked down, noticing the glowing light around his scar. Pride thrummed through him, Harry had done it, thank Merlin for that. Now it was time for them to do their part, another grim nod they began to recite the next part of the ritual.

"Continens, ut tolleret repellere," Severus and Blake chanted, their wands moving with quick rapid movements until their wrists began to hurt, until eventually they pointed their wands towards the silver trinket box pouring their magic into the chant. Considering both their powers it would definitely be enough added with Harry's own magic helping as well.

The soul piece glowed brightly, pulsing as it ejected from Harry, hovering above his head which was now bleeding profusely and began to zoom in Severus' direction, no doubt sensing the Dark Lord's magic through the mark. Unfortunately it was thrust back the runes doing its work in keeping the soul piece contained within the circle. Then the Horcrux tried to make its way over to Blake fighting for itself, futilely, Voldemort's face appeared, screaming in rage, causing the windows to shatter into a million pieces before it slammed into the silver trinket box before the room went utterly silent and the magic was spent.

They remained still for a few minutes, before relief began to pour out of ever pore in their bodies. Blake knelt before Harry who's head was covered in blood, dabbing away the blood near the scar only for more to replace it. He nodded realizing it was only going to continue, he needed to tend to it. "Dobby?" Blake called out worriedly, as soon as the House-elf appeared, "Bring me warm water, antiseptic, a cloth, a healing potion, a blood replenisher and some bandages immediately."

Dobby said nothing, and quickly disappeared.

"You seem surprised," Severus pointed out, his finger touched the box and he could feel the Horcrux within it, they'd definitely succeeded. Although really there hadn't been much doubt, they'd seen the Horcrux go into the box. Picking it up he placed in the box, and used his magic to summon the rest of the candles, which flew and landed neatly in the box as well. Then he removed all evidence of the runes with a cleaning spell, the concrete looked brand new by the time he was done.

"Mine did not bleed," Blake stated grasping the items out of Dobby's hands, the warm cloth began to methodically remove the blood, he had to wring it out in the bowl Dobby had brought a few times, the blood was removed, except the steady ooze from the scar. Swiping the antiseptic wipe across his forehead, Blake then dabbed a few drops of healing potion onto the bloody lightening bolt scar and dressed it, a few layers of bandage to keep it secure. He would need a bath when he woke though; his hair still had blood coated in it.

Standing up, Blake murmured a few spells under his breath, conjuring a stretcher and began to guide Harry who was floating on it still unconscious, through the cottage until he and Blake were in Harry's bedroom.

It was tidy, or rather tidily disorganised, books lay strewn everywhere, posters hanging on the walls and all his stuff had a place of its own. Flicking back the cover he lay Harry down, before flicking his wand once more and cancelling the stretcher causing Harry to sink into the bed. Hopefully he wouldn't remain unconscious too long; he wanted to make sure he was alright. Merlin only knows what he had seen as the Horcrux fought to remain where it was. Sighing softly, he'd managed to get it done before they went to Hogwarts. He was glad for that; it had been what he hoped to do. His fingers absently trailed along the Firebolt Harry had propped up against the wall, Harry had every single item that was precious to him. The map, the pictures of their parents, the Firebolt and the invisibility cloak. Shaking off his thoughts, refusing to dwell on it, they were material items nothing more. They didn't matter if all worked out well.
He left the room, closing the door quietly behind him, letting Harry rest and recover. He found Severus standing outside the unused room, the box in his hand outstretched, already knowing where Blake would put it. The other box had obviously been shrunk down since it was nowhere to be seen. Blake accepted the silver box with a tired smile of thanks before he made his way to his office.

"Well that's another thing I can remove from the long list," Blake sighed after locking the Horcrux up and gratefully sitting down. Summoning a bottle of fire Whiskey, giving Severus a universal gesture, asking him silently if he wanted one. A single nod was his answer, it was night somewhere in the world, so why not?

"Two more to go, I cannot decide which ones the most impossible," Severus said darkly.

"At this point? Nagini," Blake replied sardonically. At least the Dark Lord wasn't worrying for her safety, which gave them an edge to get her at the very least.

"Are you forgetting where you told me the other Horcrux is?" Severus stated, questioning Blake's sanity.

"Mmmhm," Blake shrugged noncommittally, "I will need to retrieve it before I go to Hogwarts."

"And Nagini?" Severus asked him curiously, drinking the contents in the glass when it was handed to him.

"I'd rather try and get into Gringotts twice," Blake said with a snort, "But I do happen to know where the Dark Lord is…if his destination hasn't changed. Malfoy Manor, I may just be able to get her,"

"That is not a good idea, Malfoy manor was picked because of its tight security," Severus stated sharply, "I will do it if I can the next time I'm called. Which if it happens similarly before he was defeated the first time around, he will call me the night before Hogwarts starts back up with a list of demands, I'm usually alone with him but not always. If it doesn't work out…then eleven o'clock the morning after will be your best time to go."

Blake smirked, "They do go to see their son off don't they?" chuckling dryly, filling their glasses back up with a nod, fair enough, it was a sound enough plan, either way he wanted all those Horcruxes as soon as possible.

"They do," Severus confirmed with a smirk of his own. It could all backfire, but as long as the Horcruxes were gathered and destroyed nothing else mattered. He did not want to see the future Blake had endured come to life; they had to do all they could while they had the upper hand. He would do what he could, even if it meant his death, this time he knew what he was dying for, and it certainly wouldn't be bloody Dumbledore.

"Here's to a possible brand new future," Blake said wryly, clinking the tumblers together and knocking the second drink of the day back.

Chapter End Notes

Soon they'll be at Hogwarts and soon we will get to see Dumbledore's reaction! Will he just sit back and wait for the so called 'curse' to get him or will Dumbledore
actually try and sabotage Blake? Hmm i suppose that would make Dumbledore go from being 'manipulative' to 'a grey area' one might say evil...and it's often cliched but i guess...what do you all think? just manipulative Dumbledore or one that is prepared to go to any length to get his weapon back and make Blake pay for disrupting his life and the order he now no longer controls? R&R please
“Do you have everything you’ll need this year?” Blake questioned Harry over breakfast, feeling smug and thoroughly satisfied, he’d gone to Gringotts, and he had been successful in getting the cup. Thanks to the goblin who had taken him down to his vault, a simple Wandless ‘Imperio’ had the goblin doing what he required without a fuss. Once it was all over he got them back to his vault and Obliviated it and continued on with his day. Bellatrix would never know the cup was a fake, she certainly hadn’t known whether the sword of Gryffindor was a fake back then so it wasn’t her expertise. Helga Hufflepuff’s chalice was now amongst the rest of the Horcruxes just waiting for the right moment to strike. He could either destroy them all or he could use a spell to get the soul pieces back together like a jigsaw puzzle. Now all he had to do was get Nagini and he was in for the win.

Shaking off his thoughts, steeling himself, he was not going to get smug about it, especially just in case it all blew up in his face. Narrowing his eyes on Harry, he subtly began to test his mental defences, which were still impressive; the Horcrux had not drained him. He had also tested Harry’s ability to understand Parseltongue; it seemed both of them were still Parseltongue’s despite the two different ways the Horcruxes had been removed from them.

“Yes, everything’s packed.” Harry answered giving Blake a knowing look, he could feel him probing at his mental shields, he wasn’t going to get passed, he hadn’t been able to for a while now. Even when he did get passed it was never for long before he pushed him out. It had taken him a long time to get this far and he was actually proud of himself. The fact that Blake was proud of him just gave him that extra push required to desire it done.

“And you’ve only packed the books that will not be frowned upon?” Blake continued his questioning. He hadn’t given Harry any books that the ministry had deemed unsuitable for anyone to read for his own collection. However, Harry did have access to his library and the books in his office. It seems their debates over chess had truly opened Harry’s eyes to magic despite the prejudice surrounding certain practices of magic.

“Only the books you’ve bought me,” Harry said with a shake of his head, no he hadn’t put any other books in except the ones he hadn’t read yet and of course, his school books for this year.

“Good,” Blake said nodding firmly. He contemplated informing Harry that Hermione wouldn’t take well to his new worth ethic that she would get jealous and worked up over it. Perhaps even accuse him of cheating, but he nixed the idea, he wasn’t going to have Harry working below his best, this was his second chance, he was going to make sure Harry got the grades to do whatever he wished. Due to the war it wasn’t something he had come to be able to regret constantly on the run, but that wasn’t going to happen here. He absolutely refused to allow it, not that Harry really needed to work, when he took over the Potter lordship he would have all the money he could spend in his lifetime.

“I still can’t believe Dumbledore doesn’t know you’re going to be a teacher!” Harry exclaimed unable to keep silent about it.

Blake smirked slowly; he was truly looking forward to the look on the old fools face when he went to Hogwarts. It was truly going to be a sight he would never forget. It was so rare for Dumbledore
to shed his mask and actually show the world what he was truly thinking or feeling. The old fool had probably been looking for him and Harry the entire time, it was foolish, very risky given what he knew, he could have Dumbledore arrested for Merlin’s sake. “Oh, I’m sure he’s done his best to find out,” Blake chuckled in dry amusement. “Even with all his contacts he won’t know,” Dumbledore hadn’t known about Umbridge until Cornelius Fudge had decided to tell him, relishing in the expression on the old fool’s face while he did it no doubt.

“I hope you show me the pensive memory,” Harry said with a little bit of vindication. He had every right to feel it; Dumbledore had known Sirius was innocent. He had let him rot in Azkaban for over a decade. He would never forgive Dumbledore for that, no matter what he said or did. The thought of still revering the wizard made him feel sick, and he would have done if not for Blake, if he hadn’t somehow ended up back in time.

“Perhaps,” Blake said thoughtfully, before returning to his food, wishing to eat it before it got cold. They’d slept in a little more today, since it was the last long lie Harry would have before being at Hogwarts again. Surprisingly he had slept in as well, which wasn’t like him, he normally couldn’t sleep past six or seven o’clock in the morning.

“Are you going to keep up my lessons?” Harry asked thoughtfully scooping up his scrambled egg and consuming it as he waited on an answer.

“Yes, on either Saturday or Sunday afternoon, I’ll leave you to pick.” Blake answered immediately, it was of no consequence to him when Harry chose to make his lessons, except the occasional time when he wasn’t able to attend but he could tell his ward well beforehand.

“I’ll get my timetable before I decide,” Harry murmured around the piece of toast, keeping his mouth mostly closed, he wasn’t Ron thank you very much.

“That will probably be for the best,” Blake agreed, glancing at the time, he wasn’t going to allow Harry to be late for the Hogwarts express, he’d already missed it once. Although he wouldn’t be about to let Harry get on a flying car with him, but the train ride was the most fun part of returning to the school. “Kreacher has folded your school uniform, it’s on the bottom of your bed, remember to put it in your bag.” he added, before flinging over a sack of galleons. “Don’t spend it all on the trolley,” he added sarcastically. Usually it was always three galleons he spent on sweets from the trolley most of it getting shoved down Ron’s throat as quickly as possible.

“Funny,” Harry replied, refraining from rolling his eyes, oddly touched by the fact that someone cared to make sure he had everything he needed for school. It wasn’t something he was used to experiencing; the hastily asked question from Molly Weasley as they got ready to leave for the train didn’t come close to it. He’d always had money for the train ride though, having some left over from buying his school supplies, but he hadn’t had to buy any of that this year, Blake had done it for him, judging by the weight there was at least seven galleons in that pouch it would do him until Christmas.

“Go on, get your things together, we have to leave,” Blake informed him after a few moments silence as they finished their breakfast, although really they probably should have had brunch it was nearly lunch time.

Standing up himself, he moved over to the door and began to clip his sheathed daggers onto his trouser belt. Pressing against his calf and forearm to make sure he had both his wands with him. Giving a nod of satisfaction, he put his winter cloak on, knowing from experience how cold it was at the train station. Plus he didn’t want to alarm the students with his weapons, at least not yet he thought with amusement.
By the time he was done Harry was dragging his trunk towards the door, his bag over his shoulder, Blake Wandlessly shrunk Harry’s trunk who promptly plucked it from the ground and put it in his bag.

“Lunch for Master Harry,” Kreacher said, popping in front of him, holding out a Tupperware box for him.

“Thank you, Kreacher,” Harry said looking amused as he took the plastic container and it joined his trunk in his bag, which like everything else he had was brand new and had a nifty weightless and expanding charm on it so it would never be full or heavy no matter what he put inside.

As soon as Harry took the container Kreacher disappeared.

“So when are you going to Hogwarts? After you drop me off at the train station?” Harry questioned curiously, grabbing his own winter cloak and putting it on, it had a warming charm imbued in it, and it was already making him a little too warm. The cottage was always warm, except for at night.

“An hour or so after that, yes,” Blake answered, grasping a hold of Harry’s shoulder, waiting until he’d settled before he Apparated them both to the magical side of the barrier. “Do your best, and really think about what you’d like to do, your Head of House will be asking you that this year, and if you know what you want to do, then she’ll be able to help you reach your goals. If she doesn’t you come to me, do you hear me?”

“I will,” Harry promised he still had the leaflets for all the different kinds of jobs you could get in the magical world, which was more than he’d always assumed. He’d thought the Ministry or being a shop worker was the only thing really available, but it wasn’t, there were so many careers to choose from. Being a painter and creating magical paintings or portraits, like the ones at Hogwarts. Being a curse breaker, ward constructor or deconstructing wards, builders, interior decorators, and the list was endless. That were only things that required a Mastery or knowledge in, there was also book writers and such as well that didn’t require grades or working your ass off at it for three to four years.

“Well, well, well, you must be Blake Slytherin, you have been the talk of the Ministry for weeks now,” Lucius Malfoy said, tapping his cane on the floor as he loomed over Harry and Blake, no doubt to try and intimidate them.

“Malfoy,” Harry said sharply, green eyes gleaming with hatred.

“I don’t know if I must be,” Blake said sardonically, his face impassive, the urge to gouge out those bloody eyes was strong, but he refrained, he wouldn’t get away with such an action after all. However, there were many spells in the future that did not have any counter-curses that he could use on the filthy wizard if he caused any problems. “Go on before all the seats are taken, I’ll see you soon enough.” completely ignoring Malfoy now, judging by the tightening of his hand on his cane he did not like it.

“I’ll see you later then,” Harry said a delighted grin on his face before he turned and ran towards the closest door on the Hogwarts express. The look on Malfoy’s face, both of them, had just made his entire year. Malfoy Senior pissed off at being ignored and Draco shocked and indignant because his father had been ignored no doubt.

“How dare you mock my father! Just like you mock the Slytherin name which isn’t yours to use!” Draco snapped, unable to keep silent.
“You really should control your son,” Blake told Lucius, his lip curling just slightly. “Speaking out of turn against your betters, Muggle-born’s have more decorum than you yourself are portraying at the moment.”

“You filthy little--” Lucius snarled, until he realised where he was, then forced calm upon himself from sheer willpower alone. “I will find out who you are and expose you for the pretender you are.” Lucius vowed vehemently.

“Oh? Pretender am I?” Blake said amused, his eyes gleaming maliciously. “Hilarious, you spout of nonsense that Muggle-born’s and Half-blood’s are inferior but your family married them, keeping the line pure. Added to the fact you follow in your own words a Mudblood, powerful one, yes, but no less ‘dirty’ as you’d put it tainted with Muggle blood.”

“What?” Draco squeaked out gaping in horror at what he was hearing.

“You didn’t tell your son that you were going to enforce his subjugation to a wizard with a Muggle father?” Blake sneered; Lucius was frozen, stiff as a board, his eyes warily glancing around as if he suspected this to be some sort of set up. “Your Dark Lord isn’t the last heir of the Slytherin line, no matter what he likes to think.” Blake didn’t even twitch when he felt the wards from his home emitting Severus. It had to be, Harry was on the train and only Severus was allowed in, even Black still had to come through the Floo and be accepted in.

“Draco, get on the train,” Lucius stated never removing his gaze from Blake Slytherin.

“I’ll be seeing you soon,” Blake hissed out, in Parseltongue, watching fear bloom in the faces of both the Malfoy’s, chortling in amusement, he Apparated back to the cottage, now that had been awesome. It wasn’t very often he was able to get one over Lucius Malfoy, whether he liked to admit it the wizard was one hell of a dueller, nowhere near as good as Severus, Voldemort or Bellatrix but he was right up there.

Sniggering in amusement, he turned to face Severus, who he could sense in the living room, “Good afternoon,” he said after he gained control of himself.

“And what has you so amused?” Severus said, feeling rather jealous that someone could elicit genuine laughter from the man in front of him. While he could get him to chuckle sometimes he hadn’t been able to make him laugh, it was such an irritating thing to be jealous over that it made him want to slap himself.

“The look on the Malfoy’s faces, they were accusing me of being a pretender, basically thinking I wasn’t a Slytherin and he was going to ‘find out’ who I was and ‘expose me’ I think they’re believers now, I spoke to them in Parseltongue.” Blake said, green eyes glimmering in vicious amusement. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen them so terrified of anyone that wasn’t the Dark Lord.”

Severus felt a smirk of his own spreading across his face, “He won’t want to tell the Dark Lord, but will do so, he’d be too worried that he will find out from someone else that he already knew.” it gave a whole new meaning of kill the messenger, the Dark Lord was going to be furious with this piece of information added to the fact he had now lost his snake.

“Correct,” Blake nodded confirming that this was his belief as well. “I assume you were able to get the snake if you are here?” Severus wouldn’t have wasted his time coming to tell him he had failed; he would have simply mentioned it after he was settled in at Hogwarts.

“I did,” Severus said proud of his own accomplishments.
“I have a terrarium set up for it in the bottom of my trunk; it will go next to the other Horcruxes until it’s time to deal with them.” Blake informed him.

Severus nodded his understanding.

“Follow me,” Blake added, moving out of the living room, unsurprisingly leading Severus to his office, it was where he kept the Horcruxes after all. Or had, since they were now in the hidden ‘Fidelius charmed’ compartment of his trunk. He was taking no risks of anyone being able to see them, or worse getting to them. Severus had cast it so he (Blake) could be the ‘Secret keeper’ he’d been annoyed to realise it wouldn’t work any other way. He couldn’t cast the spell and be the secret keeper.

Opening the trunk he turned it to the last compartment and withdrew the terrarium glass tank he’d created for this purpose. Severus meanwhile withdrew the shrunken unconscious snake; he was just about to set it to its right size when Blake spoke.

“Don’t, leave it that size, it will be perfectly safe and fine, if it wears off the terrarium is large enough for her to be comfortable in.” Blake stated, opening the lid letting Severus put the snake in; they replaced the lid, sealing it closed and unbreakable. She’d get plenty of breathing room of course; she just won’t be able to break it by smashing herself against it. Pressing his wand through one of the holes, he cast a spell that would wake her up. Neither of them waited for her to come around fully, well aware that the Dark Lord could possess her, instead the black cover was thrown over the tank and it was replaced inside the trunk, locking and setting it to rights. “There, that’s as good as it’s going to get.” he had added that piece of information to the will if anything happened to him and Severus so that Harry would know what to do. He took each and every precaution necessary, especially after what Dumbledore did to him. Died without telling him how to destroy the Horcruxes, he’d had to find out himself.

“If you want to see the look on Dumbledore’s face, I suggest you make your way to Hogwarts now, I do believe they’ll be sitting down to lunch getting reacquainted isn’t that so?” Blake mused thoughtfully.

“Indeed,” Severus confirmed Blake’s thoughts.

“Perfect,” Blake purred.

Severus forced himself to stay still, shifting would alert Blake to something amiss and that was the last thing he needed. He didn’t want Blake to withdraw from their friendship because of his budding feelings. He didn’t think for a moment that his feelings would be reciprocated, not after all he’d been through. Instead he forced himself to chuckle, “I will see you there,” he told the wizard, before exiting Blake’s office, walking down the hallway and back into the living room to grasp a handful of the Floo powder before stepping into the Floo and shouting out his destination, returning to his quarters to drop off his luggage, he definitely wasn’t going to take his time, so as soon as it was removed from his pockets and returned to its normal size, he vacated his quarters and made quick work of the familiar halls, he definitely didn’t want to miss this for the world.

Albus hated Blake without knowing who he was, hated him for having ‘Harry’ for disrupting the Order, leaving him without anyone to help him with the Dark Lord when he became ‘active’ he had cursed for hours that there was nobody to watch the prophecy, and had tried to get him (Severus) to help, but he was already spying, he wasn’t going to be caught sniffing anywhere near the Department of Mysteries. Then there was the fact he had ousted him in front of the Order letting them all know he knew about Sirius Black including to Black himself. He was disgraced, he should just consider himself lucky that the general population didn’t know and that Harry (or rather Blake) wasn’t pressing charges.
“Ah, Severus!” Albus called out, smiling in welcome as the reticent wizard stalked into the Great Hall looking preoccupied.

“Albus,” Severus said curtly, making his way to his seat, which he was pleased to know gave him vantage point on absolutely everyone’s reactions. Not that he cared overly much about everyone’s reaction, only Albus’ for it was going to be spectacular.
Chapter 25

"Harry!" Hermione shrieked when she finally opened the compartment to see him sitting there, although the fact he was reading a book was slightly startling but she didn't let it deter her. She dragged in her trunk her mouth running a mile a minute, "Are you alright? Did he do anything to you? Is he you know…a Death Eater?" she whispered the last words levitating her trunk to the compartment. "Where's your trunk?" she added as she looked up realizing there was no other trunk around. She levitated Ron's as well as soon as he came into the compartment.

"I'm fine," Harry said lowering his book for the moment, absently putting the bookmark inside. "No, he hasn't done anything to me and no he's not a Death Eater." feeling rather insulted since it was him she was accusing of having the Dark Mark…strictly speaking anyway. "My trunk is in my bag I won't need it until we get to Hogwarts so there's just no point to drag it everywhere." also slightly hurt that she'd think the only reason someone would take him in is if they had secret plans to hand him over to Voldemort.

"What's he like?" Ron asked he'd heard Fred and George talking about him; he didn't seem all that bad.

Hermione frowned at Harry's brisk reply, she waited impatiently for Harry to answer Ron's question intending on asking Harry why he had never replied to her letters. She knew he had been writing to the twins so it wasn't because that…that wizard had forbidden him.

The grin on Harry's face spoke volumes, "You should have seen Malfoy's face! He tried to get one over Blake but it backfired!" he was grinning so hard that his cheeks hurt.

"Damn! I can't believe I missed that!" Ron groaned, palming his forehead, "I miss all the good stuff!"

"Why didn't you reply to our letters!" Hermione blurted out, finally able to ask her question.

Ron lowered his hand at that, staring at Harry wishing an answer as well.

"Why didn't you write?" Harry fired back and he knew she'd understand without him elaborating further. She hadn't written to him once during the first part of his summer holidays, although he'd already laid into them for that. He couldn't believe she'd ask him that after what they had done earlier.

"We did," Ron pointed out confused, evidently missing the entire point.

"Yes, after you were told to I assume?" Harry said bitterly. "We've already been over this; I'm not getting into it again. You know what it's like to be ignored, maybe next time you'll actually think about what you're doing instead of mindlessly obeying someone just because they told you to." he no longer felt angry over it, he wasn't sure if it had been his own anger or influenced with the Horcrux. He liked to think it was his own anger, he was furious at them...he'd just seen Voldemort brought back, Cedric killed, and didn't have a clue what was happening in the magical world, why
the hell would they listen and not write? Oh, yes Dumbledore said so.

"It was the Headmaster who said not to Harry, we couldn't just go behind his back!" Hermione sighed, exasperated, honestly sometimes it was difficult being friends with Ron and Harry they were so immature. "He had people watching you, he would have found out."

"Yes, he might have, but you know…I would have taken comfort in the fact that my friends cared more about me than listening to a senile old man!" Harry said firmly, so much for not getting into this, it seemed as though Hermione just couldn't let it go.

"He's done a lot wrong but he's still the Headmaster!" Hermione argued.

"So what? That entitles him to respect? There's a saying, respect is earned not freely given." Harry answered calmly; he wasn't going to turn this into a debate. "He's even been kicked off the Wizengamot and the ICW; he's hanging on to the Headmaster job by the skin of his teeth."

Hermione shook her head, crossing her arms, they couldn't lose Dumbledore as Headmaster, and he was the only thing that Voldemort feared. Without him there, she truly feared that she'd end up having to leave when/if Voldemort got control of it. She'd read everything about the last war and it had not been pretty at all. What he'd done to Harry and Sirius was wrong, very wrong, but the fear of what Voldemort could do worried her more.

"You should be glad Blake helped you," Harry added, "If anyone finds out you could end up in Azkaban."

"What…what? For what?" Ron questioned eyes wider than normal having listened to the argument between his best friends.

"You didn't hear?" Harry turned to the red head surprised, "Weren't you staying at Sirius' for the rest of the summer?"

"Yeah, the outhouse, we didn't see Sirius very much," Ron explained, his mum had thrown a fit at his 'distasteful' behaviour at them living in the servants quarters, until his dad had spoken to her privately then she seemed to sober up and seemed quite happy. He wasn't sure what had happened, but he was sure that Fred and George did - they'd had their extendable ears on all the time just about. "What happened?" Hermione had been in a right state when they first came but he hadn't been able to find out why after he'd approached her when the tears stopped. What could Hermione have done to even have Harry suggest she could end up in Azkaban? Hermione was a goody two shoes, she hated breaking Hogwarts rules let alone the rules of their society.

"She Obliviated her parents," Harry said quietly, after glancing at the doorway to make sure nobody was trying to listen in. "Then compelled them to sell and leave their home, their business and go abroad to Australia."

Ron stared at Harry in horrified shock, he might be easy to anger, not the brightest Lumos in a wand…but he wasn't stupid. "Bloody hell!" he muttered, unable to articulate anything else, he was at a loss for words.

Harry ignored Hermione glaring at him indignantly, truly worried that someone would find out what she'd done. She'd done some reading after Blake Slytherin and Professor Snape had yelled at her and realized to her horror that they were right. There was no way to undo the spell she'd used to make her parents forget…she'd only wanted to protect them and with her there she was painting a target on their back. Ever since Voldemort came back she'd been thinking about it, she couldn't let anything happen to them just because she was the first witch in the family.
"What were you thinking?" Ron said gaping still.

Hermione looked away from both of them, scowling at their judgemental ways, it was alright for them, Ron had a family that could protect themselves and Harry’s family was safe under blood wards. They couldn't understand just how desperate she was to make sure her parents were safe. The only regret she felt in all this was that she couldn't find her parents when the war was over and remove the charm, them being safe was most important. She didn't regret her actions. She was confident she could find a way to remove the charm, she was the brightest witch in her year, and she could do anything when she put her mind to it. Everyone told her as much, and they were adults so they knew best.

Silence reigned in the compartment, Hermione being stubbornly silent, Harry went back to his book seen that the conversation was over and Ron felt at loss, things were so different…his friends were so different. Harry was reading a book! And Hermione had used magic outside of school it was almost like Harry and Hermione's roles had been reversed…only Harry hadn't done something illegal.

It remained silent until they were interrupted by the trolley lady coming with the sweets, and even afterward.

To say it was the most awkward journey to Hogwarts ever, would be putting it down as an understatement.

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Blake landed with a pop outside of Hogwarts, staring at the majestic building that had once been a sanctuary nay a home to him for six years. It was the longest place he had ever called home in his life. The cottage he had was now the second longest place he'd stayed in, which actually belonged to him not some abandoned building seeking somewhere to get a few hours rest before going on the move again running from well…everyone.

Shaking off his thoughts, he decided against getting the coach, he liked to keep himself as active as possible; he refused to get lazy and comfortable. After being constantly on the run, barely having time to think, well it could be stifling to be sitting doing nothing, it was why he'd wanted to become the DADA teacher.

Thoroughly looking forward to the look on the old fools face, Blake began to stalk swiftly towards the school, relishing in the feeling of being welcomed. The wards knew who he was even if the Headmaster didn't - and never would - especially if he had any say in it and he did. The only others who knew had impeccable mental shields. Short of their mind being raided repeatedly, nobody would know, although the spell on Severus would prevent anyone finding out but Harry wasn't under the same restrictions.

It took all of three minutes for Blake to reach the steps and begin to jog up them, it was probably a personal best, usually it took somewhere between seven and nine minutes to reach the doors of Hogwarts, yes he'd counted, it was just under a minute for the coaches as well.

Up another round of stairs, Blake turned with the banister and found that the Great Hall doors were closed; he was barely able to discern any of the voices he could hear that was carrying over the empty Great Hall. Suppressing his amusement, he forced his face into a blank mask, he flicked out his wand and spelled the doors to open, and if they opened a bit too quickly and slammed against the wall…well it was purely accidental.

Dumbledore jumped to his feet, staring at the wizard who had just so rudely slammed open the
doors to his school. His magic flared in anger when he realized who it was, how dare he come to Hogwarts? He had destroyed everything, taken which did not belong to him and completely obliterated his reputation. "What are you doing here?" Dumbledore demanded, and he did not sound anywhere near his usual self, in his anger he failed to see the reactions of the other teachers to his slip in composure magical and otherwise.

"Well that's a disappointing welcome," Blake drawled, as he strode forward, irritating Dumbledore more.

"You are not welcome here," Dumbledore retorted, visibly trying to calm himself down.

"Ah, that is where you are wrong," Blake said, his lips twitching, and with relish he revealed exactly why, "I am the new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor after all, thanks to the Minister of Magic."

Dumbledore froze, caught between being extremely pissed off and thrilled. In a year he would have full control of Harry again, none of the Defence Against the Dark Arts teachers lasted more than a year. All he would need to do was bid his time, slowly but surely a twinkle began to play in his eyes again as he relaxed content in this new plan.

Blake smirked at Dumbledore knowingly, he was far from stupid, and he knew what the old man was thinking. Giving him another look up and down before blatantly dismissing the wizard as if he was absolutely nothing. Blake turned to Minerva McGonagall and held out his hand, "You must be Minerva McGonagall, I've heard a great deal about you," when she gave him his hand, Blake cheekily kissed it giving her a charming smile.

"Have you now?" Minerva said assessing the wizard in front of him, her cheeks slightly pink.

"Of course, Harry speaks about Hogwarts with reverence, considering it was his only home for four years I'm not surprised." Blake said, seeing she was confused, he was surprised since he knew she was an Order member. "I am Harry's magical and non-magical guardian," she might not be the best Head of House, but she was one hell of a witch and did protect the students fiercely until of course, she couldn't.

"I see," Minerva replied, looking quite satisfied, she'd never approved of Dumbledore leaving Harry with those Muggles. They were the strangest creatures on the planet. Other than being on the skinny side, Harry seemed well adjusted, not demanding and hitting people when he didn't get what he wanted. His grades could be better, he didn't push himself, but he was far from being the lowest in his classes. Harry never came to her with any concerns; so of course, she had no idea of the life Harry truly had.

"Ah, quite ignorant of me, I'm Blake Slytherin, it's a pleasure," Blake said, speaking loud enough for everyone to hear, he nodded in both directions politely in greeting to the other professors.

"Slytherin?" Filius gazed up at Blake, "Any relation to Salazar Slytherin?"

"Yes, I'm not from the direct branch, the direct branch names go from Slytherin, Peverell, Gaunt and of course Riddle, my family seems to have been in England at one point but most people I found are from America, attending Ilvermorny, in fact my ancestors started the school," Blake informed him, lying through his teeth, he was from the direct branch, but he couldn't tell him that with Dumbledore sitting there - the old fool was more than aware that there were only two people left from the Slytherin line in Britain at any rate both Harry and Voldemort.

"Quite impressive professors, Harry has teaching him," Blake stated as he sat down, the entire hall
listening to him, hanging off his every word. "Between champion duellers, youngest Potions Masters, published authors in academic journals, it's that and Harry's desire to come back, that has heralded his return to Hogwarts this year."

Dumbledore's hands tightened on the arms of his chair at that pronouncement sending a shiver of dread down his spine. The thought of Harry being pulled from Hogwarts hadn't even crossed his mind once. If such a thing occurred, he would lose all and any control to be gained from Harry. He was the most important factor in the war, him being off in another country...perhaps never to return...they would lose. He couldn't believe Cornelius had signed him over to the DADA teacher; he'd expected interference from the Ministry not this.

"You would have removed him?" Minerva gasped in shock, "The Potters have been taught in this school since its inception."

"Do you begrudge my desire to see my ward safe?" Blake questioned in surprise, making himself at home helping himself (which made Dumbledore bristle in annoyance) to small servings of the food on proud display.

Minerva pursed her lips, "He has gotten into some unfortunate situations," she agreed reluctantly.

"Unfortunate situations?" Blake chuckled in dark amusement, swallowing his food before speaking. "Teachers trying to kill him, Voldemort, sixty foot basilisks, Dementors, Headmaster's enforcing the idea of the use of a Time-turner to save a Hippogriff, being illegally entered into the Tri-Wizard tournament which Harry could have been pulled out of by his magical guardian if anyone had read the rule book, then of course it was Dragons, underwater creatures and a damn maze only to be taken to Voldemort...yes unfortunate situations indeed."

Dumbledore felt the urge to sink into his seat at the looks of shock and horror he was receiving from the rest of the faculty. Damn Blake Slytherin to hell, the end of the year couldn't come soon enough; he was going to enjoy seeing what the curse did to him.

"Time-Turner?" Minerva questioned, her eyes narrowed, her lips disappearing in disapproval.

Blake made a noncommittal noise giving a single nod in confirmation, "Yes, ask either Hermione Granger or my ward." finishing off the food, he stood up, "Would someone show me the direction of my rooms and classroom if you please?" as much as he'd love to discuss everything further, he had no desire to listen to Dumbledore worm his way out of all the accusations he'd made...although the time-turner thing definitely wouldn't be easy to worm his way out of.

"Follow me," Severus stated sharply, as always sounding abrasive, but the teachers were nonetheless surprised, Severus wasn't usually one to endure the Defence teachers, mostly because they were incompetent. Which they didn't think would be the case this year, judging by the two wands and the lethal looking daggers strapped to his body he was a fighter, a dueller but what he was like with the students was anyone's guess.

Blake turned to Severus, his gaze roaming over him critically, as if he had never met him before, then with a nod both wizards rounded the Head table and along the student's tables and out of the doors.

The sight of the pair, quite intimidated the teachers causing a shiver to run up their spines, this year was going to be one hell of a year.

They had no idea.
Lucius had Apparated straight to the Ministry of magic from the train station; to speak to a few people he had by the crosshairs by blackmailing them. Hoping against hope to get some sort of good news for his Lord, to counteract the bad news he was also about to deliver, but much to his panic, fear and worry there was absolutely nothing to be gained, no matter how much he pressed and prodded at them with threats.

So it was with nerve-wracking dread, sweat trickling down the back of his neck and forehead he Apparated back to his home. A manor that should by rights be somewhere safe, secure, but not anymore. Each moment his family was in extreme danger, Narcissa still hadn't forgiven him for it even though she and he both knew they had no choice, the Dark Lord didn't ask for anything he took it. She just didn't understand each moment was terrifying for him as well.

He could only thank Merlin that Hogwarts had started back up so that his son was safely out of the way.

Swallowing thickly, he made his way through the grounds of the manor, the gardens which had been Narcissa's pride and joy was destroyed. Blackened shrubbery that had once had animal designs, horses, and peacocks someone had sent curses at them, and they were now a withered mess. Speaking of peacocks a few of them had been killed gruesomely as well, so he had removed them to a safer location, they were worth a fortune and he didn't want any more of them to mysteriously disappear or be killed with blasting curses.

Chapter End Notes

Well there we go I hope you weren't disappointed with Dumbledore's reaction...that it was everything you were looking for...the reason he wasn't...explosive in his reaction is because Dumbledore didn't get to where he was by being irrational, he's overconfident and lets things happen when it suits him...will Dumbledore try and manipulate Blake or will he focus all his efforts on Harry? I did decide to keep Voldemort in this story didn't I? Hmm what would you think of a sane and rational Tom Riddle as minister? Will he use that name or will we see him become someone else? use the same person harry did to get his history done so there are no holes for anyone to look at? what about Dumbledore? will he end up in St. Mungo's when he claims that Voldemort is the new minister after a very public 'defeat' of Voldemort by Harry or Blake? R&R please
Chapter 26

The Games They Play

Chapter 26

Albus sat gracefully in his seat in the Great Hall, his ears still ringing painfully from the 'scolding' he had received from Minerva, Filius, Severus and Sprout after lunch. They had demanded answers to what Slytherin had accused him off. What irked him the most was the fact they had believed the wizard without even having the courtesy to question him on whether it was true or not. They were his teachers, they had known Slytherin for all of five minutes and they were already turning against him. Harry had been with him an entire summer, what damage was he going to have to clear up when he finally got Slytherin out of the way?

No matter what he said, it hadn't appeased them at all, in fact they were all in half a mind to report it to the Ministry they said, he had after all encouraged thirteen-year-olds to break the law, to go back in time, where they could have caught sight of themselves and gone mad. He'd barely been able to get out of that one intact, but they had left and thankfully not gone to the Ministry of magic - he would have to watch himself closely.

Slytherin was enchanting his employees; Filius and Minerva were listening to his tales with attention he rarely saw them give. Discussing many things over the last hour, dueling, countries abroad, magic, ideas and academic journals they enjoyed reading even Severus joined in! He always loathed the Defence teachers, mostly because they were completely inept, but everyone assumed it was because he wanted the job.

"My apologies, I must meet the first years, excuse me," Minerva said, reluctantly standing, she had been so surprised to see the time already. Normally this part of waiting for the students to come could be tedious, but for once the time had flown in.

"It's perfectly alright," Blake insisted, waving her apology of as inconsequential. "I understand."

Severus arched a curious eyebrow; Blake had been impassive but very passionate, reeling all the teachers in with his knowledge and expertise. What he wanted to know was whether it was genuine or if he was just playing the part. Whatever he was doing, it was certainly infuriating Dumbledore who had sat stiffly in his seat without saying anything as he listened himself. Only relaxing when the students had been due to appear, doing it with such ease showed that he was brilliant at portraying confidence to everyone who looked at him.

Turning back to the front when he heard the Great Hall doors open, Minerva was merely returning with the sorting hat and of course the stool that was used each year. He knew from experience that she would leave right away again, to retrieve the latest batch of first years. He blinked twice upon observing his Slytherin's; they were acting very out of character. Staring at Blake in both curiosity, fear, and condemnation.

"I believe the Slytherins already know about you, care to share?" Severus asked, his voice extremely low so not to attract any attention from those sitting close by them. Not that they were paying attention to them, in fact, they were looking at the new batch of first years who were wandering up towards the Head table making a line between the benches.
Blake chuckled, "I believe Draco has already informed them about my abilities," he explained, "Perhaps even the fact that the Dark Lord has a Muggle father…I do hope not if he has he won't live to see past Christmas if he dares to return home to Malfoy Manor."

Severus nodded grimly at that, it was true; the Dark Lord would punish not only Draco but the entire family if he dared speak about it. He hadn't expected Draco to say anything; he'd assumed it was something else entirely. He already knew about Blake's confrontation with the Malfoy's, he had explained earlier at the cottage.

For the next twenty minutes, they concentrated on the spectacle in front of them, listening to the sorting hat's song, then applauding politely as each student's house was called out by the sorting hat. Blake ignoring the looks he was receiving from all the students, the Gryffindor's and Slytherin mostly due to the Weasleys and Malfoy no doubt. It wouldn't take too long for the rumors to reach the Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs.

"It's going to be a long week," Blake said wryly, watching Dumbledore stand to give the customary introduction.

"Always is," Severus confessed, it was the hardest having to get back into a full schedule of teaching students instead of doing whatever struck your fancy.

"…and I'd like to introduce this year's new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor, Professor Blake Slytherin," nothing in Dumbledore's voice gave away his dissatisfaction.

Blake stood up his lips twitching just slightly, giving a nod to the students who were applauding politely. He didn't need to hear their thoughts to know they were wondering who he would be like, Quirrell, Lockhart, Lupin or Moody. Once the clapping tapered off, Blake reclaimed his seat, surprised to find himself actually looking forward to teaching them. He never thought he would, this had been the means to an end that is all.

Dinner was lovely affair; unfortunately, the food wasn't as good as he remembered it to be as a student. Not that he turned his nose up at it; he just preferred making his own meals to his satisfaction. The noise in the hall was also quite jarring after eating alone for years or with just two people for company as of late.

"What do you think of Hogwarts so far? I'm sure it differs from Ilvermorny," Minerva questioned Blake after her meal was finished, dabbing her mouth with a napkin to wipe away the cream that had become smeared around her mouth.

"Both schools are in fact quite similar," Blake informed her, grateful that he knew a great deal about the school from his readings, he had also met a few people who had attended the school as well. "Ilvermorny was created to be much like Hogwarts but for those living in America. Four houses, different animals, of course, it's quite secluded just as Hogwarts is, although Ilvermorny has no magical community near it like Hogsmeade is for Hogwarts. Which makes Ilvermorny a great deal more secure in terms of protecting the students." he couldn't help but take a dig, but he would be expected to, after all, each school had a desire to be the 'best'.

"You are very passionate about that," Filius spoke up, his tone curious, nobody got that way without a reason.

"Weren't we all raised to believe that the next generation is extremely important in our culture? For without them the magical world as we know it would cease to exist." Blake made it sound like a statement, not a question. "Plagued as we have been with constant war, albeit the war with Grindelwald didn't touch your shores as much as the other magical communities."
Severus' lips twitched, Blake was very good, he didn't even slip up the slightest, 'your shores' not 'our shores'. Respect bloomed to further heights. He wasn't sure if he would have been able to keep it all straight, oh who was he kidding, of course, he would have but Blake looked as though he was doing it with so much ease.

"Very true, very true," Filius conceded to Blake's words.

"Have you taught before?" Minerva queried.

"In a school setting? No, I did do some private tutoring when and where I could find the work," Blake explained, he couldn't very well say he had done so in an official capacity since his cover did not have the essential paperwork. Private tutoring didn't hold the same official standards.

"Word of advice, don't let them hound you with questions, be firm with them." Minerva gave him some sound advice. She didn't expect him to be any other way.

"Oh, I intend to," Blake admitted sardonically, he would teach them to the best of his abilities but he wasn't going to try to play favorites or suddenly have a desire for them to like him.

Minerva pursed her lips, refraining from smiling; she could see why Severus and Blake seemed to get on so well, admittedly it might be too early to tell for sure. But she hadn't seen Severus take to any of the Defence teachers, none of them in the time he'd been a professor here at Hogwarts. They seemed to have similar personalities, she could only hope that Blake was a good man, but she believed that he had made a decision to come to dinner with his arms bared for a reason. That reason for everyone to see that he was not a Death Eater and thus not a threat to the students or anyone within Hogwarts walls.

"Did you have time to create a syllabus for this term?" Filius asked after a few moments of silence.

"I did," Blake informed him placing his arms on the table when the food vanished. Whatever the professor was about to say next was lost when Dumbledore stood up and gave his customary insane goodnight speech. Finishing it off with the usual 'Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!' and of course, the Weasley twins did their traditional funeral march while everyone sang the school song.

As soon as the students left most of the teachers relaxed and became more open. It was really odd to observe, even Irma Pince shed her stoic appearance and became more open and friendly. This was a side he had never seen of his teachers, he'd seen them protective, angry, scared, terrified, dead, but never human. "It must have been extremely odd for you becoming a teacher and observing this as young as you were." Blake informed Severus, who unlike the others hadn't shed his 'masks' as it were. "After only seeing one side of it." admitting that it was odd for him without so many words.

Severus' lips twitched understanding what Blake was referring to. "Odd is definitely one way of putting it," genuinely amused. He had been very bitter when he joined the faculty at Hogwarts, yet exhilarated at the same time. He definitely hadn't thought he would still be at Hogwarts after all this time. Unfortunately, things happen and he sincerely hoped with the upper hand Blake had that he wouldn't be here for any longer than two more years before he could finally leave and do what he loved full time.

"Nightcap?" Blake suggested he definitely needed to unwind. Seeing the quick glance Severus gave to his the side of his head, he continued on, "I wouldn't mind a teacher's perspective on the students, forgive me if I'm being a bit presumptuous."
Dumbledore gave Severus a significant look and a subtle nod as if silently encouraging him to get close to Slytherin. Severus pressed his lips together in irritation, before replying, "Very well," he replied giving a long-suffering sigh as he stood up, just perfect he had no doubt Dumbledore was going to constantly annoy him for information on Blake. As if spying on the Dark Lord wasn't hard enough.

Dumbledore sat back ponderously as the pair left through the teacher's entrance. It didn't take him long at all to leave the Great Hall himself, depressingly enough not one of his professors designed to actually say good evening or good night to him - they were still angry he deduced. Which did hurt slightly, he expected better loyalty to those whom he had ensured were safe and protected at Hogwarts, under his care.

"I feel like I should be apologising," Blake said, passing over half a glass of fire whiskey to the quiet contemplative wizard. He sat down in the one seat chair next to Severus' own, both of them sitting by the fire that had already warmed the room up comfortably for them. "I realize I've made your life indefinitely more difficult than it already was." he had already removed all the portraits in the rooms as well as checked for any eavesdropping devices and found none fortunately. Now he would have been very upset to learn that Dumbledore was invading his privacy in such a manner.

"That you have," Severus agreed, leaning back with a sigh, his masks finally crumbling leaving behind a man who was under immense pressure. One who up until Blake had never revealed any facet of himself to anyone, not really, the only times his masks usually dropped was when he was in his quarters alone. Alone, being the keyword, he had been lonely, it wasn't until he became firm friends with Blake did he realize just how lovely he had been.

"I may have been a bit hasty in my desire to return to Hogwarts, to protect Harry and keep an eye on things. An unpredictable Dumbledore isn't something I've ever had to deal with; hence it helped the decision to come along." Blake mused, sipping on the whiskey, relishing in the burn.

Severus nodded, conceding the point, it was something he would have probably done himself if their roles had been reversed. He also rather belated realised that Blake was apologising for the added pressure he was going to be under by both the Dark Lord and Dumbledore because of whom Blake was. He probably wouldn't come right out and actually apologise, it was hard to believe this man in font of him had ever been anything other than a Slytherin - but he knew he had been Gryffindor to the core since he was currently teaching his younger self. It was enough to give himself a headache. He doubted he would ever get his mind around it, regardless of the length of time he knew.

"Regardless he will probably leave me alone for the time being," Blake said, an amused smirk tugging at his lips before he drank some more. He absently swirled the amber liquid not elaborating further, but he didn't need to. Judging by the seductive chuckle that left Severus' lips he already knew Dumbledore's thoughts just as he did. Wait, what had he just thought? Blake wondered bewildered, had he just thought Severus' chuckle was seductive? He shivered a little that was very dangerous ground he was approaching.

"Indeed," Severus said amused, black eyes twinkling deviously, he had seen Dumbledore's reaction, he'd let his genial masks slip momentarily but it was enough to see had been furious then belatedly ecstatic over the new turn of events. "Senseless old fool, sure the Defence position seems cursed, but without the Dark Lord's influence none of them have died...he's betting on ill gotten statistics."

"I agree," Blake answered. Quirrell had been both the Dark Lord and his fault; if he hadn't been
possessed with the Dark Lord on the back of his head, then he wouldn't have ended up dying exquisitely under the blood protection his mothers sacrifice had ensured. Lockhart was an idiot who should most definitely not been employed at Hogwarts. His...accident had been his own doing; cowardly wizard that he was, not only trying to Obliviate them but stealing a twelve-year-olds broken wand was at the height of stupidity. He certainly deserved to be where he was, especially if all his victims ended up in the hospital with mental problems. Ironically it was Severus' fault what happened to Lupin, as an adult he understood the measures he'd felt the need to take, while as a teenager he had been very, very angry that a friend of his parents had been ripped away before he could learn anything about them. Lupin had almost killed or worse bitten four people that night because he'd forgotten to take his Wolfsbane potion. Crouch could be construed as his fault, however, he hadn't been the one covering his own ass, the fault really was directly on Fudge's shoulders - he'd done more harm than good. He still wasn't sure why Fudge had been so desperate, it wasn't as if Fudge had been Minster when all that shit went down. It would have been really easy to fob off the blame to the previous Minster Bagnold. Unfortunately Fudge just didn't have the smarts, which was good for him.

"I do believe he's just hoping for the best, desperate to get Harry back under his control." Blake added after a few moments of silence.

"Why do I have a feeling you've even prepared for such an event that only might come to pass?" Severus deduced he was just too careful not to have made contingency plans. The thought left him quite cold, which surprised and scared the hell out of him; he was getting way too attached. Usually when that happens the person he was attached to didn't live long. He gulped down half his drink at the thought.

"Because I have," Blake admitted, "All the memories Harry could possibly need are safe within a vault in Gringotts, which I hope doesn't occur, a teenager with such bleak memories, Merlin only knows how he would turn out..." he knew he had turned into a cold, calculating, untrusting wizard, he'd known it before he saw Harry's reaction to him so it hadn't been a shock. It didn't make it any less difficult in the beginning, but they had come to understand one another.

"Indeed," Severus murmured quietly, he could only imagine what his fourteen year old self would have thought of the wizard he was now. Shocked, appalled, in denial over what happens to him, he doubted he would have been able to tolerate how hopeful his younger self was over his future and how naïve he was about those he called 'friends' he should have listened to Lily but that was in the past, it had no bearing on now, it never would.

"Which year do you have for your first class?" Severus queried, changing the subject sensing it had run its course, finishing off his drink.

"I believe it's the second years I have first, then the fifth years," Blake answered, he was very good at remembering things, it had came out of sheer necessity, he hoped that Occlumency would aid Harry in the same thing.

"It could be worse," Severus mused thoughtfully, "Although fifth year is a strenuous year in itself, with the preparations for the exams," seventh year was by far the most difficult, so much to squash into a year to aid them in getting the best NEWT results they possibly could. Especially his class, they didn't just have potions to brew but ingredients, their properties, and recipes to memorize for dozens of potions. It was why he only accepted the best, those that had the aptitude for the subtle arts of Potions making.

Blake made a noise of agreement remembering how difficult his own exams were, but he seriously doubted Harry would have that same difficulty this time around. He had more than prepared Harry
for anything, not as much as he wished, but unfortunately, he hadn't had all the time in the world. To put Harry through more rigorous training would have been detrimental to him and his health. He wasn't used to using magic all year around, the summer holidays he didn't do any magic normally, and it would have drained his core. Added with the new school year, no that would have been bad news.

The comfortable silence lasted over half an hour, neither man felt the need to fill it with idle chitchat, just not being on their own was enough for them. Unfortunately, they couldn't just remain there all night, although it was tempting, they had an early start tomorrow, which wouldn't bother either of them due to the fact they were both early risers regardless.

"I think it's time I went to speak to my new snakes before retiring to bed," Severus said, his tone showing none of his reluctance, standing up, placing the glass to the side. "Goodnight," he added, before quietly departing from Blake's private quarters after receiving a just as quiet "Goodnight, Sev," in turn.

It made something in his soften considerably, he'd never had much in way of a nickname, and only one person had given him one. The other had been self-made, his moniker 'The Half-Blood Prince' as it were.

"I swear they are being deliberately evasive!" Ginny huffed as she sat down on the Gryffindor table, glaring down at the row of second years who she had just tried to interrogate - a great big failure was all it had produced. Nabbing an apple and a packet of crisps to eat during their first break of the day.

"What are you talking about?" Lavender asked, as always eager for a piece of gossip.

"I was just trying to see what Slytherins class is like," Ginny said, her nose wrinkled in distaste, given how he had spoken to her family his class was going to be just awful. She just knew it. She had him after lunch and just wanted to know what she was in for. It was too bad she couldn't just ask the twins for something so she could skip it. It was very tempting to do it, Gryffindor were probably going to be minus in house points by then.

"We have him next," Hermione said, finally coming out from behind her book, looking slightly flustered, she was trying to find someway to remove an Obliviate, but to do that she had to understand the ins and outs of that particular spell, but so far she wasn't having any luck and she was already feeling desperate, it never took her this long to find answers, never.

"You have to let me know how it goes," Ginny told Hermione adamantly.

Hermione grimaced; the thought of sitting through his class was awful. She did believe in respecting professors but she wasn't sure how she could do that with this one. He was horrible, and she quite frankly feared that he would reveal what he knew about her. She knew they weren't kidding when they said she could end up in Azkaban. The thought horrified her. It was perhaps the reason why she was trying to hard to undo what she had done. "Sure," she said, slamming the book closed in petulance, before smoothing over the front as if in silent apology. Sliding it into her bag, the bell was about to go so she grabbed herself a banana and orange juice ready to head up to class. "Ready to go, Ron?" Hermione said gazing at him expectantly, Harry hadn't come with them, in fact she hadn't seen him since their class was let out.

Ron spoke through a full mouth, what he said was indiscernible to all in the Great Hall.
"The bell is about to go," Hermione said, arms on her hips impatiently.

Ron scowled before grumbling, grabbing his own bag he reluctantly followed Hermione unhappily, he couldn't take Hermione's overwhelming presence on his own. Usually he had Harry there to help temper her somewhat, he'd had his family during the summer, and not that she'd been bad actually. Why did Harry have to be in a bad mood with them? He thought despairingly, he was so hungry and hadn't had much of an opportunity to eat half of what he actually wanted to.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry that this story has been sidelined lately I promise I'll update very soon :) so will Blake teach the students like he taught Harry? Give them examples and demonstrate to make their understanding better? Or will Ginny be right and he be intolerable like Severus when it comes to his class demanding no such mistakes? R&R please :D
Chapter 27

Blake entered the Defence classroom a few moments after the bell went, giving everyone the opportunity to get to the classroom on time. They were too busy gossiping to even realize he had entered the classroom. He shook his head in disbelief, unobservant, he thought, but they were just teenagers, he reminded himself. They would learn though, he would do everything he could to prepare them for the life outside these walls. Flicking out his wand he closed the door with a loud bang causing most of the students to jump in fright, green eyes gleaming in amusement, his face however, remained impassive, approval coursing through him as they all quietly took their seats.

"Good morning, students, welcome to your fifth year Defence class, which is an extremely important year, as I am sure you've been told this morning already by whichever teacher you had last. This won't be the last time either, but what you should do is heed that warning seriously. Your OWL exams are extremely important for whichever career you choose, no matter who your parents are…what they do, how much money you have…your OWLS and inevitably your NEWTS will show a great deal of whom you are. Ambitious, lazy, mediocre, is the words people will use with your results in even ten to fifteen years after you've left school." Blake informed them, this part was never told to the students, they just expected them to listen when they told that the exams were 'important' but not telling then the truth about how the world would view them was a mistake he was wishing to correct. "My name is as I am sure you've heard is Professor Slytherin," the first since Salazar Slytherin was teaching here in these halls in fact.

After they had nodded in understanding, still quiet, unsure of how he would be. How much they would get away with. Blake arched his eyebrow at the sight of books on the desks, books he most definitely hadn't assigned, since his employment had been sudden. Plucking one off the desk of Parvati Patil, one look at it had his lips curling in disgust; he hadn't even noticed that Harry had bought a copy of the damn thing. "I do not want to see this book in my classroom, either burn it or send it back in return for your money." it was the book Umbridge would have used. It should not have been published let alone forced upon the students.

"But what about our exams?" Hermione protested immediately. As the others all gleefully put the extremely boring book away in their bags, becoming more excited about the class. More than a few people rolled their eyes at the sound of her voice and Blake found it very difficult not to do the same.

"This book will not help you in your exams, as I am sure you already know seeing as you've already read it," Blake informed her smoothly, no hint of anger in his voice just matter of fact. "You may read it in your own time." he added, ignoring the smirks on a few of the student's faces, not surprised to see them. Hermione wasn't very popular with the student body; in fact most people couldn't stand her. Even Ron couldn't, and Blake knew it was only a matter of time before the red head put his foot in his mouth with the girl without Harry as a buffer. Placing the book back on Patil's desk where she swiftly placed it in her bag with eagerness that he only associated her with some juicy bit of gossip.

Standing at the front of his desk, perching himself on the edge of it, observing the fifteen year olds.
Wondering how to start, but he didn't need to ponder for long before he made his decision. "Can anyone here give me a demonstration of a light spell?" unsurprisingly Granger's hand went flying up, he was very disappointed that nobody else did. Eyeing them all thoughtfully, he could see they were quite eager for the discussion which confused him...if they wanted to partake why didn't they raise their hands?

"Yes, Miss Granger?" Blake said after a few moments of observing them.

"Wingardium Leviosa, the levitating spell," Hermione said smugly.

"That is incorrect," Blake replied, noticing the Slytherins were smirking. "The levitating spell actually falls into the grey area of magic spectrum. Mr. Malfoy, give me an example of a light spell, if you please."

"The patronus charm," Draco replied, surprise lighting up his features, he hadn't expected to be called upon at all, nor any of the Slytherins given how their last interaction had gone.

"Very well done, perfect example," Blake said, "Ten points to Slytherin, the patronus charm cannot be performed by someone who has extensively cast dark magic over a long period of time without using light magic. And no, dark magic does not mean it is illegal or evil." he stated sternly.

"But dark wizards can't cast the patronus spell no matter how many light spells they use!" Hermione protested.

"Why?" Blake asked, staring at her expectantly. "And please do not mention a book." he added exasperated pinching the bridge of his nose causing Hermione's mouth to snap shut in indignation.

"All books are based on the current belief's that one holds, all mentions of the Patronus charm are at least one hundred year old, there has been no new publications in that time to define what people can and cannot do." Blake informed her seriously, "What people publish is what they think, I'm not saying it's wrong, but there are always at least three sides to every scenario."

Getting back into the topic at hand, he couldn't waste the entire class on trying to get Hermione to see that her books were not all she made them out to be. "Now what would you say is the darkest of all magic, something on the opposite end of the Patronus spectrum." This time he blatantly ignored Hermione's hand.

"Mr. Nott?" Blake stated giving him a look.

"Um...the Unforgivables?" Nott murmured, unsurely, he was never called out in class.

"A good guess, but wrong, nevertheless," Blake informed him, "Anyone else want to take a guess?"

A hand raised up, "Yes, Miss Patil,"

"How can there be anything worse than the Unforgivables?" she questioned and respectfully too.

"Does anyone know the original purpose of the Unforgivables?" Blake queried. "Nobody? Nothing? I'm not surprised, that information has been wiped out from public record a long time ago."

Seeing everyone looking confused he elaborated, "The same wizard created all three of the so called 'Unforgivables, he was a Magizoologist, with a penchant for taking in abused creatures. Some he rehabilitated by using the Imperius curse on them to aid them in understanding not all
humans were alike, nine times out of ten it worked. Some of those creatures could not be saved, and so he created a spell that would give them a pain free death."

"The same can't be said for the Cruciatius Curse," a whispered wobbly voice said, and Blake didn't need to look towards the sound to know who it was. Neville Longbottom.

"Unfortunately it can," Blake admitted, "His wife took a blasting curse to the back, she took a lot of nerve damage, and was paralyzed, he created the spell unaware of what it did and refused to perform it again afterwards. His wife however, swore her foot twitched hours afterwards, she could feel again if only temporarily. She refused to give up and told him she would get someone else to do it, but she wanted him, someone she trusted to do it for her. According to the journals it was the hardest thing he'd ever had to do, but he did it and a year later she was walking, bear in mind this was before the advancement of potions. In fact the Unforgivables was used by St. Mungo's for generations before they were deemed illegal by the Ministry of magic."

"Unfortunately not all spells are used for what they were created for in the first place. All spells have the capacity to be misused, give me the name of a light spell that can be used in a fatal way?" Blake suggested, "We will come back to my other question soon."

"Yes, Mr. Thomas?" Blake nodded to him.

"What about…Rictusempra? The tickling charm?" Dean questioned, excited but apprehensive.

"Very good example, ten points to Gryffindor," Blake nodded, "Now that spell used on someone too long a cause death by asphyxiation. Now according to the Ministry this spell is considered a light spell despite its very obvious dangers it could pose to someone who doesn't know what they are doing." hoping to challenge ever preconceived notion they had on magic was. "Including its usage on eleven year old students."

"What about the tripping jinx?" Blaise added, joining in the conversation, rather enjoying himself.

"Another good example, ten potions to Slytherin, Mr. Zabini, a tripping jinx near the stairs, or elevated platform could cause numerous injuries or worse death." Blake explained, "This is also another example of a light spell."

Zabini smirked smug in satisfaction as he sat back in his seat; Defence was now most definitely becoming his favourite subject again.

"Back to my original question, anyone care to guess what the darkest magic in our world is?" Blake asked, "Mr. Potter?" he called upon the teen since he knew.

"Necromancy, black magic, and not the rituals people still like to do at all hallows eve, those are different kinds." Harry answered, he'd already gone through this with Blake, and he was surprised not more people were protesting, he knew he had. Yet they were all thrumming with excitement taking part discussing it and more importantly writing everything down.

"Correct, ten points to Gryffindor," Blake replied, "Of course, the craft of Necromancy has significantly declined since the ICW and the Ministry were created. I would say only two or three books on the craft exist today, not many have the power or the guts to perform them."

"Is that how Inferi are created?" Pancy asked, eager to know more.

"It is," Blake confirmed, "Necromancy is considered black magic as apposed to dark magic," not surprised that even the dark families like the Parkinson's would let their offspring read such dark materials.
Blake stood up and rounded his desk and took a seat, eyeing everyone curiously. "This year most of all your classes will be practical participation." he told them, waiting patiently for the noise and cheering to calm down. "Which means I need to gauge exactly where you are on the scale, considering your past Defence teachers I do not expect my expectations will be met."

"Not all of them were bad!" Dean protested.

"Of course not," Blake said wryly, "Two were just Death Eaters, one was a fraud, and another had to take time off every month."

Dean quietened down, noticing he hadn't actually said anything bad about Professor Lupin. Draco however, had snorted derisively, even though he had paled at the mention of 'Death Eaters'.

"I will be placing you in two groups, an intermediate group and an advanced group," Blake continued, causing everyone to sit up straighter. "So everyone will be handed two quizzes to finish today, do them to your best of your ability since this will be a deciding factor. Bear in mind it isn't just your ability to cast spells that will determine which group you go into…but magic on a whole." flicking his wand, the paperwork in his drawer immediately began to fly over to each students desk, leaving two papers on each desk. "There will be no cheating, if I find anyone is they will no longer be welcome in this class." he warned them.

"Begin," Blake said after a few moments of letting his threat sink in. Ron looked ready to cry, Neville was a bag of nerves, even the Slytherin's were anxious at the suddenness of being put to the test so to speak. Blake never took his eyes off them, keeping an eye out for any sign of cheating. It was a standardized question pop quiz and list of spells they'd done with a line about their purpose, he needed to know what spells they knew, judging by the amount of time it took him to start them on the disarming charm when he was young (same age as he was right now - which just hurt his head), he was going to be extremely busy getting them into shape.

He knew where every single member of Gryffindor would be placed, but the Slytherin's weren't entirely known to him. At least what they were like here and now, the sad reality was, most of this generation of Slytherin's had been pathetic Death Eaters and hadn't lived long out of Hogwarts with Voldemort's expectations, those that had became husks of the person they had been. Lost their humanity, until all that was left was darkness, bitterness. The mind's will to survive continued to amaze him even now; it can turn people into that sort of thing just so they could live. Even those who had remained neutral had been targeted in the end, unless Voldemort had a reason for allowing their continued survival.

Shaking off his dark thoughts, there was no place for them here, and he most certainly didn't want anyone to see it either. The last thing he needed was suspicion of him being raised for all the wrong reason, on his first day of teaching. Unfortunately, he was being observed, but thankfully it was only Harry, who was gazing at him with concerned yet understanding green eyes identical yet so very different from his own. His lips quirked up, as he gave Harry a pointed look, to go back to his work. Each of the 'quizzes' had only ten questions on each piece of parchment, with more than ample space to write anything they possible wanted to add to his elaboration questions.

Nodding in approval when he saw that Harry had indeed gone directly to work again.

"When you finish, set it aside and remain quiet while the others finish." Blake informed them, eyeing Hermione who was already raising her hand. "They should be afforded the same silence." having known her for so long he could take an accurate guess as to her next question. Or rather questions. Glancing at his watch pleasantly surprised to realize that the class only had half an hour left before lunch.
Then like a domino effect, one by one the students put down their quills, until they were all done with the quiz. Some had relaxed others were still worried they hadn't done well enough. As soon as the last student was done, Hermione's hand was up in the air yet again. "Yes, Miss Granger?" he called out, hiding his exasperation.

"How will you decide who gets into the intermediate and advanced groups?" Hermione asked, her voice self assured, she knew she'd get into the advanced group - how could she not?

"I will decide on your understanding of magic, and make no mistake I do not mean your spell casting, I mean about everything," Blake said glancing around the entire room.

"How long will it be before we know?" she insisted.

"You have another class with me on Friday, so I will hand out the results of the quiz then," Blake informed her.

"What will be the difference between the groups? Will you be calling on someone to assist?" Hermione asked. "Or will we all be taught different spells at the same time?" her voice became incredulous at this, it seemed impossible.

"Essentially yes, but those in the advanced group will be offered an extracurricular class so to speak, to keep up with their education so those who are not adept as others will not hold them back." Blake explained, "For example how many of you know how to perform the disarming charm…and has actually cast it successfully."

Every single Slytherin raised their hands, and only two Gryffindors did. Harry learned for the tournament, and Granger helped him, Ron however, hadn't done more than necessary out of sheer pathetic jealousy.

"As I suspected," Blake nodded, "This is why the advanced group will be created, and it is not a bad reflection of some of you for not knowing the spell. Nevertheless it's unfair of those who do already know to be lagged behind, I do believe though, with the right push I may be able to bring out the wizard I know to be in each of you." here Blake's eyes went to Neville, such a powerful wizard lay under that quivering wreck thanks to his despicable grandmother.

Blake let them talk and whisper excitedly to each other for a few moments, they would have all that to talk about during their lunch hour.

"Now, before you leave, I wish to know something more, if you are using a second hand wand that you did not buy for yourself from Ollivander's or whichever wand shop your families use, raise your hand." Blake commanded. He absolutely refused to teach Neville with that damn second hand wand, not when he knew he was capable of so much more.

He blinked in surprise when more than one student raised their hands, Neville Longbottom and Patil.

"Thank you, lower your hands," Blake said, he would need to write to both Neville's grandmother and the Patil patriarch. He was definitely going to try and get them a wand; it wasn't like he could just remove them from school to take them to get new ones that would definitely be frowned upon no matter his good intentions. As long as he had both their guardians' permission and spoke to Minerva about it there was nothing Dumbledore could actually do to prevent what he was doing.

"Yes, Mr. Thomas?" Blake asked, slightly surprised to see any hands up again.

"What about a book? Does this mean we aren't doing any theoretical work?" Dean asked, positively
vibrating with excitement at the prospect of actually doing spells all the time.

"For now," Blake explained as the bell went, "I may decide later, if I do I will procure the books so have no fear. Now I do believe you should all head to lunch," his lips twitched as they stood up, much slower than he ever remembered anyone leaving class, gathering their bags and mingling with their friends already talking about him before they were even out of earshot.

"Can I help you, Mr. Longbottom?" Blake asked as the nervous teen approached his desk instead of leaving through the door.

"Professor…you aren't going to write to my Gram are you?" the teen said, twisting his hands nervously, never once meeting his professors gaze, which he found very intense. "About…about the wand." he elaborated.

Blake's lips twitched; there was the smart boy he knew was hidden behind that bumbling fearful exterior. "I am," he confirmed, ignoring how Neville paled so drastically.

"Please don't, my Gram won't like that," Neville insisted, his eyes going everywhere except to stare at the wizard before him.

"Trust me, Mr. Longbottom, I will ensure that I give her the utmost respect, she will concede to giving you a new wand." Blake said with assurance. "The wand you have in your possession right now is not fit for you; it is hindering your magical education not helping it. Ollivander likes to say 'The wand chooses the wizard' or so I am told, it's a very accurate statement, a new wand will help you, if you trust nothing else…trust in that. Harry certainly believes you are capable of so much more." and he did, as it so happens.

Surprise flittered over Neville's face, flushing red in overwhelming pride and awe, as he finally met those intense green eyes filled with nothing but truth.

"Let an adult do right by you for once, Mr. Longbottom," Blake said, his voice uncommonly soft, changing from the stern voice he'd used throughout his class. This boy was going to be so much better than he could envisage, someone who had his back multiple times, who he trusted impeccably.

"Yes, sir," Neville stuttered unsurely, still glowing after what he'd said previously.

"Good, go ahead and get some lunch," Blake said summoning the quizzes to himself, and placing them in the desk for later perusal. Sighing softly once he was alone, the letters to Longbottom and Patil could wait, he would rather attend lunch as well, he was feeling rather hungry. So without more ado, he moved out of the classroom, locking the door behind him and ambled along the corridor using the tunnel to get to the teachers entrance.

Chapter End Notes

I tried to update something else but unfortunately, this one kept annoying me until I just gave up and began writing it lol so what did you think? Will we see Blake in a variety of classes? Or would you prefer it from Harry's POV or perhaps just more of Severus and Blake discussing life at Hogwarts etc... I honestly can't make up my mind when it comes to that :D R&R please
Chapter 28

"What did you put down for the stunning charm?" Ron asked Hermione as he stuffed his face, his eyes were shadowed with worry, normally he could copy from Harry and Hermione, but the teacher had been watching them the whole entire time! Making it impossible for him to look in their direction, he certainly wasn't going to test his patience or the fact he could throw them out, he had seen Slytherin speaking to his mother in such a horrible fashion that he knew he would do as promised.

"The incantation and what it does," Hermione said superiorly. She had answered every single question, but that wasn't a surprise, she knew she was the brightest witch of her age and top of her classes, well most classes anyway. Harry was the top for Defence, then Malfoy before her. She wasn't sure how since she was best at theory and got the spells really quick.

"Well how did it go?" Ginny demanded plonking herself down next to Hermione, her eyes alight for information. Those stupid second years had said nothing when she demanded her answers. Although if she had looked closer, she would have seen that they were insulted by the fact she assumed their new favourite teacher was any way a bad professor. Her hunger was ignored for the moment as she gazed at Hermione expectantly.

"He is…proficient," Hermione said somewhat reluctantly, she didn't want to like him, still didn't, but he was skilled at commanding a class.

"Proficient!" Thomas scoffed, "He's bleedin' brilliant is what he is!" he was excited to see what class he'd get into, he'd like to attend the extracurricular classes.

Harry grinned; he had already known that Blake was brilliant at teaching. He knew what to say to make things clear for him, but that was to be expected they were the same person just years apart in age. He hadn't been one hundred percent sure how he'd act in class, but he knew Ron, Hermione and Ginny were all worrying for nothing. It was slightly insulting how they were assuming Blake would be bad. He wanted so badly to yell at them for their hurtful words.

"You're joking!" Ginny choked out incredulously, "He's a Slytherin!" she added as if it made everything make sense.

Harry glared at Ginny, he was a Slytherin too! Well sort of, if Blake could be a Slytherin then he could too.

"He didn't attend Hogwarts, did he?" Patil came to his defence, admiration coating her voice. He was so handsome, and his clothes were the latest fashion like Lockhart's was when she was twelve. Although they had different styles, Professor Slytherin wore light battle robes, minus the armour that usually went with it. He also carried himself like an Auror and had many weapons on him, she'd wanted to ask but didn't, not yet, not until she gauged how he'd react. "He's American so it's either Durmstrang or Ilvermorny."

Ginny frowned, everyone was agreeing, how could they not see what he was really like?
"She meant that his name was Slytherin, and that was why he couldn't be trusted," Harry retorted sharply, green eyes gleaming angrily at the female Weasley. "Isn't that right, Ginevra?" using her full name icily.

Everyone in the vicinity stopped speaking, listening or some of them straight out watching in interest. Sure sometimes Ron and Harry fell out, once a really big fall out during their forth year. It had been a tense few months, in the common room and the Dorm room, mostly for Neville, Dean and Seamus. Ron had badmouthed Harry to anyone who was willing to listen; straight up for months, except to his face but Harry had never said anything other than to Ron's face, telling him he was a foul git that day for some reason. Apparently Ginny had gone too far, but if the rumours in the papers were anything to go on, then the professor was Harry's guardian. So many lies were printed that they hadn't put much stock into the rumours…perhaps they should.

Ginny flushed, looking away and began to fill her plate, half embarrassed half angry that Harry would call her by her first name. Only her mother did that when she was angry, nobody else ever called her Ginevra, she didn't like it at all. It appeared as if Harry actually liked his new guardian, she thought, as she began to plate up her lunch, she would just have to swallow her protests and feelings of disgust at him and keep it to herself. Harry would learn sooner or later that Slytherin was bad news, it was inevitable really and she could be there for him. Eventually everyone stopped staring and began to eat their dinner much to her relief; it looked as though she had damage control to do. "Harry?" she said, leaning backwards around Hermione to see him. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean anything by it…it's just…well…the way he spoke to mum," she knew Harry had a soft spot for her mum and it would work to her advantage.

"That's between them," Harry said, still angry with her, although why she was even saying sorry he didn't quite get. The Weasley's were a stubborn lot, for instance they hate Draco because their parents hated Lucius Malfoy, they would never change their opinion on Blake just because of his last name and the fact he had stood up for him that day. They would never know that Blake Slytherin was in fact Harry Potter from the future. Still to see her uncharacteristically apologising was surprising albeit if not suspicious. Now these thoughts he definitely blamed Blake for, cautioning him always to look closer, or under the surface. Not everything was as it seemed.

Ginny sighed before going back to lunch, Harry was like her brothers, staying angry until it had run its course, and he would forgive her sooner or later. Hopefully not too long, she couldn't allow it to fester, with how distant he was becoming with her entire family she would need to make a move soon. She wasn't blind to the interested looks he was receiving from everyone, with his new clothes, new attitude and confidence. She was rather envious herself if she was honest, she'd never had anything new in her life, but she hoped one day to change that. Change the fortune of her entire family. So they didn't have to scrump and save just to get by.

"What school did your guardian attend, Harry?" Patil asked eyes alit with curiosity.

"Durmstrang," Harry explained, it seemed no matter whom he was there was always curiosity involved with him so much so they needed to know everything about him. "He saw Ilvermorny while he did his first apprenticeship," Ilvermorny was quite renowned for its penchant to have dozens of apprentices in their halls every year, for all sorts of Mastery's.

"First?" Dean asked his eyes agog. "Bleedin' hell, how many did he take?"

"A few," Harry said amused by their surprise.

"How cool is that?" Seamus exclaimed.

"He's not the only one with multiple Masteries, look at Headmaster Dumbledore, his credentials are
much more impressive," Hermione insisted.

"He's old ain't he," Dean said flippantly, "Course he's got more, the professor is like in his late thirties if that."

"Early thirties," Harry corrected him, wondering why everyone was so fascinated with him, there hadn't been this much fascination around Quirrell or Lupin, admittedly everyone had been in awe over Lockhart and Moody he supposed. He was looking forward to Blake's classes, they were going to be a lot of fun, but he was sure his training would be even better.

Ginny blocked out all the conversation around her, unobtrusively observing Professor Slytherin, who sat at the head table, talking with Snape, Professor Flitwick and Professor McGonagall. How could everyone be so inquisitive about him? The other teachers seemed to like him well enough, so did the students. Blinking rapidly suddenly, narrowing her eyes further, she could have sworn she just saw a shimmer around Slytherin, a shimmer that was usually associated with a glamour charm. Then she saw it again! He WAS under a glamour charm, he was hiding something. Her lips curled in satisfaction, brown eyes gleaming in triumph, she had him, and he would be the least longest Defence professor in the history of the job at Hogwarts.

The scheming Gryffindor began to play out various scenarios where she got the best deal out of the information. If she hadn't known Blake she would have been tempted to get as much money out of him as possible. Or even coerce him into sleeping with her, he was hot, he was a man and would probably treat her much better than the boys she'd been with. Plus she would have liked to get some while trying to seduce Harry, which would be hard work, he'd never responded in the past… not that she had tried too hard or much, just a stepping stone in the right direction. It was the route she would have contemplated if he didn't scare the crap out of her. He was utterly terrifying, he was so cold and twisted, no she would say the hell away from him, but she was going to get him away from Harry as soon as she could. Away from her and everyone at Hogwarts too.

The warning bell blaring had her swiftly jumping out of her thoughts, blinking in surprise; she'd spent her entire lunch break lost in thought? Hastily grabbing her ratty school bag that had belonged to Bill before her, she quickly left the Great Hall with her classmates, making their way towards the Defence classroom, Ginny rolled her eyes at the giggling of her female classmates and the speculating of her male classmates. She had Defence with the Ravenclaw's she realised upon seeing Luna next to the door looking lost in thought.

"Hey, Luna," Ginny said, she felt sorry for the girl, she was always alone, they had played together when they were kids but she had been weird even then. However, she had a reason for talking to her today, she was curious.

"Hello, Ginny," Luna said with usual absentmindedness.

"I noticed you talking to Harry earlier…what were you talking about?" Ginny enquired, only to jump as the door to the Defence classroom banged open, magic sizzling in the air, powerful magic at that. She'd been sensitive to magic ever since that diary incident, either that or it had just manifested surrounded by so much magic at Hogwarts.

"Come in," the voice of the professor called for them to enter.

Everyone stood stock still as they entered for a moment, before being shoved in further by the other students. The classroom was bare, with only the professor's desk at the front of the classroom. Excitement began to brew within them; this was going to be a practical class…were they going to face a Boggart like the others had?
"Now put up your hand if you've successfully cast a disarming charm," Blake ordered, he was going to make sure they knew how to disarm an opponent. He felt it was quite a vital piece of magic to learn, the first piece of vital magic to learn at that. "Those that just raised their hand please go to the window side of the classroom." half the class wandered over leaving the others feeling like a failure.

"Don't fret, not everyone can access their magic during the summer," Blake soothed over ruffled feathers.

"Nobody does magic over the summer," Ginny protested, quite indignant that Luna was on the other side of the classroom. "They can't! It's against the Ministry's rules,"

"Or growing up," Blake finished giving Ginny a stern look. Of course the pureblood's had access to their magic and even during the summer holidays, they had private tutors, although when they begin being tutored he wasn't one hundred percent on, it might even be after their fifth year. Of course, Ginevra wouldn't know, she didn't have many friends who were pureblood's and those that she did know weren't rich or Noble houses. "By the end of this class I am hoping that all of you can cast the spell."

The students called out their excitement.

Blake cleared his throat, regaining their attention, "I will put you into groups of two, now I will touch each of you on the shoulder, the first two will work together then I'll repeat the process until you all have a partner. I do not want a single protest, in this classroom houses do not matter, Gryffindor or Ravenclaw or Slytherin or Hufflepuff does not matter outsides these halls, you will not get a job based on your house, the house prejudices has gone on too long." with that Blake began tap each of them on the shoulder, and each of them went with their partner without protest.

"Miss Lovegood, you are with me," Blake said, since it was uneven, she gazed at him surprised that he'd even noticed her no doubt.

"Yes, Professor," she replied softly.

"Good." he stated. "Why don't you and I show the class how it's done?" the students parted, standing up against the wall.

Getting into position, Blake bowed to Luna and she did the same back, his wand was held in his hand, waiting.

"Expelliarmus!" Luna cast, with confidence nobody had seen from her before. She caught the professor's wand in her hand before handing it back.

"Very well done, ten points to Ravenclaw, now your intentions and confidence matters with this spell, the more confidence you cast the spell with the stronger the pull against the wand has." Blake explained, accepting his wand back. "Now I want those who can successfully cast the spell to cast it first against their partners so they can get a feel of it."

Blake watched each of them work in turn, giving them all attention, pointers and everything they needed. True to their words they could cast it, some could do with more practice, but that was what he was there for. Nodding absently in approval, "Alright, now I hope you all paid attention to the wand movements, like so," with that Blake slowly began to demonstrate the wand movements, they all began to copy him, "Good, now the others will cast the spell, we'll work starting from you, Miss Weasley," Blake informed her, returning to the front of the classroom.
"No, Miss Weasley, never let your wand tip go so far down, you should always aim it at your opponent, not the floor, the floor isn't what you are trying to disarm." Blake stated.

"Professor, why do you have a glamour charm on?" Ginny asked suddenly, staring intently at him, brown eyes filled with innocence as if she hadn't intended on causing trouble.

"The spell Miss Weasley." Blake prompted, not even paying her need for attention the slightest bit of notice, nor the now curious students. Such a silly girl, she didn't even have a single occlumency shield to protect her mind, she was quite frankly an open book, all the students were projecting their thoughts quite loudly. He hadn't realized just how vindictive she could feel when slighted. She was ambitious though, he'd give her that, and he would have respected it if not for the fact she was going to try and use Harry for his money and influence, not that this was news to him regretfully but compared to everything that happened it was (to him) inconsequential. Harry hadn't truly began to learn Legilimency, when he did, he would find out himself just how disgusting the girl was. He would find out just who his real friends were, that was a good thing.

"Expelliarmus!" Ginny cast the spell, and it worked.

"Very well done, ten points to Gryffindor, Miss Weasley," Blake said, moving on, say what he liked about her personality, she was brilliant at spells. She could really make something of herself if she wasn't determined to marry a rich famous 'Harry Potter', play Quidditch for a few years then live off their fortune after making it seem like it was never for the money with her having a job and all. She wanted to be a Lady and have all the perks that came with it. She could have been so much more than that, if she had just been as inventive as the twins.

Blake continued to lend a hand when it was required, and he was very proud to say that each of the students had perfected the spell by the time the class was over. He put Luna in beside Colin Creevy and Rachel Goldstein, since he couldn't give her the time she deserved, and he wasn't leaving her out, the three actually worked well together. "Well done, everyone, take five points to each of you for your hard work, next class we will focus on the shield charm."

"Professor? We don't have a book that will let us practice, it's just the one that you said we won't learn from, that's what my brother said, is it true?" Creevy called out, he wanted to learn before class, and he wanted to be able to say he already knew how to cast the shield charm.

"It's true I don't want to see the Ministry approved book in my class," Blake confirmed, "Thankfully there is a library in the school that will help you with that particular predicament." he informed the teen kindly, cluing him in on a way. Perhaps he should let the students get a book, but he wasn't sure he was actually going to be following the spells in order as they would normally. Which left him with quite a predicament, he would work it out, all it required was a book for each year, first through seventh, he could offhand think of a few already that would be prefect.

"Yes, Sir!" Colin replied a wide grin on his face, excitement exuding from his very being.

"Good," Blake stated, "Go on, run along before you're all late for your last class!"

The rest of the day was going to be intolerable; Dumbledore was going to hear about his so called 'glamours' before the end of tonight. Well, there was nothing really to find, it was an annoyance rather than a danger to him and his identity.

"Ah, Mr. Slytherin, how was your first day?" Minerva enquired, smiling in genuine amusement as their newest faculty member claimed their seat next to her and of course, Severus was already seated to his right.
"Blake, please," Blake insisted, "It went very well," he was sure she already knew that, no doubt at least one of his classes had already had transfiguration with her at some point today.

"Do you feel the constant Defence teachers they've had has set them back or propelled them forward?" Filius' voice asked as he looked around Minerva's left side.

"Was that sarcasm, Filius?" Blake asked, glancing at Filius curiously, not reacting to the snort of amusement that Severus let out.

Filius chortled, "It wasn't," he admitted amused, only just able to pull his head away from the table before the food appeared up from the kitchen for everyone to enjoy.

"The students I've tutored in the past were much more advanced," Blake admitted, "But they aren't a bad bunch, very enthusiastic about learning, makes me wonder how often they had practical classes."

"How advanced?" Minerva asked, noticing Albus looking rather strained as he listened. She had to refrain from rolling her eyes, honestly the almost blind prejudice Albus had to all things related to Voldemort was unreal. She personally found Blake to be quite charming, funny, but quite closed off and he did things to prove points. He'd made it blatantly obvious he bore no dark mark, coming here and using the Slytherin name could mean he had put his life in danger to help Harry. Albus was just blind to all this, he saw only what he wanted to see.

Dumbledore having to visibly hide his upset at Blake's words, how he was diminishing his schools academic achievements. "I think you'll find some students are more advanced than others." he chided them, finding it difficult to do through gritted teeth. "Harry after all achieved a fully corporeal patronus when he was just thirteen."

"That had nothing to do with the curriculum," Blake pointed out, "Harry wanted to learn it and went to great lengths to achieve it. Enduring great torment in the process, but nothing quite like hearing your mother begging for your life to ensure success." he added, ignoring the flinches and winces of those who heard.

"And please refrain from being so informal with my ward, Headmaster Dumbledore, especially given your past actions," he informed Dumbledore none of his hatred showing. "Now if you'll excuse me I have a meeting with Lady Longbottom."

"Augusta?" Minerva questioned in surprise, what business could they have together? "Has she asked you to tutor her grandson?"

"Not quite, I am going to speak to her about Mr. Longbottom's second-hand wand, I believe it's detrimental to his magical education," Blake explained, remaining seated momentarily. He had been given Lady Longbottom's Floo address so he could Floo over to make it less of a journey. "I haven't heard back from Mrs. Patil."

"I wish you good luck with your endeavors, both of them are extremely old-fashioned families, I will be very surprised if you can convince them to allow it," Minerva said which was very true.

"With the rumors regarding Lady Longbottom, I understand she may be difficult to convince…but I'm afraid I've never heard of the Patil family to give any remark." Blake conceded, in fact, he Patil's didn't really talk about their family often.

"The Patil family here in Britain are part of the Patil family in India, they're quite frankly one of the richest pureblood's in India, perhaps coming fifth or sixth here in Britain, their daughters will be
married on their eighteenth birthday, the heir, Aarav Patil is already married, to one Pari Patil nee Lestrange not the direct line, the only grandchild of Leta Lestrange." Filius commented, "I know Lord Vihaan Patil, the patriarch, very well, he's in the dueling circuit, his granddaughter if given the right training could outdo him, she's very brilliant at dueling and charms, but she is a Ravenclaw."

"I see," Blake murmured quite surprised, he hadn't even realized the twins had a brother, it went to show just how secluded he had been while at Hogwarts. How ignorant he had been too, after all, he had taken Parvati Patil to the Yule ball. Given this new information, it explained why they didn't have partners until he and Ron asked…Ron probably had no idea about the contracts for the girls let alone the fortune…and he hadn't. Everyone else wouldn't have wanted to upset such a powerful family.

"I could contact him myself if you wish? See about setting up a meeting?" Filius suggested, always happy to help out, especially if it affected his Ravenclaw's which would of course.

"Not yet, let's see if I get a response, not everyone is at home during the day to pen out a reply," Blake answered. "Thank you for the offer nonetheless." it would be improper if they didn't at least reply, so he knew he'd get one, but what it would say…well that remained to be seen.

"It's nothing," Filius exclaimed, "Nothing I wouldn't do for any of my Ravenclaws!" he took his duty as Head of House very seriously; he knew Minerva and Severus did as well. Although from observation of the past four years he'd say Severus and himself were more invested in it, Minerva had become lax in her care. Bending the rules to let a first year ride a broomstick just so she could win the House cup again, it was at the height of idiocy. He'd been nearly well enough proven right after that accident of Harry's during his first game.

Blake nodded, "That is good to hear," he said, finally standing, "Excuse me," placing his napkin on the plate, and before he left he met Severus' eye with a nod, he would explain later, although there truly wasn't much left to explain, he had been present during the conversation after all. Realizing how close he was to Severus he blinked once before swiftly making his way out of the room. Harry knew how to get in touch with him if he ever needed him so he didn't need to concern himself with his younger self.

When Blake shot through the Floo Network, he remained standing, stepping swiftly from the grate. Standing before him was an elderly woman, but she was by no means weak or frail despite the fact she used a walking stick. He knew who it was, of course, the large hat and expensive but very showy clothes gave her away. She wore emerald green robes today, with a fur trim around her neck, the green pointy hat was utter overkill but purebloods were big on tradition.

"Lady Longbottom, thank you for allowing me entrance into your home," Blake said bowing in respect, "Especially since it was a last minute occasion."

Augusta watched the wizard closely, approval shone through her eyes as he observed the necessity of tradition. He wasn't some ignorant fool like she'd had to deal with in the past. "My grandson is the last of the Longbottom line, he is very important to me, so of course, when I received your letter I wanted answers," she said in her usual clipped manner. "Follow me," she added, before turning and making her way to the sitting room by the sun room.

Blake smiled as he was lead through all the plants, "Neville?" he questioned despite knowing the answer.

"Yes, he has a fondness for plants," Augusta admitted, her lips pursed, she didn't feel that it was a good career for her grandson.
"As has many before him, without people like Neville potions and remedies wouldn't be as advanced," Blake said keeping his tone respectful. "It takes a certain kind of witch or wizard to have a green thumb, from what my ward has said Neville surpassed as his classmates in Herbology. When and if you choose to get him started in the business of running Longbottom manor let me know, for I would dearly wish to do business with him. I require many herbs and potions, and I know many people in the business as well." he informed her, his gaze still roaming over the plants Neville had all around the place.

"Please take a seat," Augusta insisted, as she sat gracefully on her own, straight-backed and proud. She wasn't sure what to make of his wizard, he was definitely different. She had yet to hear anyone say differently when it came to the uselessness of Herbology, it was a servant work not wizards, especially not the last of the Longbottom line.

"My thanks," Blake said sitting, "One would think you would be relieved that Neville wished to have a…safer career, as you've said he is the last of the Longbottom's." making small talk as Augusta poured the tea.

"Darjeeling tea," she said, wondering if he even knew the differences, "Milk? Sugar?"

"Ah, the champagne of teas," Blake said amused by her surprise, "One lump of sugar please," the floral aroma was already beginning to permeate the air.

They sat in silence drinking at least half their cup of tea before Augusta began speaking. "You were extremely vague in your letter, you merely said it was something detrimental to Neville's education?" she prompted him to speak. If it wasn't for the fact that he was Harry Potter's magical guardian she would have just replied that there was nothing to be concerned about and that would have been the end of it. She had seen Harry many times when picking up Neville from school, and the difference in him over a single summer was astonishing. She hoped that Lord Slytherin could do the same for Neville.

"I may have taken a few liberties when I wrote the letter, but I was nonetheless truthful," Blake admitted, placing the cup and saucer back onto the table. He hadn't said anything about the wand for fear that she would become irrational due to its…sentimental value.

"Care to elaborate?" Augusta stated shrewdly, this was definitely a Slytherin in front of her and not just in name. Which meant she would need to analyze everything he said. She found herself quite looking forward to it, against the dull magnanimity she endured every day.

"His wand," Blake replied, watching her close off, her cup placed on the table as she mentally exuded annoyance.

"Meaning?" she asked her tone curt.

"Forgive me for being so forward, but it isn't his, he should not be using it. Neville is not Frank Longbottom, and comparing the two is very wrong of you." Blake said honestly.

"Get out!" Augusta demanded suddenly, furious with him even if a little bit of her mind acknowledged the fact he was correct.

"I will after I have said my piece," Blake insisted, quickly adding, "Do you know wands attach to a wizard's magical core?" and thanking Merlin when the woman's mouth closed with a snap.

Augusta stared at Blake, trying to gauge the truth in his statement.

"Do you remember that first time when you entered Ollivander's? Touching each wand? How your
magic violently rejected the ones that weren't right? How others sparked but just weren't quite right? Then the last one filled your entire being? Glowed brightly? That was your wand and your core aligning, binding together as one." Blake spoke his voice passionate; staring at Neville's dazed grandmother. "Did the wand you gave Neville even spark? He's been at Hogwarts for four years without a wand that connected to his core, making him practically use magic with only a level higher than a squib! I will tell you this now, at the end of the year you will find a vast improvement in your grandson with a new wand. Without thinking he's a damn squib and that his grandmother is ashamed of him he will become a man, proud, confident but one of the most caring wizards you'll be proud to know."

"You speak like you've seen it happen as if you've known my grandson more than a single day," Augusta observed, the passion in his voice was not aimed at a stranger, but a friend, a good one. There was no mistaken it and she was sure she was right.

"That's absurd," Blake replied immediately, without even a single tell that said he was lying.

"Is it?" she retorted immediately, speculatively. "Nobody has heard of you before, you clearly have a British accent, I detect a subtle hint of Surrey in there somewhere. Nobody can learn to lose their accent where they were raised without a great deal of training…something you did not elect to do unless you're doing it now…but I do not believe you felt the need to do so."

"Perhaps I am," Blake said amused, his lips twitching in amusement, he didn't feel threatened by her - far from it - she was and never had been one of Dumbledore's lackeys. She cared little for politics or the war, but her son had not followed in her footsteps nor had her grandson.

"You may keep your secrets, I have no need for them," Augusta remarked, still not believing him and making it clear to the wizard.

"Get Neville his rightful wand as soon as possible, you will not regret it." Blake added, ending the conversation, "I thank you for the tea and your time Lady Longbottom." standing up, ready to go back to Hogwarts. He had said all he could to convince her, although he was pretty sure she'd be at Hogwarts first thing tomorrow. "Please don't get up, I can see myself out, it was lovely meeting you."

And with that Blake Slytherin was very swift in getting out of Longbottom manor in a timely fashion. Only to be met with a Patronus message from Harry telling him that he had been summoned to Dumbledore's office and asking if he should go.

Flicking out his wand, he replied, his own Patronus answering, "Stay at the bottom of Dumbledore's office, I'll be there momentarily." smart of Dumbledore to use the knowledge he was gone to try and see Harry. Well, he had failed, and as Harry's guardian, it was within his right to any meeting between Harry and Dumbledore since it should pertain school work which obviously it wouldn't.

Chapter End Notes

I tried to show a bit of Harry's POV but I don't think I succeeded very much! Oh well, never mind! There we go, I actually quite enjoyed writing Lady Longbottom this time :D How will Voldemort react to the loss of his snake? when will Blake restore Voldemort's soul? Will he be automatically 'cured' or will I have to have Blake do some other things to get him straight once and for all will he go down the political
route again? Can you think of any good names for Tom Riddle? It's so weird when his name is changed :D Despite the fact that Voldemort would probably prefer it? Hmm, it would need to be a name that would bring amusement to him...someone powerful and influential...oo this is going to be fun! R&R please
Chapter 29

The Games They Play

Chapter 29

Blake wasted no time in making his way towards Dumbledore's office, going by the most direct route that nobody who had only been in the castle for a few days would have known, but quite honestly Blake didn't care for keeping up appearances. An unpredictable Dumbledore was one he wasn't used to dealing with, and who knows what he would try when Harry was concerned. Harry was on the chess board; a Queen right now, to remain safe, untouched, but one day Dumbledore would reduce him to a pawn status when the time came. To be sacrificed for the greater good. That had been the beginning process of the bitterness, the man he was today. Truthfully he hadn't noticed the changes until he'd come back.

Harry had been so naïve and innocent it had been utterly disgusting to watch, to observe, after a few days he began to realize that it was a good thing, Harry would never know the pain and cost of war the way he did. He would have a normal life, something that was just a hazy memory for him, a hope in the darkest of days until the darkness had overwhelmed everything and survival was his only hope. Then he'd realized Harry was utterly horrified about who he'd become.

He'd begun to think it would be extremely difficult, living with Harry, trying to help him, but the conversation they'd had helped matters a great deal. They'd agreed to put up with each others outlook on life, unfortunately, everything he'd had to tell Harry had jaded his outlook on life, just a little it was enough for Harry to realize why Blake was the way he was. The rest of the holiday had cemented the truth and bond they now shared. He would forever consider them different people, which was probably a good thing for his sanity.

"Harry," Blake said turning the corner to see the teen leaning against the wall, a worried look on his face. He wished he hadn't put it there, but he couldn't let Dumbledore draw him in again. Harry had to be aware of the dangers that lurked in every corner, the worst one of all within Hogwarts walls.

"Blake," Harry said relief lightening up his green eyes, he didn't like to admit it but he'd been worried at being called up to the Headmasters office. The betrayals were too numerous to mention, some hurting more than others. Mostly he was so angry with Dumbledore, with what he had been told and learned, especially regarding his godfather. There was also the way Blake had announced Voldemort's return knowing that he could have done the same instead of letting everyone think he was an attention seeking brat - basically a murderer of Cedric Diggory too. He didn't touch on the betrayals Blake had suffered; he still couldn't get his head around that information even two months on.

"We will discuss this later tonight," Blake reassured Harry, seeing the burning questions that the teen longed to ask, but he would never speak of anything here. He didn't trust Dumbledore or the portraits he had everywhere, there was truly no greater way to spy on people who consider portraits insignificant. Leaning over, he whispered into Harry's ear, "As for now, let us surprise the old fool,"

Harry glanced at Blake, was the wizard actually enjoying this? Ruefully shaking his head, he
shrugged his shoulders and stepped upon the moving staircase, Blake stepping right behind him, he didn't think he'd ever understand Blake, Blake enjoyed direct conflict where he would do everything in his power to avoid it.

Harry opened the door to the Headmasters office and stepped in, very much aware of the fact that Blake had not followed him in. Yes, he was enjoying this, choosing the best moment to enter. Honestly, Harry thought, he was...there wasn't a word he knew that described Blake best of all. He was brought out of his distracting thoughts by Dumbledore's voice.

"Harry, my boy!" Dumbledore said beaming at the teenager, hiding the caution he was feeling, he had no idea where Harry's loyalty lay, not anymore. Slytherin had only been in his life for two months, and a lot could be said and done in that time to turn the boy against him, despite his hard work for four years in making sure the teenager revered him, respected him and did everything he expected him to. He rather hoped the loyalty was ingrained enough that he could undo the damage. "Come in, lemon drop?" he asked the yellow sweet already out in offering in Dumbledore's outstretched hand.

Harry slowly walked towards the seats and sat down, "No thank you, Sir," the sir was added reluctantly, and Dumbledore who observed that, caused his twinkle to diminish slightly.

"Was it not just this afternoon I asked you to refrain from being so informal with my ward? Albus?" Blake drawled, piercing dark green eyes meeting the old fools without fear. Leaning against the door jamb looking for all the world as if he was bored.

Dumbledore stared back, nothing giving away his annoyance and anger at Blake's continued interference. "You'll have to forgive an old man, I have known Harry since he was a baby...pardon me, Mr. Potter since he was a baby." throwing a fond look at Harry.

"You met him, there is a distinctive difference," Blake replied, "To know someone, you must truly know them, I'm quite confident that if I asked you a few questions, you wouldn't be able to correctly answer any of them." he added bluntly.

"Is there anything I can do to help you?" Albus said, barely able to conceal his disgruntlement. Trying to get rid of the teacher so he could lay his case at Harry's feet and try to undo some of Slytherin's damage.

"There is not," Blake answered, green eyes gleaming in amusement.

"Then may I ask what are you doing here?" Albus added, giving Blake a stern look, he was getting a little pissed off with the amusement the wizard was getting at his expense. He was Albus Dumbledore, the most powerful wizard in the magical world; he was not to be laughed at like some common Muggle-born jester. "I have business to attend, please see yourself out if there is nothing else." he added deliberately dismissing him as unimportant.

"Yes, business involving my ward," Blake stated coolly, stepping into the room, his arms leaning against the chair Harry sat on. "Not only will I be privy to every word that goes on between you and Harry, but I will be here for them. I warn you now, they had better be regarding his schooling otherwise I will remove him from Hogwarts then take up a case against you in the Ministry, your unnatural attentions to my ward are very unwelcomed, especially giving your predilections."

Dumbledore paled and gaped at the wizard before him, his mouth open unattractively as his wits scattered completely like leaves in the wind. His mind raced at the implications behind that statement, it was impossible he had done everything in his power to destroy any and all documents pertaining to his past. Every single last one. "I beg your pardon?" he rasped out, his rage almost
overwhelming him, gathering himself, "I take offence at your suggestions, I have never once touched a student unprofessionally and I strongly resent your implication that I have!" his voice booming loudly, his magic flaring wildly.

Harry watched the two powerful wizards; they were like the ultimate power both after the same prey, doing all they could to get a rise out of the other. Dumbledore being dismissive of Blake, trying to show that the wizard thought Blake was unworthy of his attention or time. It may seem like Blake was getting one over on the Headmaster, and he was, but it was only because of his future knowledge. The only time he'd seen Dumbledore lose control, and even at that it was only a little, was when his name came out of the goblet of fire. This, this was a full blown unleashing of his magic and it was raising the hair on his arms and neck. It was utterly terrifying and thrilling all at once; he didn't know how Blake could just stand there unbothered by the display. Blake was being a bit of a hypocrite too, he was gay as well; admittedly he wasn't paying any amount of attention to young boys. He had preferences for a dark haired potions master.

"Those are your words," Blake said tersely, perhaps it had been unwise to rile the old fool up, not that he was afraid, far from it, he'd seen Dumbledore all out duel Voldemort - this was nothing. He was more concerned about what he would or could do to Harry, as he'd said an unpredictable Dumbledore was an unknown one. He just had to make it clear to Dumbledore that he was not going to be having 'little chat's' with his ward. "I have much to do before I retire tonight, so please, speak your words,"

Then just like that Dumbledore leaned back, looking as genial as ever, blink and you would think you had imagined the entire thing. Didn't those two have bloody emotions? He had felt anger, he had felt betrayal, and he couldn't just dismiss them the way Dumbledore and Blake did. Or at least the appearance of doing so, although it was much easier with Occlumency training, would he be able to do the same thing they did once he was a Master at it?

Dumbledore however, wasn't as content as he looked, he would not speak to Harry in front of Blake he couldn't. This had not gone according to plan; he had been thrilled when Slytherin had said he was leaving to Longbottom Manor. He'd taken that opportunity to invite Harry up to his office to begin his carefully laid plan of regaining status in the young boy's eyes. He had not expected him back so soon or to know of this meeting. Harry must have told him, there was nothing else for it. Which meant Harry emphatically did not trust him. That was not good. "I would like to ask your permission to give Harry lessons," not the kind Slytherin probably expected, but that was just fine with him.

Blake already had a good idea on what those lessons would be, "Denied, any extra education he desires or needs will come from me, I'm sure as Headmaster, Order leader, Wizengamot chief and your representation of the ICW takes up much of your time." he had regained all status lost in the last two months much to his annoyance.

"Do you not understand how important H…Mr. Potter is?" Dumbledore asked patiently, all the while praying for patience.

"Harry is a fifteen-year-old wizard, who has only known about magic for going on five years now, he's a student, and he will remain only a student, just a child leading an unencumbered life," Blake informed Dumbledore, as he placed his hands on Harry's shoulders, silently giving him strength. "He will be nothing more, the adults around him will protect him." he admonished the Headmaster sternly, telling him how it would be.

Harry felt his heart clenching tightly, that was all he had wanted, he'd thought when he learned of magic and Hogwarts that's exactly what he would have. He had embraced it, finally he would be
free of the Dursley's, freedom in a way he never expected not until he was sixteen and could get a
job and leave the Dursley's behind. He'd soon learned that the wizarding world expected more
from him than the Dursley's ever had. For the first time in his life, someone was defending him,
wanting him to be a normal wizard all the while promising to aid him in his task, if not take it fully
from his shoulders. He had trusted him, how could he not? But to know he was doing his damn
best to shield him from the war, while telling him everything, wanting him to have a normal life
meant more to Harry than he could ever express. To think Dumbledore had known all along that
Sirius was innocent and left him in Azkaban...Harry tightly clenched the arms of the chair, his
anger getting the better of him.

"Even if you asked Harry whether he would agree or not, I think you'll find his answer is the same
as mine, Black means a lot to him," Blake added, guiding Harry up out of his seat, and leading him
from the room. The reason Black meant a lot to him was because it would have gotten him out of
the Dursley's household, again normalcy. In other words, Dumbledore could forget ever believing
that Harry would ever forgive him.

With that they left Dumbledore's office, leaving the man to stew in the words.

Only the portraits were privy to Dumbledore's rage after they left, as he threw a temper tantrum
that would have made most two-year-olds proud, leaving quite a mess in the process. The Black
Headmaster chortled out a full belly laugh from his painted seat, he was beginning to like Blake
Slytherin, and nobody had successfully wound Dumbledore up quite so tightly before.

"Close the door behind you," Blake commented as he twirled around and began casting silencing
spells around the room. Relaxing marginally, Dumbledore had surprised him, offering lessons, had
he upped his plans to reveal to Harry his 'destiny' then show him memories of Tom Riddle's
childhood in a bid to bring them closer with this 'secret' informing Harry not to tell anyone that his
'life' depended on it.

"That was insane," Harry blurted out, "I've never seen anyone stand up to Dumbledore that way,
not even Lucius Malfoy managed to rile him up so much!"

Blake's lips twitched, "It's only a matter of finding which buttons to push, all of which I am privy
to," none of which he wouldn't have if he hadn't been propelled back into the past.

"Did he offer lessons you know...to you?" Harry asked curiously, as he sat down next to the fire
which was crackling merrily, causing shadows to dance around the room.

Blake snorted derisively, "They were not lessons in the manner you are thinking, Harry, remember
he needs the Dark Lord to kill you, giving you lessons would defeat that. Not that it would have
helped, the Dark Lord has fifty years of magical training on you, and it would have taken years of
single-minded focus which would have been impossible with your normal schooling coming first."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked, frowning in confusion.

"Let me show you," Blake said quietly, a far away look in his eyes.

"Alright," Harry agreed, watching Blake disappear into what he assumed was his bedroom, a few
minutes later he returned with a pensive. He was actually going to view the memory of
Dumbledore and Blake? That was new; usually he only told him things, to see it would be a
different thing entirely. He stood up and made his way over to Blake.
"Now I want you to view this memory on your own, watch everything, observe the reactions, I want you to give me your own opinion once you return. There is only one memory so you will not get lost, you will be ejected after it's viewed. It won't be quite as harshly as the time Dumbledore forcefully removed you from his." Blake informed Harry as he removed the shimmering memory from his temple, and placed the floating strand into the bowl.

Harry glanced nervously at Blake, the last time he'd been in a pensive it had been disorientating. He was right though, Dumbledore yanking him out of the pensive had hurt quite a bit. The confident nod of reassurance from Blake had him relaxing before reaching out.

Blake watched Harry disappear, a soft sigh leaving his lips, even with the memory out of his mind; he could recall each detail precisely. He envisioned it as Harry watched it; no doubt Harry would be confused why he was watching memories of Tom Riddle, just as he had been. For him it had the opposite reaction from what Dumbledore wanted. If it wasn't for the fact the Dark Lord was trying to kill all magical people he probably would have walked away.

"Dobby?" Blake called for his House-elf, a small smile appearing on his face, he was genuinely fond of the hyper little thing. "Bring us some refreshments, perhaps from the gardens of Potter Manor?" asking for fruit without so many words.

"Dobby will be right back!" he insisted before the hyper House-elf was gone yet again.

Pinching the bridge of his nose, he sat down on the opposite couch from which Harry had claimed momentarily just a few minutes earlier. Things were significantly different from what he remembered, and it continued to make him anxious and bordering on suspicious of everything. The start of the year had been the worst, the judgment, Umbridge, being ignored, none of which had happened to Harry. Not knowing what was coming next was quite worrisome, ironically enough most of his worries were for what Dumbledore not the Dark Lord was capable of.

The Dark Lord was more predictable than Dumbledore acknowledging it left a bitter taste in his mouth. Dumbledore until he came back had been a mere memory, long dead and forgotten. His worry had always been at being found by the dark fraction, so yes, it indeed left a bitter taste in his mouth to have everything revered so.

Blake's head jerked up when he sensed movement, observing Harry, "Sit down, think on it, then we will discuss it." He wasn't sure whether he meant Dumbledore or the memory itself.

Harry nodded, his brow furrowed as he took in everything he'd seen, quite confused by it all and angry but anger was his secondary emotion. "He never taught you anything useful did he?" Harry eventually said, beginning to understand Blake's anger at Dumbledore better than ever.

"No, no he did not," Blake revealed steadily.

"I saw the way Dumbledore reacted to…Tom's words; he never even gave him a chance did he?" Harry said, remembering the diary memory as well, how Dumbledore had looked at him. He might have been guilty of the things then, but when he was eleven nobody deserved that distrust.

"He did not," Blake agreed, "Considering how he is with me, I believe if he didn't have a lot invested in you that he would have reacted the same way. Albus Dumbledore does not like anything associate with Slytherin, certain types of magic he deems 'dark' or the Dark Lord's belief's."

Dobby popped in and laid the platters on the table with a click of his fingers before be bowed to his Master and left them to their conversation.
"Belief's?" Harry questioned.

"Mmm, before the war began, Tom Riddle attempted to go down the political route, with some legislation I personally actually agree with," Blake said dryly, ignoring Harry's indignation. "He believed we should close off the Muggle and Magical world to one another that no magical child should ever be sent to the Muggle world. Even tried persuading the Wizengamot to build an orphanage for magical orphans, having seen what I have I do believe it would have been the best for all concerned."

"He did?" Harry gaped, stunned to the core.

"Unfortunately when he began making Horcruxes he became mentally unstable, impatient, infuriated with Dumbledore's interference, everyone listened to him he had just defeated Grindelwald. Then the war began, he shed the name Tom Riddle and truly became Voldemort and lived up to his promise to one day have a name that they would all fear to speak. Waging war that spanned three generations." Blake informed him, all of which he was already aware.

"So it was like a mental illness," Harry prompted, "That's why you want to restore all the soul pieces, make him whole again." he might not have known everything, but Harry wasn't stupid, he heard things and saw them too. It was quite easy to piece together the information and process it. It was much easier with the help he'd been getting in learning how to play chess.

"I did contemplate it," Blake spoke truthfully, chewing on a grape, swallowing before continuing "But we could be putting the world in greater danger, I…we scrapped the plan almost as immediately as we thought it. The only reason the Horcruxes are together is so they can be easily destroyed when the time is right." leaning over he picked up his goblet and drank from it, having no need to check it for any poison since he knew Dobby was faithful to them.

"Tom was right though, we were more alike than we realized," Harry sighed, taking one of the plates, and began to eat the fruit on offer, melon, grapes, cut apple slices, cut orange slices, peach, plum and mango and many others. He knew they all came from the orchid in Potter Manor, Dobby quite often was sent over there during the summer holidays.

Despised and hated for what they were, discarded amongst Muggles, Merlin Dumbledore would have hated him if it weren't for the fact he needed him. Did he secretly despise him? Harry thought, was that what made it so easy to make his life hell? To imprison Sirius because of his family and connection to someone who had a Horcrux in him? Voldemort's Horcrux? Had his life been forfeited since the attack? Or had it been even before then? When the Prophecy was uttered? 'for the greater good' he would say. The sudden realization that Blake wasn't exaggerating about the danger of Dumbledore made him feel very unsafe in a place that had been his home for three years, hitting its fourth year just a few days ago.

"It isn't just you and Tom that are alike, Harry; many people are in the same boat as both of you. Sure you Parseltongue in common, which you know you did not receive from him as disgusting as it is to quote Dumbledore, it was choice, his choices that led to this, ignoring the pleas of a young boy to taking you in hand and raising like a fool to be a sacrificial lamb." Blake mused suddenly finding himself tired. He could see the building anger in Harry, he needed an outlet before he said and did something he would regret. "Come, let us get some practice. We can leave Occlumency for another night."

For the next hour the two engaged in a duel, Blake never gave Harry any leeway or made it easy, if Harry was to beat him, he would need to earn it, learn it. He would never give Harry false confidence, which is what occurred if you let them think they were getting one over you.
"That was… very well done," Blake said, watching Harry pick himself up off the floor yet again, both of them sweating and in Harry's case panting while Blake breathed calmly. "You're picking up spells that I haven't taught you with extraordinary ease." they were spells he used in the mock duels with Harry, to see him use it successfully was thrilling. He was observing his surroundings even during a duel enough to pick up the wand movements of spells he didn't know.

"I looked it up after you used it last week," Harry admitted sheepishly, palms on his knees crouched down as his body protested heavily.

"I'm pleased you're learning so quickly, and that you aren't using spells that you don't know," Blake said proudly, it wasn't something he would have done, Severus' spell and Sectumsempra came to mind easily enough.

Harry positively glowed at the praise.

"Go shower and head to bed, it's almost curfew," Blake said fondly after a few moments of silence watching Harry straighten up. "Remember to meditate."

"I will," Harry promised, "Night," he whispered as he left the classroom an even softer 'goodnight' from Blake was the last thing he heard from within as he closed the door and made his way to Gryffindor Common Room. Feeling infinitely much better, it had certainly taken care of the build up in anger he'd felt.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter I promise I will reveal what the glamours are all about ;) what do you think they are for anyway? Will everyone realize who Blake is? Is it the scar? Is it to cover resemblances he has to Harry? I suppose you'll want to see some progress between Blake and Severus...will Severus' position become a danger to his life causing Blake to realize how he feels? R&R please
Chapter 30

The Games They Play

Chapter 30

The second week into the new school year at Hogwarts came astonishingly fast, and with it, the first staff meeting of the year. It was mandatory for all teachers to attend, unless there was a very good reason for the absence. Which meant to Blake's horror he would have to sit through them or risk Dumbledore having a valid excuse to fire him. He wasn't sure whether Dumbledore would do that, or was just hoping something happened to him over the course of the year. He would put his money on the latter without a single doubt. Dumbledore is nothing if not patient letting things happen at their own pace so he didn't get his hands dirty.

Thankfully though the meetings wouldn't interfere with any training he was giving Harry, the meetings were quite early, probably so they didn't have to unexpectedly deal with any students since they were still in bed. Blake sighed as he exited his quarters, strode down the stairs of his classroom, grabbing the file on the desk for the meeting before he promptly began making his way to the staff room where the meeting was to be held. Thankfully he didn't have to traipse all over the castle to get there, especially this early in the morning.

Quite honestly, Blake was surprised by how much enjoyment he derived from teaching. Most of the students were enthusiastic, eager to learn and very impressionable with a desire to please him by doing well at their subject. Sure there were downsides, but those were just annoyances that he ignored. Fred and George however, was a pair of menaces, thankfully he was fully aware of their... nature, and avoided any and all subtle traps they had placed on the classroom or treats they had 'given him' for being an 'awesome' teacher they'd said. It had taken him all his willpower not to burst out laughing when they'd done that.

It did make him wonder what would become of the twins education this time around, since they wouldn't or rather shouldn't, feel the need to pull an almighty prank followed by the most spectacular leave Hogwarts had ever seen. Perhaps they might even graduate Hogwarts with both OWLS and NEWTS under their belts; no doubt their mother would be proud.

His thoughts were abruptly cut off, as he noticed he'd arrived at the staff room door, this was another new thing, he had never been here...well as a teacher. It was going to be extremely odd to hear the teachers talking about those who had one been his classmates. Pursing his lips, muffling a yawn, Blake opened the door and stepped in, an impeccable impenetrable mask on his face. He wasn't surprised to see everyone there, since he had left coming to the very last minute. Quite literally, he observed seeing the time on the clock.

There was only one seat empty, Blake observed also, his heart sinking, and his lip unconsciously curling, it was right next to Dumbledore. If he had been a less composed man, he would have audibly groaned in displeasure. He didn't, instead he merely strode over and claimed his seat, unobtrusively scooting the chair away marginally, just to create a space between them. He saw Minerva giving him an amused look while Severus just outright smirked, that was interesting, and he hadn't expected Minerva to be that observant.

"First thing on the agenda is for us Heads of Houses' how are the first years settling in? Any
problems?" Minerva was the one to quickly get the meeting on track, they had exactly one hour on the clock. They always stuck to the agenda if they could, the only time they hadn't in recent years would be four years ago, Harry, Hermione and Ron came to mind.

"A few of my Ravenclaw's were a little bit homesick, but since receiving and sending letters home they have calmed down and readjusted to school." Filius explained, drinking some pumpkin juice. "I don't foresee any particular problems with them settling in."

"Same with me, although Camille Watson found it more difficult, she misses her sister who she is very close to," Pomona nodded, "I'm keeping an eye on her, I do wish to discuss how she is in class to ensure it's not affecting her course work but that can be done on schedule," in fact she'd added notes to the agenda she'd received for the staff meeting so she didn't forget.

"My snakes are just fine," Severus stated calmly, they were all pureblood's so he didn't have the same problems as the other members of the faculty had. They were used to being on their own - so to speak since their parents often left them with House-elves - they had been taught not to let their emotions rule them, and nine of out ten had learned the beginning of meditation and occlumency.

Blake turned back to Minerva and arched an eyebrow; he knew she didn't check on the Gryffindors, she never did.

"I only had one tearful Gryffindor this year," Minerva explained, "Muggle-born, but she has since made friends with her year and is beginning to acclimate to school life."

This surprised Blake, he had always assumed Minerva barely took an interest in any of the students. He'd never seen her in the common room overly much, but he hadn't been homesick, or up after curfew the first month of Hogwarts. Everything had been too new; he hadn't wanted to risk his new life coming crashing down around him. He may need to revaluate what he knew especially about his old head of house it seemed.

"Blake, how are you finding Hogwarts? Is your accommodation and classroom to your liking?" Minerva moved the meeting on seeing as they were finished with item one on the agenda.

"I am very pleased with my quarters and the classroom is just fine, I do, however, need to enquire about using the Great Hall for the extracurricular class I will have my students attending," Blake commented without pause or anxiety.

"Keep in mind that you cannot look after any more than thirty students on your own for any extracurricular class that has practical participation," Dumbledore informed him, turning to give him a look over his half-moon glasses.

Minerva sighed; it was the same every time someone tried to spice things up at Hogwarts. Giving them disapproving looks, Lockhart got the very same look and warning. Severus hadn't been at that particular meeting, she couldn't quite remember why something to do with the mandrake draught perhaps? Admittedly it might have been a good thing where Lockhart was concerned, but she was curious to know how Slytherin would be, the students absolutely loved his classes and the interest in any club he begins would be immense.

"The Hogwarts charter says forty, I believe," Blake said dismissively, "I will look through all the other clubs and find a suitable time where all the students can attend it. More than likely on a Sunday, that way I will know all those who attend actually want to learn."

"In the past, many of the students have taken a great interest in Defence clubs, in fact, if I remember correctly, didn't nearly every student attend Lockhart's one, Severus?" Filius questioned
quite excitedly.

"The entire school was in the Great Hall," Sinistra exclaimed, "I wish my students took a greater interest in my classes," the astronomy teacher admitted.

"Indeed, it is fair to say that most of the student body was present," Severus said a sadistic smirk gracing his features just remembering that occasion.

Blake snorted, unable to help himself, Severus looked extremely proud of himself, of course, that look hadn't lasted long at all. There had been a combination of stunned disbelief and shock on Severus' face when he had spoken the language of the snakes. "And how many teachers were there?" he asked as if he didn't already know the answer.

"Two," Severus stated sharply before Albus could open his mouth, no doubt to spew words about how 'impractical' it was to set one up only to let the students down or some such nonsense.

"If you ever require any assistance I wouldn't be apposed to helping out from time to time," Vector spoke up, smiling at the new teacher. She couldn't promise to offer assistance all the time, for she had a lot of homework to correct from all her students, especially those in the fifth and seventh year. Arithmancy was a difficult class indeed, and it required a lot of homework to ensure it sinks into their minds. Considering she did not have many students failing her class, she must be doing something right. She wasn't unaware of what her students thought about her giving out so much homework, but it was for their own good, their future.

"Thank you, Septima," Blake said graciously, "I may take you up on that gracious offer, it just depends on how many students actually elect to come." he wouldn't take advantage of the offer though, definitely not.

"I would offer myself as well, but I am so busy taking care of all the animals," Grubbly-Plank insisted, "I cannot in all good consciousness leave them," it took her hours upon hours when she wasn't performing her duties, however, temporarily they were, of teaching Care of Magical Creatures.

"No, of course not, they cannot look after themselves, and shouldn't have to wait to be fed or tended to," Blake said seriously, he had a soft spot for animals, a few in particular of course, influenced by his teenager years. "Thank you, for the offer, nonetheless," he said charmingly, ignoring the blush encasing Grubbly-Plank's face, he didn't need nightmares thank you very much.

"Anyone else have anything to add about their quarters, class schedules?" Dumbledore questioned them, getting back on track. He could tell you all their answers since they were the same each year.

"Perfectly fine," Filius claimed.

"Not a problem," Septima replied.

"All is well," Pomona said flippantly.

"Nothing to add," Minerva added, before glancing down at the next on the list for this meeting.

"Next is students, do you have any concerns about how they are academically?" Minerva questioned, rolling up the parchment. "Any student you feel is underperforming?"

"I think my students are all capable of more," Blake stated, "But hopefully by the end of the year you'll all see a vast improvement in their grades."
"Hopefully, many of my students have desires to work in the Ministry, and as you know they require quite high scores where it comes to their NEWTS and OWLS." Pomona stated, "Ten of them wish to be Auror's, only five of them are getting the required grades where Potions and Defence are concerned."

"Give me a list of their names, the ones doing their exams this year, I will see about upping their lessons to ensure they are fully prepared to pass with the required grade." Blake informed Pomona seriously. There weren't enough Auror's graduating, and it was because of the low grades because Dumbledore refused to find a decent teacher. He seriously believed it had to do with ensuring that Harry had a less than stellar education but he didn't like to think about it…all those students who wanted to be better failing because of it. "All of you who have students who want a career that is beyond their grade at the moment…albeit if it's mostly in defence, I cannot do anything about their grades in other classes unfortunately. They all deserve a chance to be whatever they want to be, and it's our duty to see that through. Even if they fail we can say we gave it our all to aid them in their dreams." his passion obvious for all to see. He would NOT allow the magical world to spiral out of control like it had before; he absolutely refused, not while he had breath in his body.

"I will have it to you by Monday morning at the latest," Pomona promised, just hearing him speak was renewing her energy when it came to the students, vividly reminding her of her duty and her own thoughts when she first became a teacher. He was very passionate, even her Puff's had picked up on that. It had been a long time since they'd had a new teacher who felt that way, especially in Defence Against the Dark Arts.

"You already have a lot on your plate, are you sure?" Minerva asked the young professor, she knew how difficult it was to get used to Hogwarts and teaching full time. She could also clearly see he was making the teachers feel as though they were making a difference again, that they could continue to do so. She felt slightly inadequate, to be honest; she had lost that zest for helping her students a long time ago. Didn't think they were capable of change and usually made no effort to help them improve their grades…perhaps it was time for a change, she was a teacher and had responsibilities to each student as Blake had so eloquently reminded her.

"It is what we are here for," Blake stated, "The day we stop actively trying to help each student we may as well tend our resignation don't you think? Some classes do not come naturally to the students like us, who had at least one or two subjects in which we excelled in without so much as trying." like breathing. They needed to realize what they were doing to the students, and he was going to subtly bring them around by any means necessary.

"Very well then, I shall dig out all necessary information you need this afternoon and give it to you before Monday," Minerva replied, "And should you need any help at all during your extracurricular classes, do let me know, I shall be more than happy to assist."

"Thank you," Blake said charmingly.

"Have the twins been behaving themselves?" Minerva then asked, exasperation obvious,

Evidently, they made a habit of winding the teachers up at the beginning of school.

Blake pursed his lips, digging his fingers into his leg, to stop himself from bursting out laughing. The twins would be delighted to know that they wound Minerva up to the point she visibly displayed how she felt. They had their own slot on the agenda for them to discuss…well, not the twins per se, but it was telling she chose to ask about them first and foremost.

"They have been oddly…quiet," Filius commented, looking apprehensive.
"Yes, they've not even tried their firework display this year," Sinistra explained, they usually set up a display on the tower at some point in the first week, the two times they'd done it was during the first years first astronomy class.

"That is highly suspicious, I will be having a word with them," Minerva said narrowing her eyes in contemplation, wondering what the devious duo were up to now.

"Now that might be inviting trouble," Blake said amused. The twins would just up their game, not wanting to 'let the teachers down' but then again, the teachers had no idea that the twins had been trying to prank him since the school had started back up.

Severus just rolled his eyes; the twins were menaces he couldn't wait to see the back of them. He'd never admit to anyone that he subtly helped with their potions now and again. They were ingenuity itself sometimes, very clever, if only they put some of that smarts into their grades he knew they'd be better than their brothers, at least Percy and Charlie, Bill was quite probably the smartest in reality. Ronald Weasley and Ginevra left a lot to be desired, admittedly Ginevra's practical work was near perfect, but she didn't apply herself to her theory.

She had plans after Hogwarts, and none of it involved working, so she didn't bother with it. A big mistake to make, especially considering she won't get another opportunity, she couldn't afford to take her exams independently. She'd need to work for a year or two before she could take them.

Oh, he knew, and it quite frankly disgusted and appalled him. He never made a habit of going near their thoughts, but with so many children with unguarded minds, he picked up a lot that he wished he didn't. Especially when he was particularly frustrated and his barriers were lowered. With Harry getting constantly in trouble…he had been frustrated a lot of the time in the past five years.

"Are there any other concerns with the students? How is Zachariah Smith? Is he still being problematic in his classes and with bullying?" Minerva asked, moving it along, time was ticking by.

Blake's mouth curled in derisive disgust, eyes flashing conveying his hatred of Zachariah Smith. Oh, that boy was the biggest coward he'd had the misfortune of meeting, even more so than Pettigrew. A selfish coward who had run at the first sign of danger and hid away during the wars. How such a despicable character had ended up in Hufflepuff he didn't know, perhaps his ancestry? Helga would have been ashamed to have such a dastardly boy as her last living descendant.

It was a good job that it was Severus who was sitting opposite Blak since he was able to see his reaction. Severus made a mental note to find out just what the Hufflepuff had done in the future to garner such disgust from Blake. For he didn't even display that kind of reaction to even Voldemort. Then again Blake didn't show much in the way of emotion, he no longer wore his heart on his sleeve, Harry was doing well learning from him.

"I am keeping an eye on him," Pomona admitted, looking deeply troubled and ashamed.

"Just how are you dealing with these instances of bullying?" Blake queried his mind running.

"I have spoken to his family and removed house points," Pomona explained, glancing at Dumbledore before continuing, "I would have liked a greater punishment doled out, I detest bullying of any kind."

"As you should," Blake stated sharply, noticing the quick glance, "Bullying lasts all the way into adulthood, causes suicides, rash decisions, causes the consequences to land from the bully to son or daughter."
Severus' eyes flashed, knowing that Blake was referring to him, in more than one instance.

"Loss of house points I am not surprised he has continued bullying, in fact I observed an instance of bullying myself just two days ago. They were bullying a forth year, Luna Lovegood, I gave the girls detention with Filch scrubbing toilets; tonight they are going to be scrubbing the hospital wing. I believe hard labour helps them realize the error of their ways."

"It's just children being children," Dumbledore chided.

"Let me guess, you were popular at school?" Blake said dryly, giving Dumbledore a look of incredulity. The other teachers quite quickly began to stifle their amusement at his frank words. "For some children school is a nightmare, and there is no escape in boarding schools, it happens near enough all year around. Somehow you thinking school bullying is nothing doesn't surprise me after what you've let Harry go through."

Pomona was nodding, agreeing with Blake, it hadn't been easy for her, especially her size, she was constantly mocked it was why she had no tolerance for bullying. Albus of course, made her feel as though she was exaggerating their misdeeds and was putting her own hard experience at school onto the students, she eventually bowed down to him. This time she was just going to deal with it, let him know after the fact instead of coming to him with her concerns. They never seemed to matter, and apparently Albus hadn't even enquired as to why the girls received detention. He was always intervening, less more so these days than before, he was constantly getting James Potter and his cohorts out of trouble left right and centre drove Minerva mad, she remembered the conversations they had about Albus. Minerva had called him 'a barmy old codger' it was depressing how used to it all they were.

"Are there any other subjects anyone wishes to discuss?" Minerva put in when it became obvious Albus wasn't going to answer. It didn't surprise her, Albus didn't believe in punishing students for being 'children' he'd been through too many wars.

"I am afraid there is," Albus said grimly, looking over his glasses with a serious expression. "It has come to my attention Professor Slytherin, that you are wearing Glamours." it was a statement, not a question.

"Mmm, what of it?" Blake asked, making it clear that he did not care.

"You must understand our need for caution, the students need all the protection we can give them in these walls," Albus said, looking and sounding weary all of a sudden.

"Yes that is a concern, its just a shame it's taken five years to be put into affect, between Quirrell, Lockhart the fraud and of course…a wizard whom you say is a good friend of yours being trapped in a trunk while you somehow remained oblivious of the true identity of the one pretending to be him." Blake sounded very sincere in his words, "Quite amazing feat for someone locked up for so long to remain in your life for an entire year and dupe you, wouldn't you say?"

Minerva cleared her throat, "Off topic gentlemen," she informed them, but the words had sunk into her mind, she couldn't help but ponder on it.

"Quite right," Albus insisted immediately, he could have kissed her for her timely interruption. He certainly didn't want his teachers to realize he had known something was wrong, but let it go on because he knew inevitably it would throw Voldemort and Harry together in one way or another.

"What exactly do you suspect me of hiding? You know as well as everyone else that the Dark Mark cannot be hidden by any means magical, especially not by a glamour charm. Although I am
surprised you would listen to gossip from the students," Blake said offhandedly. He could see that Severus was curious, but as always was doing a good job of hiding it, if he hadn't known the wizard as well as he did - even he would have been blind to it.

"It is why I asked," Albus said in a chiding manner, hiding his growing anger at his blatant disrespect.

"Tattoos," Blake replied bluntly, watching surprise filter over the old man's face. Rolling his eyes, he removed the glamour non-verbally and without his wand in his hand the teachers observed with awe. The shimmer disappeared, letting them see his tattoos for the first time - or at least what was visible. They were able to see the red and green phoenix on his arm, along with the snitch whizzing around. The two most important ones were hidden from view only Harry had seen them. That wasn't all they noticed, after admiring the tattoos. They noticed the scars, some nasty battle scars he had on his arms, the nastier ones had been hidden behind the ink. You would need to look very closely to see the worst of them.

Which of course Severus and Minerva did see due to their perfect sight.

"I do hope you're satisfied that I am not a Death Eater, please remember who actually informed the world that he was indeed back." Blake added, "Is his meeting concluded?" he looked to Minerva not Dumbledore for an answer.

"Yes, yes, I believe so." Minerva murmured in surprise, still a little shocked at a number of scars on the relatively young man, what exactly had he been through to accumulate such a large score of battle wounds? Surely as a teacher or tutor it hadn't been that dangerous.

"Good, then I bid you good day," Blake stated before standing up and making his exit trying to keep his annoyance at a minimum. He didn't want to let Dumbledore know he was getting to him, which he was, that bloody old man didn't know when to quit. Still fishing around - looking for something to use. Which went against his theory of Dumbledore just waiting until the 'curse' on the position got to him.

Chapter End Notes

I think a good few of you had guessed by now what was under those glamours! :D do you want a more detailed description of the scars? I can have Severus thinking of them :) along with a few other...things :D Honestly, I'm not quite sure how to get those two together...I'll need to come up with something fast since it's already at chapter 30! :D R&R please
Chapter 31

The Games They Play

Chapter 31

Severus glanced at the time as he made his way in his usual crisp quick pace he used to get around Hogwarts, sensing the outbursts of magic so close to the door to Blake's Quarters, which were through one of the office doors. He found that he was right on time; perhaps Blake was letting off some excess energy? He knew Dumbledore could get people riled up, even Blake, as professional, cool and collected as he seemed he had a lot of anger inside of him. He knew because he himself felt that way, most of it was regretfully smothered by crippling guilt that Dumbledore refused to let heal without rubbing salt into his wounds by strategically bringing it up.

Knocking on the door, waiting for a reply, knowing that it would be rude to do otherwise. If anyone, anyone walked into his living quarters without knocking he would curse them until they regretted their oversight.

"Come in!" came the curt yet breathless reply.

Severus opened the door, his eyes automatically taking in the scene in front of him. Blake must have been tutoring Harry by the look of it. Both had their wands drawn and every article of furniture was stacked up against the wall giving them plenty of space to duel. A glance at Harry saw that the teenager was quite exhausted, if Blake taught him like he did everything else, it was little wonder.

His glance towards Harry was quick…his attention though was mostly centred on Blake. He had his shirt off, showing off every single tattoo he had. Seeing him without any obstructions was causing quite an embarrassing predicament, as arousal began to thrum steadily through him. He was simply breathtaking, too many scars would be seen as shameful and disgusting, most desired nothing more than to hide them to make it seem as though they didn't exist.

Blake looked as though he'd been hit with the Sectumsempra spell, but he knew it wasn't possible, the scars healed completely, and if they didn't you'd be dead due to blood loss within a few minutes. The cuts caused by Sectumsempra were quite fine, but these were really nasty deep cuts that looked as though they hadn't received the proper care, which wouldn't surprise him.

His inner arm was the worst; it was as if he had used his arm to shield his face presumably from a spell. It looked like a spider web pattern left unfinished. Although one of the worst ones were farther up his arm, he could only see the tail end of it due to his sleeve. Now that looked like a cross between a burn and a scar, like he'd cauterised the wound the old fashioned way. The phoenix he had on proud display made it less glaringly obvious, but did not hide them fully. He inwardly wondered if that had been his intention or if he simply decided that was what he wanted.

The urge to step forward, to touch, to sooth overwhelmed him. Swallowing thickly, trying to stop his odd reactions, he'd never felt such a desire before. His black eyes continued to greedily (not that anyone would be able to tell) take in and map out every detail of Blake that was laid bare before
Minerva had been especially concerned, given Blake a worried glance earlier then looking at him - he didn't need to read her mind to deduce what she was thinking, probably wondering if he knew what had happened to Blake to cause the damage that had been so horrifically inflicted. Not that he could tell her, even if he had wanted to, he would never break Blake's confidence, even without the Vow holding him to his word. He wasn't that sort of man, he rarely confided in anyone about himself, never mind someone else.

He had an unfinished cursed scar removal salve in one of his journals if he remembered correctly, he had been intending on creating one for his potions mastery before he thought of something better. It hadn't been touched since, perhaps he should go over his old journals and see if could finish it. Although he probably should ask Blake if he wanted them removed before he wasted his precious time trying to perfect it. His time was precious between teaching, patrolling the halls, taking care of his snakes and his other duties which were many; he barely had time to rest. However, he would do this for Blake if he wished for it. He deserved someone to care for him, to show they put him first just because he was there. Not because of what he could do, who he was so called 'destined' to do for the magical world. He had never cared for all that 'tripe' as Minerva called it. It was perhaps why Blake had found it so easy to trust him somewhat? It didn't matter; he was trusted and wished to prove that trust.

"Severus, I apologise," Blake said to the wizard, giving no excuse, knowing that it irritated the wizard before him. It just squandered more time than was already wasted.

Harry watched the professor who was busy looking over Blake and his numerous tattoos, his chest was bare, and while Severus wasn't displaying his emotions his eyes were trailing over each available expanse of Blake's skin. Harry pursed his lips and had to refrain from laughing, honestly those two were so oblivious that it was bordering on ridiculous. He knew how his professor felt... but Blake wasn't as easy to read, but the trust and friendship was there...although it might be all he felt but Harry seriously doubted it. "Professor," Harry said, sounding breathless, panting a little, sweat coated face and head. Finally getting around to greeting the wizard.

"Mr. Potter," Severus replied, at Hogwarts he would always refer to Harry that way, however, at the cottage he was Harry. His mind dwelling on the words that Blake had spoken in the staff room earlier the word 'suicide' echoing in his mind. While school had been utterly intolerable for him, he'd never once considered suicide, and the prospect of his attitude actually having any of the students who roam these halls wishing to kill themselves made him feel sick. He was a bastard he didn't deny that, anyone would be forced to deal with students without a single desire to teach, stuck with your own desires being squashed aside in a bid to survive asked to do things no sane person should wish to do. He didn't have much to live for, or hadn't, he had a desire to know Blake better, well he wanted more, but he would never act on it, since Blake didn't seem to reciprocate his feelings.

Regardless of his actions or what the students thought of him, he would protect them all to the best of his abilities while he still drew breath. He could say it was because of his duties as a spy, but that would be lies, and despite the fact he was a spy, and he generally lied to the Dark Lord, he was not one who sugar coated his words or tended to lie on a day to day basis. He never lied unless he had absolutely no choice.

"Here," Blake said, flinging over a cool cloth to wipe the sweat off himself.

Harry expertly caught it, as he slid his wand into his holster with his right hand. Sighing in relief at the coolness. He was feeling thoroughly elated and happy with himself, he was getting better, he
could last longer and the frequency in which he was being bested was lessening. He was nowhere near Blake's expertise but he didn't expect to be, even though he had been duelling for nearly three months every day.

"When did you get all those tattoos?" Severus asked, clearing his throat, only to gape slightly as Blake turned around; his eyes went huge when he saw the Hungarian hornetail spread out against the expanse of his back. The detail in it was exquisite, very well done, he could see the writing clearly, the Hogwarts Latin motto was clearly visible. Draco Dormiens Nunquam Titillandus - Never tickle a sleeping dragon. He was beginning to realize each of those tattoos had meaning, personal meaning, it was little wonder he chose to hide them. As each tattoo flashed through his mind's eye, every milestone of 'Harry's' life was on blatant display and then some.

Blake grabbed a clean white t-shirt and put it on, "I got them over a period of ten years; the tattoo on my back took the longest, five months in fact. I honestly couldn't tell you the exact dates, most days just blended in, it was all about survival." complete truth. Flicking his wand yet again despite all the magic he had cast, rearranging his living room back into its natural order.

Harry's ears had perked up and he had listened just as much as Severus, as he took a seat knowing that food would be ordered and definitely wasn't going to leave without getting any.

"I see," Severus replied, giving a nod of understanding.

"Coffee?" Blake enquired, as he sat down, gesturing for Severus to sit himself. Blake didn't even need to call on his House-elf before silver platters appeared in front of them, with the Potter coat of arms on blatant display.

"Please," Severus replied, sitting down feeling a little more comfortable and in control of himself. He would need to dwell on his own thoughts and reactions later, much, much later when he was alone. The desire to help, to give Blake some comfort was so unexpected, it just wasn't who he was. He didn't know what that would mean for him, he was by no means a wizard who desired to please anyone, but his relationships in the past had not really been give or take.

In time he might understand that just because you care for someone it didn't make you weak, it just made you equals.

"Has Dumbledore left you alone?" Severus enquired seriously, giving Harry his full undivided attention; he took his task very seriously. Especially considering how much he had truly actually fucked it up, and it tore at him relentlessly.

Harry blinked, before answering, "So far," he saw the look of approval on both Blake and Severus' face, and it took him a few seconds to realize why. His answer, because he knew Dumbledore wouldn't just let it lie, that he knew this made them pleased with him. It made him want to squirm on the spot; he wasn't used to that, having adults proud of him, their approval made him feel inexplicably proud of himself like after duelling or training when Blake told him he was doing good. Standing up on wobbly legs, giving a smile of thanks to Blake when he was steadied by a firm grip, grabbing himself a plate of food before sitting down again.

"How are your other lessons progressing?" Severus asked he felt that was the most important thing right now, especially under Dumbledore's nose. It almost felt like they were back at the cottage, but Severus admitted that he felt much more secure at the cottage, even more so than his own quarters, but the wards Blake had on his cottage were immense...they would quite frankly make Lucius Malfoy's manor wards pale in comparison.

Harry glanced at Blake, his mouth full of his tuna sandwich he was gratefully eating. These days
his appetite had grown to epic proportions, he felt he could out eat Ron if he wanted to try. Aided along with the fact he was actually growing taller! Taller of all things, he'd never thought that day would come, but the potions his guardian was giving him probably helped undo some of the damage the Dursley's had done to him...hell probably more than just 'some' of the damage. The exercise he was doing probably had a lot to do with it too.

"He's doing very well, but considering all the shortcuts we were able to take it's no surprise, but that doesn't make his work any less worthy." Blake said, his lips twitching, he knew Harry best after all, he was him just younger. Without the desire to know more information Harry was working diligently to strengthen his barriers at all times. "He's not ready to be able to keep someone out of his mind who relentlessly tries to invade his mind but for subtle attempts to read surface thoughts he's extremely safe." in other words any attempt from Dumbledore to glean his thoughts would be for naught.

Severus nodded before freezing and inhaling sharply, gritting his teeth as a wave of pain lanced through his arm - the Dark Lord was calling. He rarely called him during the school year, and rarely during the day even at the weekends, he wasn't sure if it was the lack of trust in his 'spy' or if it was convenience sake.

Blake gazed at him steadily, knowing what was happening, "Be safe," was all he said, he suspected that the Dark Lord had realized that Nagini was nowhere to be found, took him long enough but in his insane state, it wouldn't surprise him that he couldn't concentrate on much of anything let alone keeping track of his familiar properly.

Severus stood up without a word or gesture evidently still in great pain before swiftly exiting the room, hastily as possible making his way out of Hogwarts in order to reach the Dark Lord in a timely manner, in order to avoid greater punishment for making him wait.

He had a feeling it would be a very, very long day.

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The Next Day

"You alright, Harry?" Neville asked shyly, seeing how jumpy Harry was, it wasn't like him, at least not lately at any rate. Usually it was a different sort of jittery, like at the end of the year when he suspected something was going to happen or if something already was. He was getting used to talking to Harry every day instead of blending into the background, all he needed to hear was Professor Slytherin's words to make him feel confident, accomplished however temporarily the feeling was - not that he cared he relished in the feeling of power it gave him - and he was using that technique at this very moment.

"Huh?" Harry jumped in surprise, his face zooming in on Neville, blinking at him uncomprehendingly. His full breakfast still lying untouched for the moment.

"Are you alright?" Neville repeated becoming more concerned than shy at this point.

"I'm fine," Harry said, relaxing into his seat, he was just worried, Severus hadn't returned until two am this morning. That was a hell of a long time to be in the presence of an insane Dark Lord, and the fact he was worried was a testament to how much his damn life had changed over the space of a single summer. He'd seen Severus' dot on the map, outside the gates, it hadn't moved for ages, and he'd almost gotten up and went to see if he was alright, then Blake's dot began to move towards him, very quickly, he wasn't sure how Blake had known...some control over the wards? Senses or was his bond with Severus much closer than he thought? "Just didn't sleep much last night," he
"What happened?" Hermione asked, interrupting their conversation, removing herself from her book for the moment.

Harry turned to stare at her, his green eyes flickering towards the book then back up to her face. She was reading everything to do with mind magic, probably trying to figure out a way to remove the charm she'd placed on her parents, he felt sorry for her, Blake was a host of information, he knew so much, if he said it couldn't be reversed…well he believed him. Hermione might be great, but she wasn't as good as his guardian. His lips twitched in amusement, not that she'd ever admit that, she always liked to think she knew best, well except when it came to teachers she didn't like much, the other teachers she'd bend over backwards for…including Dumbledore. "You lost the right to ask me that a long time ago." he told her steadily, feeling anger bubbling within him before using his shields to calm and centre himself. He would find friends who didn't put authority figures first, who would risk it all for him, just like he would have done for them.

Hermione huffed, honestly she didn't know what to do with Harry these days, and she blamed Slytherin for all this. If he hadn't come barrelling in and changing everything, she wouldn't have had to use that spell on her parents and Harry would still be her friend! She couldn't stand being around Ron too much, especially with Harry as a buffer to put up with Ron's childish antics.

Harry rolled his eyes, giving Neville a 'look what I have to put up with' look causing the teen to smother an amused laugh. Although his attention shifted when he saw a red head move into the Great Hall, watching her closely, his green eyes narrowing in displeasure at what he saw.

Ginny eagerly looked up at the teachers table, finding both Dumbledore and Slytherin were absent (Snape was as well but she didn't care about that). Anticipation and elations flowed through her, had she managed to get rid of him? Dumbledore never missed breakfast, except when he was suspended in her first year; it had to be important for him to be absent. Did he have the Dark Mark? Was he going to end up in prison? Would Dumbledore let Harry live with her parents in the burrow? It would help her be able to make a move on him much easier. She sort of wished she'd been the same age as him; sharing classes would make everything easier.

"Morning professor!" Ginny chirped happily, as the Headmaster entered the Great Hall, grinning widely, she moved towards her spot.

"Miss Weasley," Dumbledore said, giving the teenager a warm friendly smile as he made his way towards the teachers table, basking in the awe surrounding him, it never got old. His smile dimmed slightly at the sight of Harry, he honestly didn't know what to do with the teenager or how to get him back under control with Slytherin constantly lurking around. He didn't let his displeasure show as he took his seat, keeping up his beaming countenance.

"Hi, Harry!" Ginny said her smile still present.

Harry grunted, not gracing her with a reply, he didn't like how happy she was, he wasn't sure but he had a feeling she'd done something. Considering the way she lit up after seeing that his guardian wasn't there…yes, suspicious indeed.

"Is everything alright?" Ginny asked, her smile fading a concerned frown on her face, but her eyes…her eyes were still sparkling brightly, unable to conceal just how truly happy she was.

"Why wouldn't it be?" Harry asked, cocking his head to the side, noticing that Neville was watching what was going on, as always.
"You don't seem very happy," Ginny offered, eyes dimming somewhat, as she pressed a hand to his shoulder, a show of solitary and compassion. Harry didn't have much of that in his life, so she couldn't help but be surprised when he shrugged it off as if she was diseased. Her lips pursed a little at that, that wouldn't do at all.

"I'm fine," Harry retorted, feeling revulsion crawling up his spine at her almost predator-ish look and touch. He wasn't sure why he felt that way… it was almost like his magic couldn't tolerate her even being near him. He definitely needed to talk to Blake soon. If he didn't come up after lunch then he'd make his way down to Severus' quarters, which was where both of them were. He wanted to make sure Severus was alright too.

He definitely wanted to avoid whatever games Ginny was playing. The games people play really annoyed him; between Fudge and Dumbledore, Voldemort and him (unwilling as he was) and even Ginny and his guardian… would it ever end?

Chapter End Notes

There we go! Sorry, I've been away a while net and computer troubles at the same time truly suck! No internet no laptop nothing to write and going bored out of my mind! Took me a few days to get back into the swing after dealing with emails, reviews, PM's and such as well and I promise the next chapter will be completely Severus/Blake focused from when he finds him until he wakes etc... will it be the beginning of their relationship or just solidify their friendship making ground work for their eventual dating? as for Harry dating...there has been some suggestion of it being Tom Riddle...what are your thoughts on that? I don't have anyone in mind for Harry - not yet anyway since it was primarily focused on Blake/Sev but as the story continues I'm going to have to think on it :D R&R please!
Late Last Night

Blake sat in his office, trying to read a book but failing miserably, causing him to scowl in annoyance at his inability to stop worrying. He hadn't experienced this kind of gut wrenching worry for a while now, not since he returned to a world that had not been torn apart. Worry wasn't a new thing for him, but the extent of the worry did catch him off guard. It had been thirteen hours now since Severus had answered the call, he knew he was being paranoid, Severus was probably just brewing potions for the Dark Lord. Yet the fact the snake was gone...he feared that maybe Severus had been caught as a spy, or someone had seen him taking Nagini and he was paying for that with his life. Shoving the book aside, face impassive his little shoving display the only readable example of his current feelings.

He should have placed a wellbeing charm on him as well, instead of just a honing beacon, which would let him know the second that Severus returned to Hogwarts. A wellbeing charm would have let him know the run down diagnosis of Severus' current health. A ping centred dead within his magical core let him know that Severus had returned to Hogwarts at long last. The feeling almost had him swept off his feet in relief, closing his eyes he stiffened his spine, green eyes flashing, he loathed being overly emotional, he was no longer a teenager, he didn't wear his heart on his sleeve. He thought to himself as he sat back down on his chair removing a bottle and glass and poured himself a generous amount of fire whiskey before downing it in a single gulp, inhaling sharply at the burning that proceeded down his throat, leaving warmth in its wake.

Blake jumped when he felt tendrils of unknown magic tingling through him, causing his breath to catch. Looking around the room suspiciously, what the hell? Closing his eyes he allowed his own magic to wash over it, getting a sense of it, it felt like home, of Hogwarts he realized belatedly as his eyes opened again wider than normal. He had always known Hogwarts was sentinel, it was obvious, and Hogwarts had a sense of humour, led students on a merry chase sometimes, by moving the staircases in the wrong direction. Yet he'd never heard of anyone being able to interact with the castle, even the Headmasters only had limited control over the castle.

Without any conscious decision or reason, Blake wandered over to the nearest wall and placed his hand on the cold stone. A frown etching itself onto his face, there was tugging, before the gates flashed momentarily before his eyes then more urgent tugging. Hogwarts was trying to tell him something. His breathing hitched as it dawned on him, Severus! Wrenching his hand back, he ran urgently like he hadn't in a while, and Hogwarts was on his side, each staircase waiting on him and guiding him in the right direction. The gentle tugging continuing but not as urgent, perhaps because Hogwarts knew he was doing what it wanted?

He wasn't even slightly out of breath as he bolted out of Hogwarts, taking the steps two at a time without even stumbling, three minutes later he was skidding to a stop, ignoring the stone pebbles flying everywhere as he knelt down beside Severus, pressing his fingers to his throat, ignoring the
slick amount of blood on him for the moment. Calming and relaxing himself, he was breathing, his pulse was erratic at best but he was still with them.

Not wishing to move him too much, he conjured a stretcher and began to make his way indoors, knowing that Severus wouldn't wish to go to the Hospital wing, he made his way to Severus' quarters, although he had no idea how to get in, he wasn't aware of the new password, but he could break through the wards although it would take time, time he quite frankly didn't want to waste. He had no idea how badly Severus was wounded.

He met nobody on his way down to the dungeons, a small smile appeared on his face when the doors to Severus' classroom, office and quarters opened without any physical explanation - Hogwarts was continuing to help him. Blake kicked the door closed, securing Severus' quarters afterwards before wandlessly transfiguring the couch into a bed, so he would be able to get at Severus from both sides. Using his wand to guide the stretcher onto it, situating Severus comfortably on his back.

Blake removed Severus' clothing, all except his underwear (and shoes as well as socks) wincing at the extent of the damage, severe bruising and cuts the shaking was pretty self explanatory. Spelling the bed secure so that if he moved he wouldn't end up falling and hurting himself. He hurriedly began to summon things he'd need, except the potions, which he went to retrieve himself, placing them into a large bowl once that was done he set them aside before pouring water into the bowl, then the disinfectant from the vial, heating it up a little, he grabbed the towels setting them around his body to catch the excess water.

He poured one vial of anti-Cruciatus potion down Severus' throat, slowly massaging his Adams apple to get him to swallow the concoction. It would have been quicker to charm it into his stomach but he was hurt enough as it was, using that spell made your stomach ache for hours afterwards he'd say as far as a day or two depending on what you'd eaten. The tremors eased a little but overall not so much, picking up the second vial of the concoction he repeated the process.

Dunking the face cloth into the water, Blake methodically began to clean Severus of the sweat and blood that covered him, each wound he cleaned of any debris before magically sealing closed with a knitting spell beginning with his face, down his neck, over his bare chest to the line of his underwear but going no further. Having to clear out the water a dozen times using a new disinfectant each time to ensure nothing got infected. The potions were much more potent than a simple spell; he knew that from personal experience, as he absently rubbed at the spot where his worst scar was.

Severus was paler than normal, his legs didn't seem to garner much damage, just a few bruises on his thighs and knees, and presumably where he thrashed around. Picking up the bruise salve, he spread it delicately on the purple bumps, trying and failing to ignore just how...intimate it was, he didn't really understand why it felt different, he'd done this millions of times before, both male and female. His sharp green eyes caught sight of a swelling, narrowing on the concealed injury; he used his wand to remove the shoes and socks, to find that his ankle was most definitely broken.

Using this moment, he cast an internal diagnosis spell to find out if any other bone was broken, upon reading the results he noticed that the ankle was the only break, his ribs however, were fractured, two of them cracked he must have fallen very heavily on his side or perhaps onto something. He had lost a lot of blood, more than even Blake had anticipated, so without further prompting he urgently fed Severus three potions, two blood replenishers and a bond mending draught which would fix his ribs and ankle.

Wiping his brow tiredly, he couldn't help but yawn as he stretched out trying to keep himself
awake and alert. A quick tempus told him he'd been at this for two hours already, it was after four am- not surprising this was delicate work. Summoning a pillow, Blake cast a ferula spell aimed at Severus' ankle to keep it safe while the potion did its job and knitted the break together. He laid the pillow down before levitating Severus and turning him around so he could see the damage done to his back.

He had a head wound, which continued to bleed steadily, nodding to himself, he transfigured an empty vial into a rectangular plastic container, which he effortlessly slid around Severus' face, before meticulously beginning to clean his hair of blood and debris, staying clear of the wound for the moment, the water went red immediately, slowly and carefully, he wiped the wound with yet another clean face cloth, using a spell to ensure everything was out of the wound, before delicately beginning to re-knit his skin back together, using what was left of the bruise salve to coat the wound and hair, leaving it on for a few minutes to ensure it sunk into the bruise.

"Dobby?" Blake called quietly, not surprised at having to wait, he always ensured Dobby looked after himself, ordered in fact.

A few minutes later, Dobby appeared, his eyes shadowed in worry, his Master didn't usually call him at night…at least never this late. "What can Dobby do to help Master Blake?" he asked, his tone echoing his Master, that is to say he spoke in a whisper, eyes going wider at the sight of the injured Potions Master.

"Bring me a pepper up potion and some coffee, maybe something to eat as well," Blake requested sombrely, he preferred it all to come from the cottage, from Dobby's own hands, he didn't trust the Hogwarts House-elves, and they would do what Dumbledore asked of them. What could he say? He was paranoid but for good reason. Dumbledore needed Harry; he was almost as obsessed with Harry as Voldemort was who knew what the old fool would do to keep Harry in his grasp. He was in the way, and he wouldn't let himself be victimised by either of the wizards who thought they knew best.

"Ham sandwiches and some fruit do?" Dobby asked, wanting to know if his Master wanted something warm to eat or something quick and filling.

"That would be perfect, Dobby," Blake murmured with a quiet sigh, turning back to Severus once Dobby was gone, he painstakingly began to remove the salve from Severus' wound and hair, knowing if he didn't it would be extremely difficult to remove once hardened. Nodding in satisfaction, he banished the shallow plastic tub, patting his hair dry with a towel as much as he dared. He remembered to bind Severus' ribs, before levitating him back over, cleaning and drying the bed getting rid of the water and blood. Replacing the pillow under his injured ankle and then placing a pillow on Severus' neck and head, too low to catch on the injury.

Unable to ignore the urgent urge to pee, he left Severus to use his toilet for a few moments, once done; he stared at himself in the mirror, stomach churning at the blood on his hands and head where he had wiped his forehead a few times earlier. Grimacing as his mind began to remember those who he had lost, no! He thought to himself sternly, his hands gripping the sink, they were alive, they were innocent, they were happy and concentrating on school work…well most of them. The others he hadn't known until the world truly went to hell. Grasping the closest towel he began to roughly rub away the blood using cold water, which cooled him somewhat.

He wasn't going to let everything get the way it had been, of that he swore vehemently. Voldemort was only one of the problems, Dumbledore and the Muggles were also really big concerns. With technology advancing so much, magic could be exposed, had been in his future, they had to do something to prevent it. He couldn't continue to let Severus be hurt, he couldn't let the worst of the
Death Eaters be released into the general population. Why the hell had he come here? He had been so stupid, he could have been working from the sidelines, and gotten everything he needed done already. He had to make his move and soon, screw this waiting around. Eyes narrowed he flung the used towel into the basket.

He wasn't sure whether Severus had been found out or not, but to be sure he would need to go back outside and search the area for any sign of a Portkey. It would have been his only way out; if the Dark Lord didn't want to let anyone out of his current residence then they wouldn't be able to. He hadn't seen anything in the general vicinity, so the likelihood to him was that he'd either been dropped off by the others or managed to remain coherent enough to get back to Hogwarts.

Feeling much better with a goal in mind, he left the bathroom, and found that Dobby had already returned with everything he asked. Smiling a little, once again struck by how much he had missed he little guy, he covered Severus before he moved to sit down and eat his food, as his stomach ceased complaining. All information about the Horcruxes were in the Fidelus Charmed trunk, along with the actual Horcruxes, no more delays, it was time he acted, part of him feared if he didn't act now he was going to become complacent. Or rather more complacent. Just because there wasn't an all out war yet - hopefully never - it didn't mean people weren't suffering. Severus had been his wake up call; he couldn't let him continue to sacrifice himself not when he could do something about it.

The next few hours Blake stared at the small kitchen in Severus' quarters as he drank in the same spot Dobby had put the tray in earlier, drinking his weight in coffee his mind continuing to strategise everything. A small almost indecipherable whimper caught his attention, not something he'd have noticed if it wasn't so damn quiet.

His green eyes zoned in on Severus, he was evidently having a nightmare, he felt very conflicted, and did he try to comfort the wizard? What if he woke up? He doubted Severus would be very impressed if he found himself being comforted during a nightmare. Yet, he couldn't just leave him, nobody deserved to suffer through that alone. He'd had friends who woke him up, sometimes just comforted him, but that was during the earlier years of the war before it got to every single one of them.

Standing up, he moved over to Severus, carding his hand through his hair, soothing him with quiet murmurs that he was safe. Severus leaned into the soft caress as if he was starved for attention and affection. His green eyes gleamed sadly, had Severus ever been comforted? Had anyone there to help him? Or had he suffered alone? He'd never allow this while he was conscious, was Severus like him so closed off that he couldn't perceive anyone wishing to help him let alone allowing it? When he removed his hand a small sound of protest came from Severus, causing Blake to resign himself, he summoned a chair and sat down, continuing his ministrations.

Despite the amount of caffeine he consumed, sleep gently began to win over, until he fell asleep on the chair leaning over onto the bed.

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As soon as wakefulness began to return to Severus, he remained silent, as he slowly woke, trying to get some semblance of his environment. The last thing he remembered was dragging his broken body out of Malfoy Manor, clinging desperately to consciousness, but it was completely blank after that. The smell surrounding him was comforting, familiar, had he made it back to his quarters? His eyes popped open the second he realized he was practically naked under the sheet covering him. He ached like blazes but compared to last night? Yesterday? He didn't know how long he'd been out of it, he felt a lot better.
A head of hair caught his attention next, and it caught him off guard, even as warmth and affection coursed through him. When Blake was asleep he didn't look troubled, or tense even. He looked years younger, more his actual age than when he was awake and closed off. Hope began to thrum inside of him, surely his feelings were not completely unrequited, and you didn't stay and take care of someone who wasn't important to you, now did you? He shoved those feelings as far back into his mind as possible, refusing to dwell on them, to even think on them for a second more.

Severus lay there for a few more minutes, trying to decide what to do; did he wake him up or just leave him to rest? He'd probably wake quite quickly at any noise, he knew from experience. The urging of his body prevented him from remaining on the comfortable bed, so he slowly sat up, stopping when he felt dizzy before resuming, sitting up breathing out slowly, his hand automatically going up to his head, to find the wound mostly healed, but the headache wasn't so lucky to be gone. Throwing the cover off himself, flushing a little glancing back at Blake, closing his eyes in humiliation. Compared to Blake's body his looked utterly dreadful, pale, thin and unappealing to look at.

He couldn't find his clothes or wand, which made him feel quite anxious, causing him to forget his pervious thoughts, swinging his legs out of the bed, wincing at the minor pain that throbbed through his ankle, so he had broken it. He thought, as he stared at the bandaged appendage testing out his reflexes, it had healed but was still sore. His eyes caught sight of potions - more specifically the pain reliever - he quickly plucked it from its resting place and swallowed it, sighing in relief as the reminder of the aches he had disappeared. Delicately standing, trying to keep as much weight off his mending ankle, thankful that he was very close to the bathroom.

Blake immediately came awake at the sound of the soft click as the bathroom door closed, stretching out feeling none of the embarrassment that Severus did. A quick tempus startled him into surprise; it was almost lunch time, eleven forty-five. It was little wonder he was feeling more rested than he had suspected. His stomach grumbled loudly, no doubt Severus needed something in him too. "Dobby?" once again calling him quietly.

"What can Dobby do for Master?" the House-elf asked.

"Bring us some lunch, something soft," Blake told Dobby, the last thing Severus would want was something greasy, his stomach was probably feeling a little off after all the potions and the pain.

Dobby bowed once before leaving once again.

Sighing softly, he stood up stretching out with a satisfied groan, well, if Severus was able to stand up, he'd bet he was feeling a lot better.

"How are you feeling?" Blake asked when Severus eventually came out of the bathroom, wearing a pair of loose-fitting silk green pajama bottoms and a silk long sleeved top that matched. Considering they'd been in the laundry basket he was obviously recycling used clothes instead of going into his bedroom - self-conscious then.

"What happened?" Severus asked as he moved over to the table, as Dobby popped in with a tray of food. "How long was I out of it?"

"Its lunch time, Sunday afternoon, you weren't unconscious too long," Blake informed him, gesturing towards the bowl of stew, without saying anything telling Severus to eat. He was baffled when Severus actually did slide it close and begin eating, he must have been hungry then. "As for what happened, only you can answer that I am afraid, I found you outside the wards of Hogwarts unconscious and injured. I know you detest the hospital wing and Poppy's mothering, so I brought you here and healed you myself."
Severus paused for a moment, letting it sink in before replying, "Thank you," he genuinely appreciated that Blake had brought him here, he truly did loathe the Hospital wing.

"Anytime," Blake replied sincerely, he badly wanted to ask him about the meeting, whether he was caught or not, but he refused to be like Dumbledore. Dumbledore didn't care about anything other than getting answers, he knew the feeling, he'd been tortured at fourteen and all Dumbledore cared was getting the full picture.

Both of them ate in silence, enjoying the warm bowl of stew and the sandwiches that Dobby had provided them with, unlike the school meals; this had spices and herbs in it making it truly a wonderful bowl of stew. It was exactly what Severus needed after the night he had.

"He knows Nagini is gone," Severus informed him bluntly and almost out of the blue after their meal was done.

Blake nodded pensively, "I suspected as much,"

Severus narrowed his eyes, "You're planning something," he may not have known Blake for years, but he knew him well enough, had seen the look he got when he analyzed his thoughts when he planned something.

"Yes," he admitted without preamble.

"Why? You were happy to continue our…your plans up until now," Severus stated cautiously, was it because of him? He doubted it but part of him truly believed that to be the case.

"Our plans," Blake corrected him; he was in on this after all. "It's time to fix this before anything else happens, I changed the future by just being here…trying to stop more from changing is just stupidity and cowardice, things have changed enough anyway that there's no knowing what will happen."

"This you already know," Severus pointed out, perplexed by Blake's sudden change of heart, it made his heart pound, could he be the reason that Blake was changing everything? He didn't dare ask he wasn't going to make an ass out of himself. "And you are not a coward," far from it that it was ludicrous to even suggest otherwise to either Blake or Harry.

"Try and remain off that leg until tomorrow morning as much as possible," Blake told him, completely changing the subject.

Severus nodded grimly, he was aware of the limitations; it wasn't his first broken bone. "What do you propose we do?"

"Honestly? Try to catch the Dark Lord on his own, or with as little Malfoy's in the manor as possible, preferably without Lucius there, Narcissa isn't as big as a supporter, she's more likely to feign ignorance at this point, especially if it gets her son out of being a Death Eater." Blake mused.

"The wards are impregnable," Severus pointed out; his own brow furrowed as he tried to think like Blake and figure out what he was planning.

"Mmm, perhaps not," Blake mused, rubbing his jaw absently, remembering how they had gotten out of Malfoy Manor the first time. It's certainly not a way they would expect for things to go. House-elves were very undervalued by nearly everyone in the magical community.

"Care to elaborate?" Severus asked, his entire body tense as dread consumed him, not liking the thought of Blake entering that damn manor without knowing the ins and outs himself. He would be
going as a backup, he wasn't about to let Blake do this himself, no matter how damn powerful and smart he was.

"I got out of Malfoy Manor the first time around at the age of seventeen when Dobby came to my aid," Blake informed Severus, his eyes flashing in pain at the memory even now.

Severus' breath caught in his throat, there was no room for incredulity that Blake would give a shit about a House-elf, it wasn't unexpected. Harry, had many friends, a bloody half-giant a centaur if the rumors were to be believed why not a House-elf? Blake grieved for the House-elf even now, that much was obvious. Or rather the memory since Dobby was very much alive.

"Dobby used to belong to the Malfoy's and Kreacher as one of the Black's will also be able to get in due to Black blood," Blake said shrewdly. "They can get me in and out, I'd just need to pick a good time, preferably during a Wizengamot meeting or council meeting that Lucius couldn't get out off."

"We, you aren't going alone, you'll need back up," Severus stated sharply, he wasn't going to take no for an answer.

Blake's lips twitched as he nodded sombrely, sort of grateful for Severus' words as fondness swept over him.

Both of them were getting all that closer to admitting their feelings for each other. Although considering how taciturn they both were, it might take something drastic for both of them or one of them to show their feelings.

Chapter End Notes

There we go I've had a few people asking if I had changed my mind about Voldemort being killed off and the answer to that is yes I did change my mind :) not sure how it will turn out but I believe that not many wishes for Tom/Harry in this so it's maybe best if it didn't happen, I'll just have some sort of relationship happen in the epilogue since its ages away yet anyway and Harry does have a lot on his plate so there we go! perhaps Neville/Luna/Harry might be a good twist :P although I don't normally write threesomes I wouldn't actually be writing much of it, due to the fact it would be in the epilogue but having it alluded for a few chapters can't hurt ;) I've never written Dumbledore in St. Mungo's before...it might be fun to write that...what do you think? Dumbledore in Azkaban, St. Mungo's or die of old age without anyone listening to him after they all rejoice the lack of war? R&R please
"You should know that Hogwarts informed me that you were injured," Blake informed Severus, absently swirling the alcohol around in the glass, looking for all the world as if he wasn't keeping a keen eye on Severus' reaction to his words. Which of course, he was, he did wonder if Severus was able to communicate with her as well. Yes, he considered Hogwarts a 'her' he didn't know if it was the castle's doing or if it was more to do with Helga and Rowena's magic going into making her sentient that made Hogwarts feel 'female' as it were. Not that he'd ever voice that out loud, it would make him seem utterly insane.

"Hogwarts?" Severus asked dubiously, giving Blake an odd look, similar but not exactly like the one he had given Harry when he found out about his Parseltongue abilities. Similar only because there was no fear today, and there most definitely had been back then, he hadn't noticed it at the time. He was twelve years old at the time, so yeah, course he wouldn't understand the terror Severus had felt just hearing hissing. Which he no doubt associated with death due to The Dark Lord's penchant for having snakes around and using them to kill or injure people…then there was the fact when the Dark Lord was furious he would hiss in Parseltongue before curses and hexes would fly.

"I'm serious," Blake spoke, putting the now empty glass aside, "I could feel foreign magic here," gesturing towards his heart. "Urgent tugging as if something required my attention. I realized it was Hogwarts, it felt like home, felt safe."

Severus swallowed thickly, his brow furrowing, he didn't quite understand it himself.

"I pressed my hand against the wall and an image of the gates flashed before my eyes," Blake told him, a thoughtful look on his face, "I realized she was trying to get my attention - to you. I quickly began to make my way down towards the gates, every move I made I could still feel her, she made sure the path was clear for me, each corner I turned the stairs were pulling in and took me in the quickest direct path to you."

Warmth suffused Severus, his black eyes flashing, but as happy as he felt over it, he did indeed feel some confusion.

"That was not all," Blake said, "As I brought you here, your classroom, office and quarters doors all opened for me, I didn't utter a single password, and when I closed the doors the wards flared back up, and if I'm not wrong…they felt a little stronger than before."

"Why?" Severus muttered utterly baffled, even as he felt as though he could power London with the feelings he couldn't quite name, happiness perhaps, affection for the place he called home?

"I can't say, I've never quite felt anything like it before in my life, even Headteachers do not get to feel her to that extent," Blake shrugged, truly in the dark just as much as Severus was regarding Hogwarts motives, but he did know that it was nothing bad. She had been sincere in trying to look after those she cared for under her roof…under her protection.
"Not even in your timeline?" Severus questioned in surprise.

"I never really entered Hogwarts again after I was seventeen, and that was only for a short period of time, I only completed six years of Hogwarts." Blake sighed, rubbing his head as if he was trying to rub away a horrid headache. "Perhaps that is what the Headteachers feel? Not like I'm going to ask Dumbledore," his lips curled in derision, oh, how he hated the old fool. There was no other way to find out unless he spoke to one of the portraits.

"The portraits," Severus pointed out shrewdly, his mind echoing Blake's quite accurately.

Blake smirked, giving a single nod letting Severus know without words that it had been his thoughts too. "Phineas Black would be the best person to have this conversation with. He hated Dumbledore as well, and does the bare minimum when it comes to doing what the old fool asks. He would get a kick out of it as well, and the knowing secretive smirk Phineas would wear will most assuredly drive Dumbledore insane." Phineas hated Dumbledore due to his eccentricity, and his pro-Muggle beliefs and he was right to hate him so.

"His portrait was in the ancestral Black townhouse…what happened to it after Black moved into the new place?" Severus questioned, he wanted answers, and he didn't like mysteries.

"The portraits should be in the trunk with the rest of the stuff gathered from the townhouse…I'm positive Kreacher removed everything, even Walburga's portrait so it stands to reason the others would be there." Blake replied, his mind trying to figure out if he had come across them but he couldn't remember he had taken so many curses and hexes of a lot of items. "Kreacher?" Blake commanded, calling him from the cottage where he stayed with Dobby.

Just then a knock caught them off guard; they glanced at each other with caution and suspicion.

"Remain seated, you need to get your ankle better, especially if you wish to accompany me," Blake stated sternly, giving him a pointed look. "I will not let you come with me if you are not one hundred percent," it was going to be dangerous after all.

"Only Dumbledore ever comes down," Severus gritted out through clenched teeth, he really didn't want to have to deal with the old fool. He had already written everything down and sent it to the old man; he had nothing more left to say, so of course, he would come down here instead of letting him recover in peace.

Blake just held out his arm, palm up instructing him to remain seated as he moved to answer the door. He was honestly expecting Dumbledore, but he was pleasantly surprised to be proven wrong. "Harry," he said, blinking at the sight of the worried teen.

"Is everything alright?" Harry asked, his brow furrowed green eyes alight with worry, glancing inside, seeing the Professor without his customary robes on was weird and told him last night must have been bad.

"What can Kreacher do for Master Blake?" Kreacher answered the call, standing behind Blake.

"Get in," Blake gestured opening the door wider allowing the teen to duck under his arm, stepping aside to stop himself from stepping on Kreacher. "Sit down," he gestured for the teen to go ahead and sit.

"Kreacher did you remove all the portraits from the walls?" Blake asked the House-elf as he reclaimed his seat.

"Yes, I did Master Black," Kreacher replied, his tone wary, he didn't like where this was going. He
had his Mistresses portrait stowed away beside his locket that his Master had said was his.

"Look for Phineas Black's portrait and bring it to me please," Blake ordered the House-elf, "If I am not still here bring it up to my Quarters at Hogwarts, do not do so if I have company, that's not anyone in this room, you understand?"

"Kreacher understands, bring it to only you, or when you're alone with only who is in this room," Kreacher said, giving a bow before he popped away. It was slightly insulting really; he wasn't going to take that long to find the portrait at all.

"Why do you want the old Black Headmaster's portrait? What's going on?" Harry asked, as always eager for information.

"I want to ask him a few questions," Blake answered Harry's question, knowing more would be coming, he was terribly nosy.

"Why?" Harry then predictably asked.

Severus rolled his eyes in exasperation, the boy was too damn curious for his own good and had gotten into a lot of trouble he wouldn't have otherwise if he'd just kept his nose clean. It made protecting him next to impossible, but he must have done something right before he died in the other timeline he thought gazing at Blake briefly, he had grown into a strong impressive individual. He rarely thought of them both as the same person, the personalities were just so different that when he did think about it - it made his head spin. Although Blake's appearance here had definitely changed his feelings for both of them in different ways.

"I have a few questions to ask him about what being the Headmaster entails," Blake answered, being truthful without giving too much away. "Why aren't you with Neville, Luna or the twins?"

"The twins are busy and Neville is with Luna in the ROR," Harry replied, his cheeks going slightly red as he admitted this, especially with a teacher there…well two teachers actually. He regretted saying anything right away, especially with the looks of amusement on their faces, and yes, despite the fact they weren't laughing, Harry had learned to tell how Blake felt, and along the way, it helped him read even Severus to an extent.

"And just how did they find out about the Room of Requirements?" Blake enquired, green eyes gleaming in wicked amusement.

"I er…I might have told them," Harry said, shifting uncomfortably, he hadn't exactly assumed they'd have THAT in mind when he answered their question on knowing somewhere private. With Luna being a Ravenclaw and Neville a Gryffindor it wasn't easy to find anywhere after all. Neither house would be happy to have a student, not of their house invading their common room. So yes, he'd explained the Room of Requirements to him. Blake had mentioned the room a few times during the summer, and it had clicked for him, it was the very same room Dumbledore had mentioned to Karkaroff during last years fiasco.

Harry eyed Blake and Snape as they glanced at each other in amusement; there was softness in Snape's eyes when he looked at Blake. Biting his tongue Harry stared at the floor, wondering when they were going to make a move already, it was getting stupid. If he noticed it then there was definitely no subtly between them. "What happened?" he asked, wanting to know why his session had been canceled.

"Did you feel anything last night?" Blake asked, narrowing his eyes, wondering if it was just Harry's intuition when it came to these things or if he had seen something. He shouldn't have, the
Horcrux had been removed, and with it the connection was broken. He should know he'd never seen anything since the removal of his own invading soul piece. Although he had often time wished for it back, just to catch a glimpse, to see what the Dark Lord was planning.

"No, he called didn't he?" Harry said, nodding as if he had suspected as much, he had already theorized that there wasn't much that would have Severus deviating from his normal routine. The fact Blake had broken the routine as well spoke volumes, his lessons were important, and there weren't many people that Blake would put it on hold for. "Are you going to be okay?" Harry solemnly asked, wincing just a tad, with Blake he felt safe, happy, although somewhat burdened by some of the knowledge of what the future held. Knowing that everything was going to be down to him, in the end, enabled him to feel like he could properly breathe for the first time. It wasn't just that though when Blake gave him information he didn't hold back, which meant he knew just how vicious and downright cruel Voldemort could be. But hello, he would know, he'd suffered under the Cruciatus Curse himself - twice! - He understood it better than everyone else his own age.

Severus' eyes flickered with surprise at the honest question from Harry, he also caught the wince, and it took him a few seconds to understand why it had occurred. Of course, he had been the one to brew the potions to ease the symptoms of the torture that had been inflicted on Harry. Nobody deserved that sort of hurts bestowed upon them, let alone a fourteen-year-old teenager. He remembered the first time he'd been held under it, he had been unable to stand, Lucius had been the one to side-long Apparate him to Spinners End after the meeting. The fact Harry had managed to pick himself up and somehow evade the Death Eaters and the Dark Lord and get to safety along with the dead body of his fellow champion was a bloody miracle. "I'm recovering," Severus answered honestly, gratitude enveloping him; even Albus didn't ask him that without ulterior motives.

To have someone caring, more than one someone was a godsend, a gift he wouldn't take for granted.

"Now that you're here, why don't we have a session?" Blake demanded in a gruff manner.

Harry blinked utterly used to his moody ways; it usually meant Blake was thinking of not so pleasant things, like the future. Not that anyone could blame him, the future had sounded pretty fucking bleak. Either that or he was blaming himself internally for something that was more than likely not even his fault. Given the subject, he deduced it was more than likely he felt responsible for Severus' injuries.

They were planning something. He didn't know what yet, and honestly…Harry wasn't sure whether he wanted to know or not. He knew both Blake and Severus were dark wizards; they would do whatever it took to end the war, no matter the consequences to their own conscience. Who was he kidding? He hated not being in on the action, not knowing what was going on. It's what had led to all those previous encounters. Harry scrambled to get up out of the chair when Blake stood, following him, inwardly wondering how he knew this place so well…the map or had he been down often enough to get it all internally mapped out in his head. He had kept an eye on the map so he didn't get how that could have occurred.

Blake muttered a few spells under his breath, the room was bare, a spare bedroom that wasn't used. Then he stepped into position, a serious air around him, like always when they did this dueling stance. Waiting patiently for Harry to stand at the opposite side, then their wands were drawn towards their chest, their hearts a quick bow before it was swiftly withdrawn and held out and aloft, ready to commence their duel.

He didn't need to be instructed he knew the ins and outs now.
"Bombarda!" without more ado Harry began the duel, knowing better than to use the disarming charm; he had learned that lesson a long time ago.

"demissam demergi totam facti sunt!" Blake said it very quickly his wand aimed appropriately.

Harry cursed as he began to submerge into the floor, acting quickly as he had been trained to do, "Subsistio! Protego! Ferveret sanguis!"

Blake swiftly erected a shield and then redirected the blood boiling curse to harmlessly hit the wall. Sending his own spells in retaliation, "Incisura! Vulnus!" using spells he'd been teaching Harry for weeks, to make sure both the spells and counters were stuck firmly in his mind. It would prevent him freezing if he was facing a true opponent.

"Parma! Avis!" Harry conjured up first the shield spell, then the birds to catch the slashing spell 'Vulnus' was a nasty piece of work, and its counter was longer than the spell itself, so it was best just to use something like Avis or use something in the way.

"Expulso!" Blake cast with lightning quick reflexes. "Bombarda! Incarcerous!" adding a few mild ones in to see if Harry could deal with them all.

"Protego! Confringo! Expelliarmus!" Harry muttered.

"Come on now," Blake spoke, slightly vexed that Harry was resorting to completely Hogwarts authorized spells now after doing so well.

"Contrarium!" Harry cast refusing to get angry, another thing Blake taught him, anger made you sloppy, make mistakes, remain calm always in face of an enemy, aiming the spell at Blake's knee, trying to use the spell to cripple his knee make it jerk backward and cause Blake to fall down. "Vulnus!"

"Avis! Langlock!" Blake cast the two spells in rapid succession; the birds distracted Harry long enough for him not to notice the spell until it was too late.

Harry pursed his lips, making an indignant noise at the back of his throat for a second before concentrated, then blue bolts of electricity began leaving his wand zooming straight for Blake with precision.

Blake smirked impressed, he hadn't seen Harry able to use that spell non-verbally yet. Throwing shield after shield up, actually having to work to keep himself from being hit.

The electric conductor continued on…Harry visibly straining to keep it up. Then out of the blue, he cast a non-verbal blasting curse followed by the blue bolts of electricity, both of them hit their targets. Due to the fact, the shield charm he was using didn't work against blasting curses.

Blake went careening into the wall, blood splattering everywhere from where Blake had used his arm to literally shield himself from the blasting curse, which was weakened due to it being non-verbalised but still strong enough to break through the shield charm.

A muffled curse word later, Harry was kneeling beside Blake worried, not reveling in his success.

"Move aside," Severus stated causing Harry to jump in shock before shuffling to the side, "Retrieve a blood replenisher, pain reliever and a salve, go!" he gestured for the teen to go ahead and get them. Shaking his head, he also pointed his wand at Harry and reversed the curse, causing a sigh of relief as Harry's tongue was once again where it was meant to be not stuck on the roof of his mouth. He did not like that spell at all, and he was determined to find out more about it. So he
quickly made correct guesswork's as to where the lab was after one wrong turn grabbing everything he needed.

Severus used a gentle spell to return Blake to the land of the living instead of the more known medical one.

"Bloody hell," Blake groaned, sitting up, he was far too proud to be embarrassed really.

"Let me see your arm," Severus demanded, putting more weight on his good leg, he was definitely not going to undo all Blake's hard work, and he most assuredly was not going to be left behind. Whatever Blake was up to, he was going with him, and it had nothing to do with playing the hero or being a good guy, he just wanted to ensure that Blake came out of this alive and that he kept his promise to himself, that he would see the Dark Lord destroyed once and for all. He refused to die this time around before the final battle, he wanted to live but to live he had to ensure Blake destroyed the Dark Lord.

"I told you to stay off your feet," Blake reprimanded, grimacing as he held up his mangled left arm. "I'm so not used to this pain anymore," he admitted with a pained groan.

"Here," Harry called as he shuffled onto his knees, keeping a grip of the vials in his hand.

Severus plucked the pain reliever immediately and uncorked it before passing it over with a single determined look that told Blake to swallow the damn thing.

Blake sighed in relief as the potion got to work right away.

Severus got to work on repairing the damage to Blake's arm, due to the speed in which they were dealing with it; his tattoo wouldn't suffer for it.

"I can't believe I managed to beat you," Harry said, sounding utterly stunned.

"That's exactly what I want you to do," Blake stated sharply, "You did really well, I'm proud of how far you've come and your ingenuity,"

Harry flushed at the praise, a small smile curling at his lips, fondness overtaking him yet again, he really liked that he was praised, sure it was hard earned but it happened. He wasn't used to people wanting him to do well, to be smart, but for a bit of praise...Harry would do it all over again if he could. It felt amazing, yes, he was going to do his best to earn more praise. "Thank you," Harry whispered no cocky masks or sarcastic remarks to be found. "I didn't think it would work...but I just knew what I had to do all of a sudden," he confided.

Blake's lips twitched and he nodded that he understood, much of what they did had been 'just knowing what to do' it always came at the right moment too, usually during severe situations. "You are always at your best when the situation is dire," their thirst for survival was immense. "Thank you, Severus," he added, as his arm was smothered in salve before bandaged tightly with a quick simple spell.

"Your head?" Severus questioned.

"Aches but no wound," Blake told him after mentally assessing himself.

"Come on, I'll help you up!" Harry said, easily standing up, helping Blake regain his bearings, and all three of them slowly but surely made their way out of the spare room they'd just used for an impromptu duel. "And don't think I've forgotten earlier, what are you planning?"
"I'll tell you," Blake stated seriously, "But only when I've had a chance to think it through, I'm not keeping it from you in an attempt to protect you, I just don't have a solid plan yet, do you understand?" making it clear to the fifteen-year-old.

Harry nodded sombrely, and he trusted Blake completely, he hadn't lied to him yet and he knew deep inside he never would.

"Good!" Blake said slumping into the seat with a sigh, rubbing his forehead, his eyes closed as his head thumped painfully; damn the teenager hadn't half got him good. It had been a long time since he had been so thoroughly caught off guard. It would show him for assuming he had the upper hand because of the spell.

As always Severus watched their interactions with concealed curiosity.

Chapter End Notes

There we go! thank you all so much for your patience and reviews when it comes to all my stories they all mean the world to me! You know I've never had the 'final battle' be just a duel between Voldemort and Harry before...perhaps when Voldemort was due to break into Azkaban? Or will Blake publicity challenge Voldemort to a duel making the wizard have to attend? Sort of like a contract of sorts using old blood and magic to enable it? IT would definitely help him gain popularity in terms of Blake warning the magical world of what could come...with the Muggles and all provide proof of how they could be found out etc... or will Blake get to work on his own? Or become the Minister and ensure the work is done? What do you think? R&R please
Chapter 34

The Games They Play

Chapter 34

An hour later after being given his orders, Kreacher popped back into Severus' quarters, where only two people currently occupied it. The large frame was floating in mid-air in front of the House-elf, obscuring him from view completely, so small he was compared to the large picture frame. It didn't obscure Kreacher for long, who stepped aside from the frame, bowing to his Master, "The portrait you requested, Master," he answered, without the usual glum or disgust coating his voice. If anything Kreacher sounded quite happy at his success, as he should be.

"Thank you, Kreacher, you may return home now," Blake replied, giving the House-elf a small barely discernible smile. Showing the House-elf he was proud of him, he believed treating House-elves with kind intentions was a good thing, they were more loyal in the end, happier to serve. Dobby had proven that time and time again, and hopefully, he would get the chance to see what would become of Kreacher when treated right.

The portrait levitated towards the wall before Kreacher disappeared with a pop.

"How often have you actually been teaching Harry?" Severus asked as cups, sugar, milk, cream, biscuits on a large platter made its way through to the living room via Severus' magic. Speaking for the first time since Blake had suggested that Harry go do something before Dumbledore comes down, and he might with a meeting having happened the night before. He knew it happened at least once a week, but by what he had just seen…he suspected it was much more frequent than that. The duel had been quite spectacular, especially for a mock duel for a fifteen-year-old.

Even Filius would have been impressed and that was a wizard who had been involved in the dueling circuit for longer than two decades.

"You don't have anything stronger?" Blake asked, staring at the cups of coffee as if they had personally offended him.

"No," Severus denied, he wasn't going to let Blake drink not after perhaps getting a concussion, it may well end up covering shock, even if he doubted such a thing could actually send him into a shock. Better safe than sorry in his mind, so he was going to prevent, while he could at any rate, Blake from drinking.

Blake grumbled under his breath before accepting the coffee half-heartedly. "Thank you," remembering his manners.

Severus' lips twitched in amusement at the sight of what was probably a 'pout' on Blake's face.

"As you know, teaching someone one on one allows them to become quite…proficient and very quickly, especially going at their paces." Blake shrugged, sipping the coffee, before continuing, "It also helps that I know Harry, I know all the tricks that will help him learn at a brisk pace."

Severus nodded to concede the point.
"He's always been brilliant at Defence, he learned the Patronus charm with only what...perhaps nine lessons, I think, maybe a few more," Blake continued as if he wasn't speaking of himself. "Even most adults cannot produce a fully fledged patronus, so yeah, he's always been a prodigy at Defence. He was happy at being a mediocre student, he had nobody to will him to do better. He also learned very quickly that Granger became incensed when he did better and Weasley got jealous. He preferred to keep the status quo."

Severus' lip curled, the thought of anyone deciding to do less than their best when it came to their education was idiotic and that was him kindly phrasing it.

Blake laughed, "Yeah, I know what you're thinking, but we all do stupid things as children, don't you agree?" arching an eyebrow in Severus' direction.

Severus deflated, grudgingly nodding, "Indeed," listening to Black and going down to the Whomping Willow had been utterly stupid. As had joined the Dark Lord at the urging of his so-called 'friends', when in reality Lily had been his only friend and had seen what was happening when he'd been blinded to it. The ultimatum she'd given him...no doubt she'd expected him to come out of the funk he'd been in, but the opposite had happened, it had drug him further down into their hold.

"Anyway, I usually taught him two to three times a week, sometimes more, due to the fact working here had been a last minute decision, I thought I wouldn't have much time to teach him as much as possible. It's twice right now, scheduled in when we can do it, once at the weekend though." Blake finally answered Severus' question. "Phineas Black," he called out to the portrait, now it was a waiting game to see whether the wizard would show up - hopefully soon - he was too curious for his own good, especially for a Slytherin. He definitely had the attitude of one though, that's for damn certain.

"I assume you are going to continue them even after the Dark Lord has been defeated?" Severus summarised, and honestly, he wasn't surprised. He doubted people like himself or Blake would ever get out of the suspicious mindset, they would remain paranoid until the day they died.

"You know it," Blake replied immediately, pouring a little more milk into the coffee so he could drink it properly without scalding his tongue. Which he promptly did, "There will still be Death Eaters around, continuing their Lord's work, they will assume that he will come back again...he has quite managed to make them see him as...immortal due to the grandiose display he put on during his resurrection ritual."

"What is your so-called 'plan'?" Severus questioned, upon seeing the look he received, "Don't give me that look, you already have tentative plans made, I wasn't born yesterday," he informed him sardonically.

Blake smirked wryly, "Two actually, but I'm unsure of which would have the best overall results, for both myself and the magical world on whole." he finally confessed, his brow slightly furrowed, showing his confliction.

Severus stared blankly, surprised by the show of mental struggle that Blake was obviously experiencing. A lot of thought must have gone into this for him to actually be conflicted. He couldn't say he was surprised by the fact he had thought of at least two ideas to deal with the conflict, he and Blake were a lot alike and thought numerous scenarios to deal with an abundance of things. From everyday problems to more severe things such as any happenings that dealt with the Dark Lord. "I would be more than happy to lend an ear should you wish to discuss it," he said slowly, not one hundred percent certain that Blake would wish to share his ideas, although if experience had taught him anything lately when it came to Blake he seemed to relish the idea of
having someone to talk to. He could only imagine how bleak the future had been for him that he took such solace from his presence.

Blake's dark jaded green eyes flicked towards Severus' own jaded black ones, narrowed in contemplation before a single nod showed that he had made up his mind.

"On one hand, having the duel in say Malfoy Manor would give at least a modicum of privacy so that the Dark Lord doesn't have…much in the way of using hostages or means of distraction. I can of course, after the duel, albeit if I survive, take his dead body back to the Ministry of magic and give them the pensive memory and it can be written about and probably dramatized to oblivion. Which can have one or two results, having the public terrified of me and thinking I could be the next Dark Lord or in awe of me, I actually prefer the latter especially if I want to accomplish what I need."

"Which is?" Severus asked, "The Muggles?" he guessed as the most likely culprit.

"Got it in one," Blake stated sharply, just remembering what it was like having both the Muggles and the Dark Lord and his legion of Death Eaters after one small group trying to stay ahead of both. "They technologic advance too much for most wizards to understand, even for wizard raised Half-Blood's."

"I cannot see how the outcome can be changed unless you sabotage their technology," Severus admitted pensively, it was rather concerning, to be honest. "Even then that may not work long term." it seemed inevitable that magic would be exposed by the things that have been described. It was enough to give him nightmares.

"Welcome to one of my many dilemmas," Blake replied cynically. His mind wasn't a pretty place to be at the best of times, and coming back should have eased his worries but the fact of the matter was…it had increased them significantly. He felt the weight of the world on his shoulders, he was just but one man, one wizard, as powerful as he may be, he wasn't omnipotent, he didn't know what to do for the best, and it weighed him down.

"And your second option?" Severus prompted a few moments later.

"Having it be a public spectacle, so that people will know what really happened and not the Ministry propaganda or the Prophet exaggerating is what they hear of what happened. It's an old practice, one that isn't done today, but with both of us having founders blood…it's conceivable that I can use the ritual and force the Dark Lord to participate in a duel."

Severus' eyebrows rose in shock, "Lest he loses his magic,"

"If he fails to show he will indeed lose his magic," Blake confirmed. The ritual would make it seem as though he was issuing the challenge right in front of him, but it will be a mere shade, a projection if you like.

"But on the downside, he has people who he can use as protection," Severus mused thoughtfully, and as cold and emotionally distant Blake seemed, he would never see an innocent hurt if he could help it. That was the one thing that hadn't changed in both Harry and Blake from what he could see. "There are barriers that can be erected, I'm sure Filius would know dozens, they use them during the championship dueling tournament. They certainly seem to keep everyone safe from stay hexes and curses."

"Ah, but they don't use the Unforgivable Curses," Blake pointed out wryly, and they both knew from experience that the Dark Lord certainly loved those spells above all others.
Severus grimaced, as his cheeks went a little red in embarrassment at his insipid oversight, and it was a stupid bloody oversight, especially for a man of his intelligence and smarts.

"You called?" drawled a voice causing both men to flinch, fingers drawn to their wands before it dawned on them, Phineas Black. The wizard was watching them with a narrowed look, unable to fully conceal his curiosity at them.

Blake leaned back, shooting Phineas a calculating speculative look. "How would you describe your connection to Hogwarts, your bond if you will while you were Headmaster?"

Severus shot Blake a look, suspecting that Blake actually knew or had a theory as to what had happened and why.

"Now why would you want to know that?" Phineas questioned suddenly looking bored, their defacto settings when they were actually truly curious.

Blake chuckled in genuine amusement, tapping the end of the sofa arms, just waiting the Headmaster out.

"Well?" he drawled, trying to sound bored but it came out more frustrated than he probably liked.

"I'll tell you what, if you answer all my questions...I'll tell you something about your current dear old Headmaster that not many others know." Blake bargained, 'Got ya' he thought seeing those grey eyes flaring in sadistic amusement.

"Alright, you have my attention," Phineas acknowledged. "What do you want to know?"

"Has Hogwarts ever communicated with you in any way, using pictures as a way of communicating what she wants, even with the best of mental shields at your disposal?" Blake commanded.

Shock appeared on Phineas' face, "Once, to both myself and the Hogwarts healer at the time, Healer Walsh,"

"What were the circumstances?" it was Severus who spoke this time, deeply curious.

"A student was grievously injured in the greenhouse, stupidly and willfully disobeying the professor's orders, but that's Gryffindors for you," Phineas said derisively.

"Who was the student?" Blake enquired.

"Armando Dippet," Phineas answered, wondering once more at the way the questions were being asked.

"It seems Hogwarts is more than just a little sentient," Blake said, a smug look on his face.

"Meaning?" Severus questioned cautiously.

"It looks like you're still set to become the Headmaster of Hogwarts, its no coincidence that Hogwarts herself has come to the aid of two of the future Headmasters Hogwarts will or ever had." Blake quietly explained, the smirk never leaving his face. "I...honestly don't think that meeting happened before, in fact, it cannot have since he had nothing to concern himself with regarding Nagini..." he felt extremely guilty for it.

Phineas was clearly trying to listen to the two wizards and failing to hear what was being said.
judging by the annoyed frown crossing his features.

Severus grimaced and rubbed the back of his neck.

"I'm still slightly baffled as to why she chose me...Dumbledore was at the school last night, wasn't he?" Blake spoke loud enough for Phineas to hear this time. "There is no way he would risk his spy...not unless...he thought he was compromised..." swallowing thickly, definitely his fault then.

"He remained in the school, he didn't leave his office until two am even then it was straight to bed." Phineas imparted.

Blake sighed tiredly, pinching the bridge of his nose, "Perhaps I was a bit too hopeful that he would wait for the curse on the job to do its business. I can scarcely believe he would risk his spy just on the off chance..." exasperated beyond belief. He shouldn't have underestimated just how strongly Dumbledore would feel against him and Severus being friends.

"You're looking too much into this," Severus pointed out, "We have no idea if Hogwarts even showed Dumbledore anything." he wasn't just trying to give Dumbledore the benefit of the doubt. Maybe Hogwarts just didn't trust Dumbledore, and thus did not inform him of what happened. He couldn't believe he was living in a world where that damn sentence made sense.

"Dumbledore didn't pause from working at all, so if he saw anything he didn't give any subtle indications." Phineas told them, with a negligent wave of his hand. "When it happened to me I stood up so fast my head and the chair was spinning."

Blake nodded in agreement, it was very disconcerting at the time, but once he accepted it, accepted her the feeling did fade.

"Agreed," he pursed his lips in thought, perhaps he was right in his decision to take Voldemort out then focus on Dumbledore instead of waiting. Without Voldemort then the Ministry and the public wouldn't have any qualms about deriding Dumbledore. They all would focus on the fact Hogwarts, their children, the future was safe with Dumbledore under her roof. They wouldn't want to do too much to him for fear of the possible retribution that may occur.

"You've come to a decision," Severus deduced, seeing the subtle relaxing of Blake's shoulders as if a weight had been taken off him.

"I have," Blake confirmed Severus' deductions.

Severus glanced at Phineas and held his questions in, there was no way either were going to discuss their plans with a Slytherin in the room. Or rather should he say an unrelated to the situation Slytherin who may take advantage of the situation? No doubt he was already deeply curious about what was going on as it stood without adding more fuel to the fire.

"Well, what's this about Dumbledore that nobody else knows?" Phineas demanded, he wanted the juicy titbits and he deserved them. "A deal is a deal," he added when Blake didn't open his mouth immediately.

Blake just grinned ferally, leaned forward and told him about Dumbledore's past that he kept so tightly guarded.

Severus just listened in amusement, Blake was having too much fun with all this information. He was impatient, he wanted to know what Blake had decided, so he couldn't wait until the conversation was over so they could talk privately.
Thankfully Phineas was too shocked at the information he was receiving to ask too many questions and thus making the conversation that much longer.

Chapter End Notes

There we go! another chapter and I am sorry about those who were excited about Voldemort surviving in this one...I just couldn't get the muse to cooperate...perhaps if I had made the war more about the Muggles than Voldemort and 'Blake' it may have been possible but I'm definitely not going back and editing it...so if you really want to see a sane Tom and a Tom/Harry relationship that's a story of mine you can read Lord Of Time which is probably next on my update list! R&R please
Chapter 35

The Games They Play

Chapter 35

Severus stalked through the halls of Hogwarts, making his way directly to the library, he had a book he wished to read and he had to do it soon. By the way, Blake was talking, he intended to do it very soon. The book was an old one, definitely in the restricted section. For once he ignored the students, he had no desire to take points or assign detentions, not at the weekend and not with something plaguing his mind. At least Severus was hoping the book was still within the confines of the library, and not one that Dumbledore had deemed unsuitable for students eyes.

Upon entering he found mostly upper year students studying, a lot of Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws - which always surprised him, they had their library within their common room - Severus gave Madam Pince a nod in silent greeting, as he moved towards the restricted section. She was one of the few people he was able to tolerate, she didn't babble endlessly, and was quite a fierce witch, not that you'd know by looking at the quiet woman, she definitely looked and played the part of a librarian well. He too had been taken in, until he had seen her and Dumbledore arguing, it was his first year as a teacher, and she'd argued like a hellion over him removing one of her books. He'd never admit it but he'd been awed by the sight, it wasn't every day you saw someone actually arguing with Dumbledore.

Opening the door to the restricted section, the smell of musty books hitting him immediately. It smelt like home, his house in Spinners End was more a library than a home. His living room was just bookcases and bookcases covering all inch of wall, with chairs and a table in the middle. A lot of his books were old, older than some of these books, as a matter of fact, he was an avid reader. Devouring any and all information he could. This time he had a purpose.

Traditions and regulations of Duelling

Back in those days, they never had any imagination, the book titles were quite to the point. For once Severus was grateful for it, it meant he was able to find what he needed without reading the descriptions of books to find out what it was about. Tapping the book with his wand, he disabled the safety features on it which prevented students from removing the books from the Restricted Section without the proper authorization. When they had authorization, it was Madam Pince that removed it, otherwise, they screamed loud enough to wake the dead.

The large black bound book was then taken to Pince so he could check it out, which was done without a word. Another silent nod, Severus exited the library, making his way directly back to his quarters. He had nothing else he had to get done today, no detentions, no patrols, so he could read this in relative peace given if he wasn't interrupted. Which would just be the thing, and normally how his life worked.

As he descended down the steps to the Great Hall, he arched an eyebrow but kept moving at the sight of Harry with the Weasley twins along with Mr. Longbottom and Miss Lovegood. There was a relative ease about him that Severus hadn't seen in the years past. After what he had been through, as an unwilling witness and instrument of the Dark Lord's resurrection. After the tournament and his daring escape after enduring torture, he had been different. Understandable,
would change anyone, let alone a teenager.

He had anticipated an angry bitter teenager to return after the holidays, but things had changed since then. It was difficult to process so much had changed in such a short amount of time. Blake had brought that change along with a hope that Severus hadn't felt in a long time. He'd known he would not live to see the end of the war, there was just too much against him for that to happen. He was a spy, spies didn't get happily ever after. He had been right in some respects, he had died in Blake's timeline. Yet there was hope now, perhaps they could avoid the majority of war and damage that so destroyed them in the future.

Harry did not look as though he had the world on his shoulders anymore, and perhaps it was because he didn't. It had been wrong of Dumbledore to make the teenager think he was alone in this fight. Blake had ensured Harry understood he had a life, his life was worth something and that he would help Harry destroy the Dark Lord. All Blake wanted, in turn, was for Harry to do his best, to have the life that had so eluded him.

As he swiftly headed into Slytherin territory, he conceded that Harry always had some tenseness around him ever since he was eleven, presumably when he realized that the Dark Lord was not dead. Even with his friends, Granger and Weasley he still held himself…wary and tense, ready to fight. He wondered if Harry had felt defensive around the two teens, or whether it was a combination of Blake and his new friends that had elicited this change. There was no way would ever figure that out, but it was an idle curiosity.

"Severus, I'm quite glad I caught you!" Dumbledore beamed as he wandered up to his Potions Master, not noticing or not caring about how tense Severus went at his presence. Even his neck stiffened, and Severus kept Dumbledore within his line of sight at all times.

"Albus," Severus drawled none of his hyper vigilance at the sight of Dumbledore showing - he hoped - he just did not fully trust the old fool anymore - if he ever had - and felt wary.

"We had best go to your quarters," Dumbledore prompted walking slightly ahead of his Potions Master, in quite a hurry to get to Severus' quarters. Giving more than a curious passing glance at the book Severus currently had in his hands.

Severus bit his tongue to refrain from saying anything and wordlessly followed Dumbledore to his own quarters. It made him feel on edge allowing the old man into his quarters. Especially knowing that Dumbledore would do whatever it took to win this damn war, regardless of the loss of life or the damage caused to others. As soon as the door was closed, he stood there patiently, a blank mask covering his features, absently putting the book down on the table as if it were no big deal.

"You were called?" Dumbledore prompted the beginning of the conversation, his face demanding an explanation.

"I was," Severus confirmed, idly wondering where he had found out, presumably through the portraits which meant he knew that Blake had also helped him. Which meant he might also know that Harry was down here, this was getting a bit too dangerous. He would need to caution both Blake and Harry to have more care…for however long was required.

Especially considering he had no doubt that Blake was going to expose Dumbledore utterly. The anger he held against the old man was…significant, to say the least.

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-0 Flashback 0-
Severus listened to Blake theatrically tell the Black Headmaster about Dumbledore's childhood and teenage years. He was able to weave quite a tale, but Severus was more amused by the faces Phineas made during the true story. About Dumbledore's father, what happened to Ariana - in a most sympathetic solemn tone - how the father had sought revenge but never once caved to public pressure or interrogation and held his secrets close to his heart, refusing to reveal why he had gone after those particular boys. Keeping his only daughter safe, the inevitable death in Azkaban prison, the Dumbledore boys growing up, Albus doing his best to wash away his fathers' dark reputation so it didn't drag him down. Even at the age of eleven aspiring greatness, his mothers' death at the hands of Ariana, albeit accidentally she was unwell after all. How Dumbledore returned to Godric's Hollow angry at having to care for his ill sister, there he met Gellert Grindelwald and planned out world dominion over the Muggles and wizards alike. How Albus could be responsible for the murder of his little sister, either directly or indirectly. How Gellert ran after that and continued their quest.

"How many wizards and witches have died during the course of these wars? To think if he had just opened his goddamned mouth Gellert and Voldemort wouldn't have succeeded in terrorizing the world at large for decades." Blake stated derisively, his disgust at the old man was obvious to all. "These are just some of his crimes, Albus Dumbledore thinks himself above the law,"

"I didn't think it was possible for anyone to hate Dumbledore more than the Dark Lord," Severus said pensively, but Blake sure as hell sounded like he did.

"The Dark Lord was never screwed over by Dumbledore, not more than once, my wards life has been nothing but screwed over by the old fool," Blake spoke coldly, eyes flashing darkly gleaming with sheer malice.

Severus was in awe that even in his anger Blake was aware of Phineas Black enough not to give himself away. He knew himself that if he let himself get so worked up, he would have said a lot of unsavory things and probably revealed a few tidbits of information he shouldn't have. It was one of his bad traits he so loathed about himself. It had caused so many problems during his life and made him lose someone close to him.

Phineas though looked dazed from where he sat in his portrait seat, looking through them processing the juiciest information he'd ever receive.

"Muffliato!" Severus pointed his wand at them, putting them in a privacy bubble that nothing would get through. Not even listening devices or the portraits themselves could hear anything. "You've made a decision," he pointed out, unsure whether to continue their conversation, Blake seemed extremely angry.

"I have," Blake agreed, his bad mood receding like a wave crashing out and becoming still. Just having come to a decision calmed Blake down immensely. Plans were pretty much all he had for so long, plans of evading the Death Eaters, trying to kill the Dark Lord before there was nobody left, trying to save those who they could. So, yes, plans were all he had, here and now as a different scenario. Things might be different but they were just as dangerous, only now he was having to watch his back from two powerful wizards.

He wanted them out of his life as soon as possible. Out of Harry's life as soon as he could.

It was time to end this once and for all before something happened that he couldn't predict.

There had been many times in his life where he just wanted to lie down and give up, give in against the unenviable, but it just wasn't who he was. His entire life had been one constant battle to survive, to live, in hopes of something going his way, of actually having a life. He'd given up on his hopes
and dreams of a normal life, now his greatest desire was to wipe Dumbledore and the Dark Lord out of existence. If he could do that then he would consider something in his life a success. This, being here, with Severus...it was the most content he had been for a very long time. More than he'd ever imagined he could be for a good long while.

"Care to share?" Severus prompted, relaxing, ignoring the twinges he felt from the pain returning, now that Blake had relaxed.

"I am going to officially challenge the Dark Lord to a duel," Blake revealed, "I need to before he creates anymore Horcruxes or does something that I can't foresee. It's a shame to have to get rid of him, his intelligence would have been handy to have, but he's a threat, the exposure he creates could be the catalyst to magic being found out." not that he needed a reason to destroy the Dark Lord, his actions thus far, was enough, never mind the future.

"Then you best make it soon," Severus replied, his tone and countenance grim, "He may believe that someone has found out with Nagini going missing."

"He can see through Nagini, control her to a certain extent, he will know she's in a tank, chances are he probably thinks she was picked up by a Muggle or someone magical unaware of who or what she was." Blake shook his head explaining quickly, "It's why I primarily put her in there, even I saw through her eyes a few times, it's also why I haven't destroyed them yet." he just couldn't risk more Horcruxes, its what had happen to him in future. He could not let it happen. Pressing his palm to his forehead, annoyed at his circling thoughts, repeating themselves constantly.

"What if he returns to his hideouts to ensure their safety?" Severus questioned playing devil's advocate on possible actions that the Dark Lord may partake.

"I have a few runes buried under the grass, future work, practically undetectable, if he approaches them I'll know," Blake nixing that particular worry. Giving Severus a knowing look, "I know him well, believe me, I've spent years playing an elaborate game of chess with him, trying to bring him down." Dumbledore had initially set the board of course, but he and the Dark Lord had forged ahead, long after Dumbledore was dead.

"Touché," Severus said, his lips twitching into a smirk, an elaborate game of chess, indeed! Blake certainly had a way with words and understatements. "When are you going to challenge him?" his mind calculating just when he thought Blake would go for it.

"Before the holidays, but after the students visit Hogsmeade," Blake mused thoughtfully, "I'm not having them deciding to watch the spectacle while they're meant to be in Hogsmeade, I'll try and get something done so that none of the students can leave Hogwarts for the duration."

"Minerva?" Severus arched a curious eyebrow.

"Honestly I'd trust Filius before her," Blake grumbled under his breath.

"Mmm, her trust in Albus is quite bothersome," Severus conceded resignedly.

-0 End Flashback 0-
have known anything happened if he wasn't blatantly spying on him using portraits of all things to do so. Either that or he was watching him much more closely by keeping an eye on his magical signature, which was quite sickening, to be honest. "Perhaps annoyed may be a better term to use, his snake has gone missing," he informed him grudgingly. "He took his mood out on all of us, trying to gain information none of us had for him." concern and suspicion crawled up Severus' spine when he saw Dumbledore's eye take on an ardent and cautious gleam. Could Dumbledore already believe Nagini was a Horcrux? Yes, he will have known from the moment Harry described his nightmares, while in Riddle mansion.

"His snake?" Dumbledore questioned, "Now why would anyone take his snake?"

"A better question is how that thing has never been out of the Dark Lord's sight the times I've been summoned." Severus scoffed derisively. "With how paranoid the Dark Lord is, I wouldn't be surprised if it was simply cursed or lost in one of the crevices that make up Malfoy manor."

"It's possible," Dumbledore conceded, his own suspicions warring with the sense Severus was making.

"If that is all, Albus?" Severus questioned, wishing nothing more than for the old fool to leave him in peace. It wasn't very much out of his character, he normally couldn't stand being around anyone, not even Dumbledore and the old man knew that.

"I can wait," Albus said distractedly, wishing to be in his office to ponder on this new information, he glimpsed the book Severus had once more. "Doing some light reading?" watching Severus closely without being obvious.

Albus Dumbledore trying to outwit a Slytherin who managed to even deceive Voldemort…like that would work. Dumbledore was good, but he wasn't that good.

"Take a look around, Albus, when I have a free moment I like to read," Severus said sardonically. His quarters like his home housed nothing more than books. It was a very poor attempt at trying to find out why he was interested in that particular book, but it was obvious even to him that Albus was still dwelling on what he had been told earlier.

He had fixated on the snake.

He definitely knew about the Horcruxes.

He suspected Nagini was one.

"Come to my office tomorrow evening, after dinner," Albus demanded, wanting to know everything in greater detail. "I wish to know everything that has happened, and I'm pleased you are well," with that the Headmaster made his way out of his spy's quarters. His mind truly a million miles away, wondering where the snake could have gone…and if anyone could possibly know that Tom had Horcruxes. The thought of anyone knowing was very troublesome, he had to find out.

Especially if they figured out that Mr. Potter was one.

A boy who had greatly distanced himself from him.

Everything was falling apart, and Albus wasn't used to things not going his way. He could never have anticipated someone like Blake Slytherin into his plans, let alone successfully gaining guardianship of his weapon. Even if the young man died there was no guarantee that he would get Harry back into his sphere of influence, he had no idea what backups Slytherin had put into place. For all he knew Slytherin already had someone in line, to care for the boy, and he honestly
wouldn't put it past him. Slytherin as much as it infuriated him was cautious, smart, and not to mention smug. There would be no knowing who his friends were, who he trusted, for all he knew Slytherin dying could put Harry further out of arms reach, perhaps even America or further out still.

Worse still? The Order was barely holding together, they just didn't trust him. They were there for one reason and one reason only, to see Voldemort and the Death Eaters stopped. They weren't doing anything on the side when he asked, such as asking Bill to find out more about Slytherin from Gringotts or Shacklebolt finding out information from the Ministry. They were disinclined to help him.

Every time he saw the wizard he was vividly reminded of just how screwed up everything now was.

Albus quite frankly had a strong desire to strangle Slytherin. Which he did, frequently, in his fantasies.

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Severus sighed in relief once he was alone, before closing his door and ensuring the wards were fully functional and in operation. Giving a nod of satisfaction when all was well, he claimed his favorite seat and picked up the book.

If Blake was going to call upon the founders' blood they both shared to vow them into a duel, he wanted to know every detail.

He didn't want to chance any backfiring coming their way.

He didn't want to see anything happening to the man he lov-

Oh, no, Severus paled at his own thoughts, swallowing thickly, dear Merlin, why did this always happen to him?

Chapter End Notes

Heh, poor Sev I do like to torture him, don't I? it's fun though! I sort of wanted to leave it here, the next chapter will be longer...I'm wondering whether to announce the duel and have it in the same chapter or some heart to heart in the chapter after the announcement between Sev/Blake Harry/Blake I sort of can't believe how short this story is going to be, compared to my longer ones...nearly 100/100+ usually I guess not every story can be that long huh? :D Read and Review, please
Chapter 36

The Games They Play

Chapter 36

“I have to go, I’ll see you later,” Harry said, glancing at the time, realizing he was nearly late for training with Blake. Grabbing his bag, he swung it over his shoulders as he jumped up, off the grass and stretched out getting ready to run to Blake’s quarters.

“Where are you going?” Fred asked, sitting up, George was also doing the same thing, they’d all been out getting some sun while they could. It wasn’t often one got any sun especially this far in Scotland.

“I’ve got training with Blake,” Harry explained, and boy was it wonderful not having to deal with any sort of jealousy. Fred and George just nodded as if it made sense, and were quite happy to let him go without arguments or bouts of irrational jealousy because he was doing something different and nobody else could join in.

“Ask if we can come along one day,” George asked, giving him a grin, “I’d like to see what we’re up against,” it turned into a devious grin, “Plus, I’d like to see him move around.” Blake was intimidating yes, but absolutely gorgeous. Oh, they knew they’d never have a chance with him, even if they were gay, which they weren’t. They had girls they liked and were in the process of wooing to the best of their abilities. Still, it didn’t mean they couldn’t appreciate his good looks.

Harry gagged, looking green around the gills, “Too much information!” he grumbled, shaking his head at the pair of them. “I’ll ask and see what he says,” he added, before calling out a quick, “Bye!” before he bolted from the grounds, leaving Fred and George to laugh uproariously from where they sat.

It showed how fit Harry was getting that it took only six minutes to get to the Defence Against the Dark Art’s classroom. All those exercises were working, making his endurance span further, the duelling was probably helping too.

Jogging up the stairs to Blake’s quarters, and opening the door which granted him easy entrance. He wasn’t surprised to find Severus their as well, it was becoming rare to see his Potions Master without his magical guardian. “Hi! Fred and George want to come to one of the lessons,” deciding against telling them exactly what was said. Blake was leaning over a table, looking over a few books, previously looking deep in thought before he made his entrance. Severus was sitting in the seat nearest to him, he didn’t look quite so blank faced as he normally did and he was relaxed too, as if he could trust them.

“Then bring them the next time,” Blake informed him, he had no issue with the twins, and with how much they were helping Harry relax and have a good time at Hogwarts…he actually owed them. He only wished he had decided to break off his friendship with Granger and Weasley and befriend the twins properly himself. He hadn’t but that was life, another life, it did not matter now. He like Severus could see the changes in Harry, they weren’t blind to it. “Has Dumbledore been bothering you?” he asked, as he often did.

“No, nothing,” Harry shook his head to emphasis his answer. He was grateful for it, he didn’t want to be alone with Dumbledore or endure his manipulations. Honestly, he had what he wanted in life, things Dumbledore had been denying him for fifteen years. Now he was trying to manipulate him.
back into being his golden boy? To distrust Blake? If only he knew the truth. To distrust Blake would be to distrust himself.

“Good,” Blake stated firmly, eyes gleaming darkly as they always did when thinking about Dumbledore.

“What’s happening?” Harry asked, wanting to know what was going down, and he knew something was.

Blake glanced speculatively at Harry, wondering if he could trust the teen to do as he was told. Harry would try, he knew that, but he also knew he was very impulsive when someone he cared about was in danger.

“You can tell me,” Harry said solemnly, as if he could see through Blake, see what he was actually thinking. Which wouldn’t be hard to do, Harry knew quite a lot about Blake’s past, and how he had turned out. So, it didn’t really take a genius to figure out what he could potentially be thinking.

Blake relaxed, his face smoothing out, his decision made, “I am going to challenge the Dark Lord to a duel, an old fashioned one that will be impossible to get out of without losing your magic. He will have to fight me or lose face and his magic.” it wasn’t something the Dark Lord would do. He was too overconfident in his abilities, at least he would be, there was a chance that he was still magically weakened by his resurrection. If he was at this point…well, it wasn’t so easily predicted what the Dark Lord would do.

Harry’s eyes widened in disbelief, “What?” he croaked out, shaking his head automatically. Unable to curb his worries and fears of what could happen, Voldemort had always been made out to be undefeatable, so much so that even Dumbledore had never been able to. Although, he couldn’t help but wonder how much Dumbledore had even tried.

“Kiddo, it’s either this…or the war is drawn on for years, we might never get this opportunity again.” Blake explained patiently, knowing what was bothering Harry without needing to read his thoughts. “Things aren’t going to go the same way they did before, you understand that? We will be in the dark just as much as everyone else…and an unpredictable world isn’t something I’m prepared to risk. Not when I can take him out once and for all.”

Severus reluctantly nodded, agreeing with Blake’s words, which probably didn’t help the teenager any. He looked terrified, perhaps the trauma of what he’d gone through wasn’t as dealt with as he first thought. He’d need to speak to Blake about it, perhaps he needed someone to talk to.

Harry bit his bottom lip, his thoughts churning, “Are you sure you want to do this?” he felt quite sick at the thought of losing Blake. For the first time in his life he had someone – even if it was himself – who cared, who made sure he was able to fight for himself. cared enough to get him fit, feed him, want to see his grades. Like a father figure. Even Sirius, who cared, didn’t ask about his grades or anything like that. Or express happiness if he did well, or disappointment if he just went through the motions without really trying.

“I may not have intended to come back here, it might have only been an accident, but I’m glad I did.” Blake said quietly, “It’s the most peace I’ve had in a long, long time. If I die taking out the Dark Lord…it would be worth it. However,” he held up his hand to stall Harry’s protest, “I swear I’ll do everything in my power to ensure I survive this, if I don’t…”

“Stop!” Harry said, he didn’t want to hear it.

“Listen to me,” Blake retorted sharply, reminding Harry of the first time they’d met and the first
week they’d been living together, getting used to each other’s personalities. “If I don’t survive, my solicitor will come to Hogwarts within an hour of it happening. He has papers that will legally emancipate you, and you’ll gain control over your entire estate including everything I’ve bought too. It cannot be contested, not by anyone, not even the Minister of Magic. You will be self-sufficient, independent and never have to fear going back to those disgusting Muggles. You’ll need to be strong, but you’ll get there, I have faith in you, now this is only a precaution, alright? I safeguarded your future before I even collected you from that damn courtroom.”

Harry knew that Blake always plotted and planned for everything. It was as if he saw life as a massive chessboard. He probably did see it that way, not as having people as pawns, just deducing what moves would be made and where. The fact he’d done all this in the beginning didn’t really surprise him. That was all thanks to Dumbledore, no doubt. God he hated the old man, probably as much as he feared him. Not like he did Voldemort, at least not really, more of the fear that came with being sent back to the Dursley’s and the fact that he ignored his abuse.

“Have faith in me, Harry,” Blake said softly, “I will do everything in my power to protect you, this includes getting rid of the Dark Lord and Dumbledore so you can have an unencumbered life.”

Harry breathed out shakily, “How can I help?” the thought of not doing anything did not sit well with him.

“Oh, believe me you’ll be helping,” Blake said seriously, “There is nobody else I’d trust with this,”

Severus glanced Blake’s way in surprise, hiding his hurt that he wasn’t trusted.

“With what? And why can’t anyone else be trusted?” Harry asked inquisitively.

“Severus will be my second, if he accepts, which leaves only you to do something that must be done.” Blake explained, sitting down casually as if he wasn’t talking about something so serious. “The Horcruxes must be destroyed, and if it’s done during the duel, there’s a good chance I might get the upper hand.”

“There is no guarantee that he will feel them being destroyed,” Severus pointed out, “Unless of course…it’s already happened?”

“Oh, he won’t, not to begin with, but he will feel something especially after the last few Horcruxes are destroyed.” Blake explained, “He didn’t notice in my timeline, not until the end, where he went and created more,” there was nothing more but a single ribbon, a shard really, of his soul left. The constant destruction it left in his wake…Merlin this was why he had to do this now.

He had to defeat the Dark Lord before he created more. After that there was no predicting the outcome.

“Dumbledore knows about them,” Severus stated, “He seemed a bit too interested in hearing about Nagini.”

“How long?” Harry asked, swallowing thickly, “How long has he known about the Horcruxes?” had he asked that question before? Did he know the answer to it? He’d learned so much about Dumbledore lately that it was all still circling his mind like a vulture.

“He had the only book that mentioned Horcruxes removed from the library a year after the Dark Lord left Hogwarts…what does that tell you?” Blake shrugged, Dumbledore’s actions truly held no surprise to him. “He’s always had his suspicions, and had his confirmation in your second year, the diary, but he believed wholeheartedly that we had to defeat him, which included the Horcruxes
apparently.” He honestly didn’t understand Dumbledore’s thoughts, it’s like they were choppy and chaotic. He just left all this shit for a sixteen-year-old to deal with instead of stepping up.

“I had no problem with the diary, so I can destroy the others, it just means going to the chamber, right?” Harry asked, strengthening his spine, he’d do whatever he could to help Blake. If it helped Blake defeat Voldemort once and for all, gave him the upper hand then he was all for it.

“The diary was easily destroyed because the Dark Lord was weakened, in spirit form,” Blake knocked that delusion straight off. “Added to the fact it was the first one he created, he didn’t have the safeguards he does on his older ones.”

Harry swallowed, he guessed it was too much to hope for, “What kind of safeguards?” his stomach churning, wondering what exactly he’d have to do.

Severus narrowed his own eyes, knowing just what kind of safeguards the Dark Lord was capable of. It made a shiver of revulsion crawl up his spine. He had no intentions of staying here to destroy the Horcruxes. He was being trusted to be Blake’s second. Which spoke volumes, if anything happened to Blake it would be down to him to finish what he started. One way or another, the Dark Lord would be defeated or they would both be dead. Which was fine by him, he didn’t think he’d survive without Blake. He’d already lost so much with this damn war, to lose Blake was… intolerable. Yet it didn’t sit right with him having Harry left alone to deal with the Horcruxes.

“How dangerous are we talking?”

“Let’s just say it requires a strong willpower to resist temptation, the Horcruxes show you things to entice and incite jealousy.” Blake explained, “Even Weasley was able to overcome one in order to destroy one, and I have no doubt Harry is twenty times stronger than that jealous twat.” That was the kindest thing he’d ever have to say about Ronald Weasley.

Harry gained further inner strength just hearing those words. “I’ll do it. I swear.” He would not let Blake down.

“There is nothing else harmful on them?” Severus questioned, still cautious.

“Everything else has been removed, the safeguard is only triggered when it senses vulnerability.” Blake shook his head, “There is nothing that will harm Harry on them.” He’d never risk that, he still didn’t know what would happen to him if anything happened to Harry. Not that was the only reason for his fears, he wanted Harry to live even if he didn’t, so he’d have a normal life as he’d stated.

“Very well,” Severus finally relaxed, trusting Blake’s judgement.

“So I use the basilisk fang on everything?” Harry queried, still focusing on what he knew he’d have to do, and pretty soon too. It sounded as though Blake wasn’t about to wait by the sound of it.

“Either that or Fiendfyre, but I’d prefer you not use it, even in the Chamber of Secrets, the school was already nearly destroyed by one idiot using that particular spell.” Blake told him, “But if it comes to it, destroying them is more important.”

“Using the fire will ensure they are all destroyed at the same time,” Severus pointed out, “Whereas a fang would only allow you to target a single one.”

“True,” Blake mused thoughtfully, “Perhaps I should give you a jumpstart on the spell, but it can’t be done here, we’d need to leave the school and return to the cottage grounds.”

“Won’t Dumbledore know?” Harry asked, he really didn’t want to deal with Dumbledore, or be
forced to answer a dozen questions on why he’d left the school grounds. Dumbledore would be very suspicious and he was closely watched as it was.

“No, we’ll use the Portkey, it’s undetectable,” Blake answered, Dumbledore as far as he was aware hadn’t upgraded the wards even after the whole Animagus and Portkey nonsense that went down last year. Dumbledore just didn’t care, but that was for another time, he didn’t want to dwell on him. Enough of his thoughts were taken up by the manipulative old bastard as it was. “No time like the present, let’s go.” Standing up he moved towards his desk, taking out a gold chain with a medallion on it.

“What’s on that?” Harry asked peering at it curiously, only to freeze at the sympathetic look on Severus’ face.

“It’s the Potter crest,” Severus explained, there was still so much the teenager didn’t know.

“Let’s go,” Blake stated firmly, the chain expanded as he put it over each of their necks. Holding the crest out with only his thumb and forefinger touching the medallion. Severus and Harry automatically touched it as well.

A few seconds later, they were whirling out of existence, within sixty seconds they reappeared inside the cottage. Harry remained standing much to his excitement, he was beginning to get the hang of all this magical travel. He could even remain standing after using the Floo now.

“Just how soon are you planning on asking for this duel?” Harry asked quietly, thoughtfully as he trailed after Blake, through the kitchen and out the back door. Dobby was nowhere to be seen, neither was Kreacher actually.

“Soon,” Blake’s words and tone revealed everything.

Harry just nodded knowing he wouldn’t receive any other answer. Probably because Blake didn’t have any other answer to give. If he didn’t want to answer him he would have just said as such. So, soon was as far as Blake had gotten, he was curious about all this duelling information. “I’m guessing it’s nothing like the challenge Draco gave us when we were eleven?”

“The informal version of it, yes, the idiot thankfully didn’t use the correct wording,” Blake scoffed just remembering that particular incident.

“Excuse me?” Severus narrowed his eyes, “When and where exactly did this happen?” what on earth possessed his godson to ask for a bloody duel at eleven?

Blake smirked, nodding his head, leaving it up to Harry to tell the tale as they finally reached the cliffs. The sound of the water calmed him, there was just something about standing here, listening to the gulls, the smell of the air, the sound of the water smashing against the rocks. This place…it was more of a home than he’d ever experienced in his life. Unconsciously, he relaxed completely, his eyes closed, a small smile twitching at his lips. Peace. Nothing would ever beat that.

Harry explained his side of events that had Draco challenging him to a duel.

Severus seriously wanted to roll his eyes as he listened, honestly, children. His attention was swiftly caught by Blake, taking in the sight of him standing by the cliffs. His face was calm and serene in a way Severus had never seen before. It caused his breathing to hitch a little, as he determinedly desired to imprint this memory to mind. He’d never seen such a beautiful sight before.

“Then we ran, we were almost caught by Filch,” Harry ended his tale.
“That was Draco’s intentions, he wanted you to get into trouble. He was jealous of you, Harry, he resented the attention you were getting. Your fame and because of your prodigious flying abilities which allowed you to break more rules and get into a Quidditch team at a younger age than anyone else since the rules were made.” Blake explained, “He has never been proven wrong, each Slytherin in the great hall after your first year were badly let down, as their Headmaster tricked them all by giving out more house points then they’d never get the chance to catch up. Going from being the centre of his parents universe to practically ignored for being a Slytherin and the child of Death Eaters and a Malfoy is a shock to the system never mind someone else coming along and getting all the glory he envisioned while at Hogwarts. Added to the fact you turned Draco down when he genuinely wanted to be your friend,”

Harry blinked at Blake, a frown overtaking his features, grunting as he was forced to see it from Malfoy’s point of view. Something he definitely didn’t want to do thank you very much. He didn’t agree with Blake that Draco actually wanted to be his friend though.

Severus’ lips twitched, a fond feeling overcoming him, he’d assumed Blake probably thought quite harshly of his Slytherin’s despite his fairness in class. Especially knowing what they would become in the future. Yet would you look at that, he understood, probably far greater than even he did. That was with Draco being his godson. He was used to it though, mostly due to the fact he was used to the Headmaster’s ways regarding his snakes. It frustrated and angered him, sure, but it didn’t surprise him. It had been that way since before he was at Hogwarts himself as a lad. One glance at Harry and he genuinely had to stop himself laughing, it had been a long time since such a genuine reaction had been elicited from him that it took a few seconds to register the feeling. Harry was practically pouting at Blake’s back.

He’d never looked more his age before.

“Welcome to the world of growing up, Mr. Potter,” Severus informed him, eyes glittering in amusement.

Harry’s jaw dropped, did Severus just make a joke?

“Fiendfyre is no ordinary fire, it’s cursed fire,” Blake informed Harry as he turned back to face him, his teaching face on. “Using it when one doesn’t control it allows the flames to become sentient, the fire itself consumes everything without care. Unconsciously, bidding it’s castors desire. The fire mutates, forms gigantic fiery creatures, dragons, chimaeras and even serpents form in the flames. Hunting down everything, doing it’s level best to burn everyone to a crisp. It has the ability to seek out living targets and consume them. The belief that they are not sentient is false.”

Severus felt his heart sink, the way he was talking, Blake had first-hand knowledge of such a spell cast his way. Had someone he knew die by cursed fire or had Blake managed to evade the fiery flames?

“It’s advanced Dark magic I am going to show you, Harry, and it’s very difficult to control.” Blake continued, eyes still glazed over slightly, showing him lost in thought, in memories. “The flames cannot be extinguished by normal or enchanted water. It will incinerate anything upon contact. Once you gain control over the spell, you’ll have greater control, even be able to create an animal of your choice in the flames, and guide it where you desire for it to go. It’s important you understand and respect this as a castor, otherwise…it will cost you your life.”

“Who?” Severus asked quietly, very subdued.

“Vincent Crabbe,” Blake revealed, “I managed to save Draco and Goyle with Weasley’s – who was urged by Granger – very reluctant help before the room was consumed in flames. I’m surprised
then was anything left of Hogwarts still standing after that display.”

“Then we may want to induce a preventative measure,” Severus said, it was more of a question though since he was not responsible for the DADA class. Vincent could be an thoughtless impudent at times but to think he would so thoughtlessly cast such a dangerous curse. Their parents were slipping, perhaps because of the Dark Lord’s return, Vincent’s father was cautious, smart, had managed to keep his freedom and not cause the ire of the Dark Lord by remaining silent taking his ‘punishment’ without a single complaint or beg for mercy. His father surely would never allow his son to cast such magic, or let him read it without first fully letting him be aware of such danger. He wondered whether he was actually happy the Dark Lord returned. Not that it mattered, he’d never approach him. That would be suicidal.

He might be many things, but suicidal wasn’t one of them, not now when he had a reason for his continued survival. He just wished he knew whether Blake felt the same or not.

“Okay, so what do I do?” Harry asked, straightening up determinedly. Green eyes glinting that doggedly feeling.

Standing up against Harry’s back, Blake gripped Harry’s hand tightly, making it tighten thusly on his wand. “Remember the feeling the Patronus elicited? The feeling deep in here?” his left hand pressing tightly against Harry’s chest next to his heart. “The will power, the strength of your mind, feel your resolve, imagine it as your fortitude, you can do this, but to begin with, only allow a small measure of your power, your magic through the wand. Whatever you do, do not flick your wand until I give you permission to do so, which might not even be today.”

“No wand movements?” Harry deduced.

“No,” Blake confirmed, stepping back, keeping to Harry’s back, as Severus strode around so he too was not in the front of Harry while he learned this spell. Which was smart enough to be held over a cliff and water not that it would help much. But it would prevent anyone from being burnt or worse the cottage. Severus had come to love this place, much greater than he liked Spinners End, which was like, not at all. “Don’t be nervous, your emotions can effect the spell, remember that, only cast it when you feel confident enough.”

“Watch,” Blake ordered, flicking out his wand, pointing it towards the sea, “Fiendfyre!” he didn’t shout, didn’t even raise his voice, it was a mere whisper, yet the results were immediate and fierce. The resulting animal that came out was a Basilisk, its flame fangs glinting in the light as it span around in the air up towards the sky before returning down towards them only to dissipate as if the very air around it dispersed it. “Now you go ahead and try,” knowing that Harry would succeed, he can clearly see he can do it, that was how Harry did his best spells so to speak. The whole Patronus thing – thinking it was his father – was proof of that.

“Fiendfyre!” Harry aimed his wand in the same direction Blake had, having to consciously keep his damn wand steady and not move it. He wasn’t sure what was considered ‘flicking’ but considering Blake had barely moved his wand to cast the spell he wasn’t risking it.

A small spurt of flames came out before it was extinguished.

“Very good,” Blake said impressed despite himself. “Now add only a small measure more of your magic to the spell.” It wasn’t just magical powers either, it had a lot to do with will power and understanding and respecting the spell.

“Don’t worry, I’ll fit it in…somehow,” Blake informed Severus as he stepped back leaving Harry to it. Speaking low so not to distract Harry, that was the last thing they needed since he was
Factually playing with fire. “Discussing curses again might be the best way,” just talking out of the blue about a curse like Fiendfyre might look too odd even for him.

Severus nodded, gratitude showing he cared about all his snakes. They weren’t bad or evil, not yet, and he refused to give up on them. He had been in their shoes once and he’d turned his life around. They were teenagers, they make bad decisions, it’s how you learned, how you grew up into a decent person. “Thank you,” he murmured, grateful that Blake could understand his concerns without hearing the words.

“Even Granger was terrified of using the spell,” Blake mused thoughtfully. That spoke volumes really, since Granger was quite confident when it came to her spell casting, with good reason. She was good and she new it, she just made stupid choices.

“Did she ever find her parents?” Severus asked, his brow furrowed, not that he cared about the Muggles, it was just disgusting what she’d done to them.

“They never got into Australia,” Blake revealed darkly, keeping a keen eye on Harry and his spell casting. Each spell the fire grew in small proportions, yet he kept control. He wouldn’t be able to continue for more than thirty minutes, maybe an hour. The spell took a lot out of you. “They were refused entry, with Granger’s spell, they will absolutely be terrified to come back to England. They could be anywhere, and more than likely, the money they have will run out quickly, they will need to work odd jobs, that will barely get them enough money to get by, that’s if they’re lucky. They may be dentists but their qualifications mean nothing abroad. That is nothing on the hole in their hearts where their memories were ripped from them. No doubt it will cause depression perhaps even suicidal tendencies. Questioning everything in their lives…she may have meant well but what she did was horrific really.”

Severus winced, he hadn’t even contemplated it from their point of view. Not to that extent anyway, just annoyance at Grangers insistent on always being right. Even now she was determined that she was correct in her actions in order to save her parents. “Does she even know?”

“As smart as she is, she doesn’t know where to start, plus opening that can of worms…will draw the Ministry’s attention to her. Something she doesn’t want, as the consequences would be most severe.” Blake sighed, rubbing his chin, “Potential prison sentence at that, this was no small spell she did. The Pure-blood’s will chew her up if they got her into a courtroom. Especially if she started any of her carry on while trying to defend her actions.” It was guaranteed that she would, it would incite their wrath further.

“Perhaps she should face the consequences of her actions, it might do her the world of good…especially before she is considered an adult.” She was only a year away from being considered so by the magical world.

“It would,” Blake agreed, a glimmer of sadness in his eyes, “She learned her lesson in my time…but without anyone to curb her attitude…I quite dread to see how she turns out in this time.”

Severus made a noncommittal hum, acknowledging that he’d heard Blake but had nothing further to say on the subject.

“Pay attention to your task at hand,” Blake warned Harry, who’s head was cocked just so in order to try and hear them better. Fortunately they were too far away and speaking too lowly for Harry to hear. “We will continue for another thirty minutes before heading back.”

“What? Why?” Harry asked startled to hear that.
“You aren’t feeling the drain yet,” Blake stated, “Keep going and you will, it takes a lot out of you both magically and mentally while focusing on the spell.” Even the Dark Lord and he wouldn’t be able to keep it up indefinitely.

“Actually I can…a little,” Harry admitted, but it was mostly just the feeling of a small headache building behind his eyes. It was nowhere near annoying yet, gripping his wand tightly, he turned back and cast the spell again. “Fiendfyre!” determined to impress both Blake and Severus with his abilities. He knew even if it didn’t work that they wouldn’t be disappointed, it hadn’t happened yet, just said to keep trying and they’d get there eventually.

Probably why he felt so safe and happy with them. Harry would never have imagined a side like this to his Potions Master. Yet he appeared all too human now, and only six months had gone by since that day.

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I had the idea for the Granger's come from a review
Blake opened the door to the Defence classroom with a flick of his wand as he strode down the corridor. The bell went just as he did so, and the students all began to pile into his room. Harry mentally counted the students as they passed through the threshold, and wasn’t surprised to see that all his students were present and accounted for. His class was a very well liked one, and so other than extenuating circumstances the students were always on time. They knew he didn’t tolerate tardiness, and the fact he was fair to all students – including Slytherins – it made them like his class. Then there was the fact he ensured it was mostly practical classes helped too.

“Good afternoon,” Blake said coolly, “Today we will be discussing two spells, Fiendfyre and of course, the Patronus Charm.” momentarily ignoring the excited murmurs that arose at his proclamation.

“Yes, Mr. Thomas,” Blake pointed towards the fifth year student, who had his hand raised in the air like a few of the other students.

“Are we going to be practicing them?” Thomas asked, excitement exuding from the wizard.

“The Patronus Charm, yes, depending on how long the discussion runs for…it might be our next class before we begin participating in the practical side of the spell,” Blake informed him. His lips twitching minutely at how excited they were over such a simple spell, one he had cast at the age of thirteen. Two years younger than all the students were right here and now.

Hermione raised her hand, waving it relentlessly in the normal way she did, as if she feared that she would be ignored.

“Yes, Miss. Granger?” Blake pointed towards her, bracing himself for her usual ‘I-know-better-than-you’ jabs she loved to emote so much. It didn’t matter what class she was in, she did it to them all, and it annoyed all her teachers, in fact it drove them crazy. He hadn’t realised just how ‘crazy’ it made them until they’d gotten into a discussion about it while in the staff room. Only Severus actually demonstrated just how annoying it was in front of the students. Blake honestly wouldn’t have said she drove them all insane. None more so than Professor Babbling, the woman got herself into a tizzy just discussing her earlier that week.

“Is the Patronus charm even part of our exams?” Hermione asked, ignoring absolutely everyone around her who rolled their eyes in derision. Even her fellow Gryffindors had all but groaned theatrically over her hand being in the air.

Blake just stared blankly at the girl until she was squirming in her chair, cheeks flushing red in a combination of what was embarrassment and anger. “The spell can gain you extra points at the end of your practical exam, for both Charms and Defence. I presume that extra credit is something that you’d like?” he said sardonically.

“Yes, Sir,” Hermione murmured, her gaze going to the table feeling rather foolish. She had thought such a hard spell would never make an appearance on the exams. It felt almost like a cheat, having it there, but the prospect of extra credit did excite her, and thus she made a promise to herself to try her hardest to cast it.
“Now…what can you tell me about the spell, Fiendfyre?” Blake called out to everyone, taking a seat on the top of his desk, eying all the students. Ensuring that everyone was paying attention, especially Crabbe and Goyle, and surprisingly they were paying attention. Which of course, was odd itself, those two…weren’t the brightest Lumos in the wand, they did have more magic than they often portrayed, the damage done to Hogwarts due to the Fiendfyre gave that away.

“Yes, Mr. Nott,” Blake said, gazing expectantly at the wizard.

“It’s cursed fire,” Nott explained, eyes a little nervous, he didn’t know much about it, “My father says it’s a ‘damn near impossible’ spell to cast, my father almost had a heart attack when he came home unexpectedly from the Ministry to find my cousin trying to cast the spell, he had just turned seventeen,” and legally an adult went unsaid. “He didn’t let Cory back into the manor for years after that.”

Blake chuckled, nodding his head, “I’m not surprised, it’s in fact how the Black’s lost their ancestral manor back in the early fifties.” With so many Black’s they hadn’t dared to spend gratuitously, too worried about money and possible future repercussions. Not a lot of the Black’s actually worked, unless they actually had a motivation and a will to do so. So they bought a small townhouse and a few other properties and that’s how it remains to this day. It was their unwillingness to spend that accounted for the large estate they had now. That and the constant disownment, a large sum had gone towards marrying the females off, Bellatrix and Narcissa, Andromeda got stuck off. Regulus was killed and Sirius spent over a decade in Azkaban.

Surprise flittered over Draco’s face, as he mentally stored yet another piece of information he should already know about his family. Sure, some of the Black’s were disappointments but the family itself was a proud one. A pure and proud family, and he was honoured to be a Black even if it was only through his mothers side. Unfortunately, his mother didn’t really ever talk about her family, he only knew his grandparents names and a few other titbits he’d picked up over the years. He knew infinitely more about his father’s side, his side, the Malfoy family.

“So, take heed, Fiendfyre is a very, very difficult spell, damn near impossible to master and control.” Blake stated sharply, ensuring everyone’s attention was fixed upon him. “There’s a reason the professors do not teach you such an unpredictable spell…primarily so that the school is still standing to teach its next class.” He said dryly making them laugh a little and relax, Blake did want to warn them but not petrify them after all. Hopefully, this would be a lesson to them all.

“But it can be taught?” Patil asked, it sounded more of a statement.

Blake glanced briefly at the girl, before nodding slowly, “Yes, a specialised tutor would probably be what you should aim for.” aware of her family origins since Filius had informed him about them. How members of her family were in the duelling circuit. “Confidence is key,” he added as an afterthought. He didn’t believe in arranged marriages, and it was a damn shame they would be having to endure such a thing. Unfortunately, with older families and traditions it wasn’t easily overcome. Short of disowning themselves, there was no getting out of it. It explained why they were rather…demure, even during the tournament ball they had been very modest, had made no attempts to even give a chaste kiss to either Ron or him at any given time.

“My Sister-in-law perfected the spell when she was eighteen-years-old,” Patil said, sounding a little smug.

“Duelling champion?” Blake enquired.

Patil blinked in shock surprised, dumbly nodding her head, yes, she was a duelling champion. Most people thought witches didn’t take part in duelling championship games. Or that they had their
own version, which wasn’t true, they worked just as hard as the wizards to aim for their place in the top three.

“Now what can anyone tell me about the Patronus Charm?” Blake asked, once again changing the subject. As always, Harry had no desire to raise his hand in order to participate in class. If he wanted the teen to answer anything he’d need to call upon him.

Only Hermione’s hand raised.

Blake bit his tongue violently, his narrowed gaze zooming over the students, wondering if they were truly that stupid or if they just didn’t wish to compete with Granger.

“Granger,” Blake said, deflating slightly, bracing himself for what was coming.

“The ancient and mysterious charm conjures a magical guardian, a projection of all your most positive feelings. The Patronus Charm is difficult, and many witches and wizards are unable to produce a full, corporeal Patronus, a guardian which generally takes the shape of the animal with whom they share the deepest affinity. You may suspect, but you will never truly know what form your Patronus will take until you succeed in conjuring it…”

“That’s enough, five points to Gryffindor,” Blake sighed, “Anyone else know anything about the spell?” one that wasn’t a textbook answer. This was why Granger wasn’t in his advanced Defence class.

Harry took pity on his guardian and raised his own hand, he did look exasperated beyond belief.

“The spell creates a partially-tangible lifeforce, a spirit guardian that protects you from Dementors and Lethifolds. The spell itself is ancient, there are scrolls and woodcuts that portray how old it is. Those who can produce fully-fledged Patronus’ tend to have high up positions in the Ministry of magic. It’s a sign of greatness.” Harry explained, his fingers absentely making the pattern of the Patronus with his finger which was a circle. “Every Patronus is as unique as it’s creator, even identical twins are known to produce two very different Patronuses.”

Hermione pursed her lips unhappily, her jaw dropping at the words that left her Professor’s mouth next. It wasn’t fair! She had given a good answer, the best answer one could give.

“Twenty points to Gryffindor, Mr. Potter,” Blake stated with pride, ignoring the huff of breath from the Gryffindor side of the classroom. He didn’t need to look to realise just who it was. “Now, the most difficult part of this particular spell is the fact you need a very, very happy memory. The happier the memory the greater the strength of your will to cast it properly. Imagining scenarios is no good, it doesn’t have the emotion behind it to create your Patronus. Emotion is what you need to have you Patronus emerging fully. Simple every day memories will not be strong enough either. You’ll probably find this out yourself as we practice. So for the next ten minutes, I want each of you to concentrate and focus on a memory that means the world to you. One you wish you could return to, live again, experience again for the first time.”

Blake stood and moved around to his seat, trusting his students to do as he asked for now. No doubt they were looking forward to attempting the spell. He knew many of them had what it took to cast the spell, for he had taught them himself. It was a lifetime ago, and oddly enough around about the same time too, give or take a few weeks. He wouldn’t be surprised if his students from his advanced class actually asked to continue their lesson. The Patronus spell was something everyone would want to cast unless they were lazy. Even Ron had been able to cast the spell, and he was one of the laziest wizards he’d ever met.
“Professor? Can you create a Patronus?” called out one of his students, bringing Blake out of his thoughts.

Harry sat up straighter, alarmed, there was no way he could cast it without arousing suspicion.

“Expecto Patronum!” Blake uttered, his wand twirling in a circular motion with swiftness only a professional could have.

A large wolf pounced out of his wand, it prowled around the room prideful and arrogant in its strut. After investigating the room, it returned to Blake, bowing low before it disappeared into a wisp of smoke. Blake was able to change his Patronus by thinking on certain memories, just like Severus and Remus could hide their Patronus. Remus of course, out of fear that he would be made as a werewolf. Tonks had also inevitably had her own Patronus change form when she fell in love with Remus. It’s for this reason he decided against revealing that Patronus’ could be changed, he didn’t want to implant that kind of idea in their minds.

Blake’s lips twitched as he listened to the coo’s of awe and exclamations of amazement from the students. Their excitement was palpable, their eyes sparkled with desire to do this themselves, to see what they could do. To see what kind of Patronus they would have. Seamus’ would be a Fox something he rather liked, Granger’s would be an Otter.

Harry leaned back in his chair, breathing for the first time since he’d seen Blake use the wand movements.

“Mr. Potter, since you will not need this lesson, come up here, I have a book that should hold your attention,” Blake stated, it wasn’t a suggestion and Harry knew it.

Harry stood up automatically, used to doing what he was told when it came to Blake, he was his magical guardian after all. Someone he respected and cared for very much, and knowing what was going to happen was fucking with his mind. He didn’t want Blake to face Voldemort, even Dumbledore hadn’t been able to beat him. The thought of losing him was a bit too much to bear. Not even knowing he was safe, or that the magical world would be safe if he won changed that. For the first time in his life…he felt as though he had something to lose.

Blake’s hand came down on his shoulder, guiding him into the seat his teacher had just vacated. “Stop worrying so much,” he murmured. Giving his shoulder a squeeze, he stepped away, letting Harry read the book, it should distract him for a while. None of the students so much as looked confused, such a momentous spell…and the fact he did within Hogwarts grounds meant that the Patronus was seen by dozens of students. They knew he could cast the spell.

The book did distract him, the gleeful look on his face as he opened it immediately spoke volumes. Blake shook his head and began to coach the students on how to perform the spell. Guiding them when they failed to get an aspect of it right. He wasn’t surprised when only wisps of smoke emerged from their wands. Such a spell took dedication, time and power, not just magical powers but mental powers too. It would take weeks if not months for any kind of process to be made.

“Do not be discouraged,” he informed them seriously, seeing the irritated and disappointed looks on their faces one-hour and thirty minutes in. It was almost like they had expected a goddamned miracle. Perhaps they thought well a thirteen year old can cast it, it must mean they can. “Most adults cannot perform this spell, but by the time I’m done with you, each of you will be casting it successfully. If you’re not feeling it use a different memory, give it time, it’s all you need and practice and time to perfect it.” Not something he should be promising them, but it was one he
intended to keep. Even if he had to keep going with them individually, you never know when such a spell could save your life. Especially if the Dementors were already compromised, which they were, but nobody knew that, yet.

The bell went immediately after his speech.

“Go, enjoy your dinner, and remember what I said,” Blake started firmly, giving them permission to leave.

“Sir, can I speak to you, please?” Neville asked, his brow furrowed an apprehensive look on his face, having waited until everyone left the room – with the exception of Harry of course – who was still sitting reading the book.

“Of course,” Blake said, gesturing wordlessly for Harry to leave, before reclaiming his seat. Keeping his full attention fixed upon Neville, giving him a single nod of encouragement.

Harry had left, taking the book with him.

“Wha…what if you can’t think of any memories that are good enough?” Neville whispered, eyes shadowed, “Will that mean I can’t cast the spell?” he had gotten steadily better since getting his own wand, at this wizard’s behest too. He hadn’t no success whatsoever trying to cast the spell, and he was slightly surprised he hadn’t been called upon about it.

Blake leaned back, “I know sometimes it can feel as though memories aren’t good enough, but surprisingly there can be times in one’s life where the emotions you still feel are more powerful than you realize. The moment you realized your life had changed when you performed magic, the ride to Hogwarts, your first pet, your sorting, your best friend, these memories are deceptively mild but can carry you forward even decades in the future by just remembering.” He informed the teen, knowing that those he’d suggested would actually help Neville gain the confidence required for the spell.

Neville swallowed, his brow furrowed before nodding slowly, either agreeing with what his professor said or just acknowledging his words.

“Would you like one-on-one tutoring on learning the Patronus spell?” Blake asked, inwardly cursing himself, he was busy as it was, what the hell was he doing giving up more of his free time? Because Neville had been there for him, he couldn’t help the other Neville. He could help this one, and the other Neville would never exist, hell, Nev might get to become that Herbology teacher he so desired. He’d confessed his deepest fears while hidden from the world in a rotten down property hiding. They all had done the same thing, spoke about what they wanted, it kept them going through the worst of the war. Gave them hope.

Between the advanced classes, teaching Harry, and a few of the seventh years in order to get their grades up so they could become Aurors…his schedule was packed. It was better that way, less time to think, to procrastinate. He didn’t like dwelling on things he wanted to change. It made him second guess himself, which nobody would think about when it came to him. Except maybe Severus, it was difficult to say whether Severus could see through him or not.

Having a plan made things easier, he didn’t worry quite so much.

The day after the Hogsmeade trip the students went on…would be the day he put forth the challenge.

One way or another this would all be over, at least for him.
He didn’t want to die, but he also wouldn’t detest the idea, peace sounded quite good to him.

“Professor?” Neville called, his tone indicating he’d said the word more than once.

Blake blinked and shook his head, seeing the concern written across Neville’s face had his masks back up quicker than lightening. “My apologies, Neville, I was simply lost in thought, so, lessons?” leaning forward giving him his full attention.

“I…if you’re sure?” Neville finally stuttered, he knew that his professor was busy, he wasn’t blind or stupid. He heard the others talking about the tutoring Professor Slytherin was giving them, two Gryffindors who were constantly exhausted on a Tuesday night. He was also pretty sure Harry was getting lessons too. He wasn’t sure why the professor would give him lessons, he was nothing special.

“Of course I am,” Blake stated firmly, “It may have only been a few weeks since you got your new wand…but Neville you’ve already grown in leaps and bounds…just like I knew you would. You’re so much more capable than you know.” He would curse the hell out of anyone who said otherwise. Children were cruel, the students could be cruel, completing grinding someone’s confidence to the grindstone just to make themselves feel better.

Neville glanced down at the floor, cheeks flushed red in uncomfortable happiness.

“Await my owl, either that or I’ll send Harry with a date and time,” Blake informed Neville, everyone knew Harry was his ward so it wasn’t surprising that he’d send something for him. “Go on and get your dinner before the rest of the Gryffindors leave you with nothing.” He teased, knowing just how quickly the food could disappear especially when you sat next to the Weasley’s.

Neville grinned tentatively at his professor before muttering a quiet goodbye before hastily retreating from the classroom.

Blake sighed before leaning back in the chair, stretching out rubbing at his chin absently. He just wished he knew when the Hogsmeade day was, regretfully there wasn’t a date set yet, they had to see which teachers were available and on what days. He would know in the next few days though, that was something at least. Harry was anxious about it, he hadn’t been prepared for that when he went to the Ministry and got himself made Harry’s magical guardian.

He hadn’t counted on any strong feelings growing between them. He should have. It’s what he’d actually craved for the most of his childhood. Guidance, love, a firm hand, someone to say he did well, to let him feel as if he had done something right in life. He was seeing himself how he always knew he could have been with someone to encourage and love. It was a kick in the gut really, he cared, probably too much, all things considered. It was the same with Harry, he cared too much too, and this…well, he hadn’t been sure he’d stay, or get to, hell time-travel of this magnitude had never been done before. At least not documented, like him they could have just fitted in and hunkered down, lived.

Then there was Severus…Merlin help him, for the first time in decades he actually had something real to live for, someone – some people – to live for. It was utterly fucking terrifying, his life had been one constant uphill battle with attempt after attempt to destroy Voldemort for good before there was no magical world left.

Quite honestly…he’d rather that than this fear he could feel creeping up on him. The fear of loss.

Blake closed his eyes, breathing evenly and deeply, clearing his mind. Dinner, then he would be tutoring, that would keep his mind occupied.
Thank Merlin for busy schedules.

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There we go! Another chapter for you to enjoy I think the next one will be the challenge and then maybe some conversations between Harry/Blake or Blake/Severus...maybe them all before the next chapter will be the duel, this story is nearly at it's end perhaps maybe 5-6 chapters left I think it was always going to be a rather short one compared to my newer stories since after Voldemort's done there will be no drama and nothing worth writing about to make the story exciting and push it on for longer :) I hope you don't feel too disappointed! Read and Review please
Chapter 38

The Games They Play

Chapter 38

“You are keeping yourself rather busy,” Severus commented from the door of the Defence classroom. Stepping inside, he closed the door and flung up a silencing spell out of sheer habit. “What is bothering you?” he questioned, gliding through the room and sitting on one of the student chairs facing Blake. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what exactly was wrong with the wizard. He too had a tendency to work harder when he had troubles. Except he was so overworked these days that he didn’t need to hide behind his work.

Blake arched an eyebrow, “What makes you think something is bothering me?” slightly surprised to see Severus here, he shouldn’t be he supposed. Out of anyone, the spy would be the one to notice slight changes in his character.

Severus gave him a look that suggested he was beginning to suspect he was insane. “What is going on in that head of yours?” he asked instead of replying to that rather weak question. Blake was a smart wizard, there was little point to that weak reply.

“It’s of little consequence, it changes nothing,” Blake stated, and that was true, he was still going to do what he had originally came back to do. Truthfully though, he had intended to just go out and hunt Voldemort down, end him quickly and quietly. He had never intended to get attached to anyone, let alone allow someone to become dependant on him.

“Well?” Severus stated, demanding an explanation.

“You realize of course, my coming here was an accident, I was grievously injured at first…I made many decisions during that time.” Blake sighed, pushing the homework he had been grading aside. “I originally intended to just hunt Voldemort down and defeat him, he’s still slightly weakened by his return, it would have been easy…after I had the Horcruxes of course…but so much could go wrong, I had only one shot of this so I had to be careful.”

“Which is when you decided to get your younger self involved, forewarned is forearmed,” Severus finished his thoughts, it’s the sort of thing he would have done.

“I didn’t want to,” Blake corrected him, “I needed to, I had to plan accordingly,”

“And what has happened that you did not foresee?” Severus questioned shrewdly, it was enough to play on Blake’s mind, he suspected

“Harry getting attached,” Blake said wryly, he had wished to help him becoming independent, and
he was, for the most part, but not with him. As time went on, he had noticed it, but it wasn’t until recently when he noticed how worried Harry was that it dawned on him.

“He isn’t the only one is he?” Severus pointed out, sympathy playing across his face. How long until he came back had it been since Blake had stability and safety? Where he could go anywhere he pleased without worries and fears of being found out? The world he was from sounded dreadful, and he honestly couldn’t contemplate what his life was like. The last war was bad, but the Dark Lord hadn’t managed to successfully take over…it seemed however, that Blake’s past – the possible future without him – he had won.

Blake remained silent for some time, thinking on everything from the moment he had seen his ‘younger self’ at the Ministry during his trial to the last training session they had. “No, he isn’t the only one, but I had intended to make him stronger, independent, but I am afraid I may have made him dependant on me,” his scowl was impressive, it made Severus’ look weak by comparison. The knowledge pissed him off, but it would change nothing if he got annoyed enough to try and do something about it.

“That is expected,” Severus said slowly, measuring his words carefully, “He’s never had stability before, someone to answer to, whom will not let him away with the shenanigans he gets up to here at Hogwarts. Which I am grateful for personally, it makes keeping him safe much easier.”

“It wasn’t solely Harry’s fault,” Blake sighed, slumping, suddenly looking for all the world like he hadn’t slept in a week. “But you’re right, I didn’t think of these things before I claimed his guardianship, if I had…I wouldn’t change a thing.” He couldn’t bring himself to lie, not to Severus and not to himself.

“You’re worried about the outcome,” Severus stated, it was natural, he too was worried about it. This was the Dark Lord they were talking about, one who had surpassed even Grindelwald on the death and evil scales. There was no guarantee they could thwart him, it was just the way it was. They were good, yes, but that was no assurance they’d come out on top.

“Aren’t you?” Blake asked Severus blunt as always.

“I am,” Severus confessed, he might not speak about his feelings, but he did not make a habit of lying either. Admitting something that could result in both of their deaths wasn’t exactly brain science, Blake was bound to know whether or not he reveals it. He had been personally taught by the Dark Lord himself, he had seen him duel, he knew what they were getting into. He had a feeling the same went for Blake, who he was sure had fought the Dark Lord in his own time.

“Yeah,” Blake murmured grimly.

“That’s not all,” Severus observed, something else was bothering him.

Blake pursed his lips, “I’ve researched everything possible about time-travel, what happened to me shouldn’t have been possible. Once he’s defeated…the timeline I come from will be gone for good. There may be a chance I could fade from existence after the duel. I will no longer exist since that timeline will not.” And he couldn’t say that it didn’t scare the crap out of him. To fade out of existence? To have his life just gone just like that?

Sure he had changed small things coming back, but the reality was, his future could still come to fruition at the end of the day. Once he destroys the Horcruxes and defeat Voldemort – if he succeeds – that future will completely disappear. It will be a whole knew world, one with peace and prosperity, one that he had never known.
Severus swallowed thickly, he hadn’t thought of that, he should have and he could honestly kick himself for not thinking of it sooner. The thought of losing Blake didn’t sit well with him, yet what could he do to prevent it? There wasn’t a damn thing, he couldn’t condemn the world in order to keep Blake…although the selfish part of him would do it in a heartbeat. Just take Harry and Blake and go abroad, leave Britain to its fate.

What if he was destined to lose Blake? Was he even really his to lose? He didn’t even have the guts to state how he felt. He never had, he feared rejection more than anything else in the world. The world might think him an unfeeling bastard but the truth was…he was human, just like everyone else with pain and fear as part of that.

He hadn’t even known him long, the last time it had taken years for such feelings to creep up, admittedly he had been too young to realize what it was. Too young to truly be in love. Not that he was in love, he just cared a great deal, and it could become more if he would just open his mouth.

He did not of course.

“I almost want to change you as my second, have someone else step in,” Blake spoke, his voice subdued, “So that I know Harry will have at least one of us to get him the hell out of here if it all goes wrong.” Not that he had anyone else who could be his second, and he had to have one it was an official duel.

“And will you?” Severus asked, with deceptive mildness, tensely coiled like a spring.

“No,” Blake replied immediately, “There is nobody else I’d trust to have my back, except of course Harry,” he said with a wry smirk, chuckling at his own joke.

“I see,” Severus answered, relaxing fully at those reassuring words. He didn’t think he would have been able to forgive Blake if he had retracted his word.

“It’s not been easy these few months…even though I’ve had more freedom than I have had in years,” Blake admitted, leaning back against his chair, forcing his body to relax. He was tired, not just physically but mentally too. He had so many worries on his shoulders that it was honestly unreal.

Severus snorted, “Indeed,” shaking his head, “I will admit knowing there might be an end in sight does help,” he offered his own version of a consolation. It probably wasn’t much in the way of reassurance but it was all he had to offer. He wasn’t one for offering empty platitudes, especially against such dire straits. He was stressed, busier than normal, feeling as though he was being pulled at all ends. Yet, as he’d stated, he did feel a sense of peace knowing a path was available to him.

“Yes,” Blake mused, “That is true,” for good or ill the end was in sight, one way or another he was in for a fight of his life.

“When do you intend to challenge him to the duel?” Severus asked, how long did he have before everything changed? Went unasked.

“Today,” Blake replied grimly, the students were all in Hogsmeade, well, those thirteen and above. The first and second years will most likely be in their common rooms or in the library. “I’m thinking of having the duel within Hogwarts grounds, no matter what I try to do, word is going to get out and people will turn up to see it. At least within Hogwarts grounds they’ll be at least slightly more protected than anywhere else. That and the seventh years won’t sneak out to see it, they can watch it from the castle at a safe distance.”
Severus rolled his eyes, “You need to make up your mind,” Blake didn’t often change his mind, but when he did it was rather annoying, it made their change of plans difficult to enact to say the least.

“If I am to do this…I want to go at the only place that’s ever been a home to me,” Blake replied, showing there was actual emotion behind his decision and not just logic.

A deep seated understanding washed over Severus, “That I understand,” the more than you can fathom remained unsaid, there was no way Blake and he could consider his thoughts ‘more than you can fathom’ they’d been through hell and truly, Hogwarts was their only home. Spinners End held too many bad memories to be considered home. Harry’s cottage though…he rather liked it there, secluded, beautiful, peaceful and just downright tranquil, a change of pace from the hustle and bustle.

Blake just nodded curtly, just once, yes, he wasn’t surprised that Severus understood that.

“Would you like something to eat?” Blake asked, changing the subject completely.

“I wouldn’t mind,” Severus replied, glancing at his watch, he had another forty-five minutes until his meeting with Dumbledore. Joy, if he could have gotten out of it he would have, but the only way he could conceive getting out of the meeting would be if he was called…so perhaps not. The Dark Lord’s moods were extremely negative as of late.

For the rest of their time together they spent it speaking about the students, Hogwarts, the new books that had been released, as well as discussing potions and defence. The Dark Lord, Dumbledore and Harry weren’t brought up again as they just enjoyed each other’s time.

During that time they kept their feelings tightly contained as they grew fonder for one another.

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Severus’ good mood abruptly plummeted as he made his way towards the Headmasters’ office. It was so rare for his mood to be a good one, he wished to hang onto it for as long as possible. Regretfully, just thinking about the old fool was enough to sour his mood. He had genuinely enjoyed spending time with Blake that had nothing to do with Horcruxes, plans or the Dark Lord. It didn’t happen often, their plans were the most important thing right now, so they tended to focus on that most of the time.

With a glower on his face, he stepped on the gargoyle and let it lead him to Dumbledore’s office. He honestly wished he didn’t need to be here. He knew every single one of the questions the old man was going to propose towards him, he knew because he’d already asked them dozens of times in the past few weeks. Which might be a slight exaggeration, but not by much.

Opening the door, observing his surroundings, “Albus,” he said, in his usual voice, giving none of his thoughts and feelings away as he glided into the room and claimed a seat.

“Ah, Severus, prompt as always,” Albus said, beaming at Severus as if he was delighted to see him.

Severus just arched and eyebrow and waited.

He didn’t need to wait long.

“Have you found out anything about him?” Albus asked, it was the same question he asked all the time.
“Albus,” Severus sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, “Blake Slytherin is not your enemy,” the fact he was using him to spy on not only the Dark Lord but assuming he’d spy on Blake was extremely insulting and annoying.

“Just because he’s not a Death Eater does not make him someone dangerous,” Albus stated chidingly. “He has the child you’ve sworn to protect in his care... his rather dubious care.” He of course ignored absolutely everything that was better about Harry since Blake took over his guardianship. Well, ignore was the wrong word, everything about Harry was alarming him, he was too independent, didn’t depend on him anymore, did not rely on him or listen to him and those were things that needed to happen in order for Harry to go through with his plans to defeat Voldemort once and for all.

“You and I obviously see two different things,” Severus pointed out blithely. “The boy has actually grown properly, no longer looks thin, he’s become confident, and actually focuses on his academics for the first time in four years.” Judging by the look on Dumbledore’s face those were the things he hated above all else. Those were true facts, regardless of what Dumbledore felt. The changes he’d seen in the young boy was... mind-blowing, incredible really, how a change in guardianship could cause so many positive reactions from one child in the short time he’d been in his life, the summer holidays. Just one summer.

“He’s an unknown wizard, we do not know where his allegiances lie,” Albus chided yet again. Severus opened his mouth to reply when a voice – Blake’s voice – surrounded the room, as if he had cast a Sonorous on himself.

‘To Tom Marvolo Riddle, otherwise known as the Dark Lord Voldemort, I, Blake Slytherin herby challenge you to a duel. The duel will take place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry at nine AM in two days’ time. The duel will be to the death with seconds, as a Slytherin challenging, to forfeit is to lose your magic’

“I believe you have your answer, Albus,” Severus said, his voice slightly hoarse in surprise. He had not expected to actually hear Blake’s challenge.

Albus himself was paler than a ghost, sitting in his chair completely stunned, honestly, a feather could have caused him to crumble.

“I knew I liked him for a reason,” Phineas said with a smirk.

“Why use a Sonorous charm? The Dark Lord will not hear him from here,” Severus spoke the words without being consciously aware until they were already out of his mouth.

“All challenges are heard by all wizards and witches in the British Isles the Muggles won’t hear it,” Phineas patiently answered, “Official ones especially, and he made it official, nobody and nothing can interfere with the duel now,” it had been generations since such a duel had been called up, it was both a blast from the past and a welcoming change. It was just a shame that those fighting were the last two remaining Slytherins from the Slytherin line.

Severus closed his eyes, “I’m going to assume the students all heard that as well?” something Blake had not wanted, at all.

“Everyone,” Phineas said emphatically, not staring at Severus anymore, but rather at a dumbfounded Dumbledore.

“Albus?” Severus questioned, his tone sharper than intended, but judging by Dumbledore’s glazed
eyes it was going to take some sharp retorts to get him out of his state.

“Severus, we have to stop this duel,” Albus rasped out, still extraordinary pale and shaken by what he had just heard.

“How so?” Severus questioned, playing ignorant, he knew the reason why Dumbledore was acting so upset. All his plans were falling into ruins, the question remained how far he would go to see that his ‘plans’ were not disturbed in any way. The only reason he hadn’t tried so hard to get Blake gone was because of his foolhardy belief that the Defence position was in any way really cursed.

“It’s vitally important,” Albus informed him imperiously, sitting straighter, refusing as always to share his plans or his reasoning behind anything unless it suited him. Even then it was usually riddles upon riddles that were difficult to decipher with only ‘It’s for the greater good’ to top it off.

“Nobody can interfere with a duel,” Severus pointed out.

“That is correct, there are dire consequences to those who attempt to.” Phineas commented, his amusement obvious to all there. Many of the portraits had vacated the room, in order to gossip about this newest development that had occurred. “There has even been reports of deaths due to disastrous attempts to circumvent a challenge.”

Albus paused at that, any action he could feasible take would be attempts at circumventing the duel. Even getting someone else to act on his behalf could be seen as the same thing. His death was not on the cards at the moment, and he did not want it to be. He had much to do, to see over, to ensure happens.

“What are the chances of Slytherin being able to best Tom?” Albus asked worriedly, he was rather betting on Voldemort winning to be frank. If Voldemort was ‘killed’ in the duel who knew how long it would take for him to be reborn so to speak? He was already having to ensure that this all ended within two years…so that it ended while the boy was under his guidance and not out in the world where he could freely gain independence and a rebellious nature that came with being famous. No, Voldemort’s death would not do. The thought of trying to reign in Harry when he was older, an adult, was quite frankly tedious to think about.

No, Blake had to lose the duel, he just had it. It would also ensure Harry was firmly planted back where he belonged, under him. His control where he belonged. So he had to do something…but what? He couldn’t interfere with the duel, perhaps a potion that would weaken him before the duel?

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Here we go! Sorry its a little short! well, half of what I usually post! but it was stubborn! I wanted to show a bit of Blake and Severus actually talking about things but nothing would come to mind...fortunately some feels got in there :) will they confess before the duel? or will they have a rather...public display after the duel? Will Dumbledore try and interfere and lose his magic? Lose his Headmastership or will he let things run their course? Is there anyone's reaction you want to see before I move on to the duel? Voldemort's reaction is a given in the next chapter :D in two chapters I reckon we will see the duel! ugh I'm getting close to two major duels in my stories Lord Of Time and This! Duelling is never fun to write! maybe I should read the final duel at Hogwarts the book of course - to see if that helps me! Read and Review please!
Chapter 39

The Games They Play

Chapter 39

Voldemort froze when he heard the beginning of the speech, not out of shock that he could hear someone. No, it was the mere fact that someone had dare to use his filthy muggle name. Only a few of his old ‘friends’ knew that name, not many had lived to adulthood, with great goals came necessary sacrifices. As long as those doing the sacrificing wasn’t him of course. To add insult to injury, the entire magical world was now aware of who he really was. That he was the son of a filthy Muggle father. How long would it take for them to uncover his heritage? That his Slytherin blood was watered down so completely that they wouldn’t want to follow him? Was this the end? Win or lose the duel? Everything he’d worked towards just gone. His pale features became clammy and ashen.

He was beyond anger, beyond rage, he felt nothing but stunned disbelief, and it wasn’t a feeling he had been familiar with in his life. Anger he knew, anger he anchored, used to get what he wanted almost as much as charm when he was younger. Was this what shock felt like? Staring down at his hands in incredulity as they shook as dizziness and nausea overtook him in droves. His breathing was rapid and laboured, as he stared ahead at nothing. Not seeing the bookcases filled with books in front of him.

A part of him was grateful he was alone, or would be when he recovered from what had just happened. Not that it would matter, he knew deep down that he had just lost the majority of his followers, they knew now, that he was just a filthy half-blood. Just like those they fought against, to them he was no better than a Muggle born wrench. There would be those who still followed him, out of fear and terror but it wasn’t anywhere near enough to win a war he wished to wage on the magical world.

That caused rage to plough through him, shattering the shock that had surrounded him. Snarling furiously, he began to let loose blasting curses, hitting everything he could. As books and bookcases smashed to smithereens, tables went next, walls, chairs even the ceiling, again and again he let loose his rage by non-verbal blasting curses. Uncaring of anything that rained down upon him. So enraged that he didn’t even notice his wand was pointed in the upward direction.

“Bombarda!” he snarled out through gritted teeth, unable to keep quiet right now. His aim caused the chandelier to fall with an almighty crash of glass shattering around his bare feet. Missing him only by mere inches, not that he noticed, for all the attention he paid to it.

Voldemort just stood there breathing heavily, chest heaving as he tried to get enough oxygen into his lungs.

If anyone heard the commotion, nobody showed up, the House-elves cowered in fear during the entire thing. The Malfoy library stood – barely – in total ruin, much like the gardens now due to the Death Eaters contempt for anything not their own.

With that Voldemort disappeared with a pop, leaving Malfoy Manor, and his shame behind.

He had some thinking to do, and he did that best ironically enough in the Muggle world where he had started, the place where Wool’s Orphanage once stood.
Albus Dumbledore sighed as he sat back down at his desk, the ancient book he’d just pilfered from the library in his hands. The one that would tell him everything there was to know about magical duels. Including the consequences of interference. He refused to believe the old Black Headmaster, the consequences couldn’t be that bad. Magic, as good as it was, wasn’t a sentient being. It couldn’t possibly be able to tell intent especially when one had absolutely no part in it. He wouldn’t, he would give that part to someone else…just after he had read everything he could and ensure it wouldn’t bite him in the ass.

It would take a while though, the book was over five hundred pages long and very delicate. Breathing evenly, he knew he had to do this regardless of the outcome of the information in the book. If it cost him his life, then it would need to happen, he would just need to ensure he leaves everything in the capable hands of those he trusts, somewhat. At least enough to get this done, and they would, they wanted the war over just as much as him, and had a lot more to lose. He didn’t want to die without being sure of Harry’s loyalties though, the boy needed to end the war, needed to die to end the war.

He once again cursed Blake Slytherin, and the chaos he had brought with him. He hadn’t seen it coming and it had hit him sideways. To make matters worse, the wizard had known information he shouldn’t have, and he feared the leak was closer to home than he wanted to look too closely at. He’d played them all like fiddles at the trial and had continued to do so since. He had the entire Order in disarray, to make matters worse, he still knew nothing about the wizard at all. Except he had gone to two schools, had quite a way with people, they either took to him or they hated him.

The students regretfully liked the wizard which added to his irritation.

He hadn’t expected him to last this long, he assumed that Tom would have lashed out by this. He’d killed the rest of his family, why hadn’t he done anything to Blake? It would have been very…convenient if he had done so. Then again, why would Tom do anything about him? He probably knew just how difficult Blake was making his life.

He would have preferred using Severus to do this, since Blake trusted him somewhat. He couldn’t risk Severus’ divided loyalties, he seemed to be impressed by Harry’s changes which only caused him alarm. Seemed to like Blake’s character, even if he could convince Severus of the danger Blake posed to Harry…it might not work in his favour. No, it was impossible, he just wished he didn’t have to use his last ace in a hole to get this annoyance dealt with.

A fast acting poison, and he knew just how they could go about it. Blake being a teacher at his school, where he could keep an eye on him, had finally come in hand. He also only had two days to stop this travesty from happening.

He didn’t pause for a moment in the fact he was planning another person’s death.

It was all for the greater good after all.

Harry paled when he heard the words, glancing around the room, only to realize they had heard it too. It wasn’t just because he and Blake were technically the same person. He’d known Blake was going to challenge Voldemort soon, but he hadn’t expected it to be this quick…or this public either. Blake was brilliant, one of the best duellers Harry had ever seen, but considering he hadn’t seen many duellers or duels what did he really know? Nobody had beaten Voldemort – except him – and it was more of an accident than anything else. What chance did Blake really have against
Voldemort? Did he really have a go at being able to defeat him?

“Bloody hell!” Ron whispered wide eyed, glancing at Harry in concern, their friendship might be gone…but he still cared about Harry. “Are…are you alright?” he asked the teen, pity mixing with concern, but mostly concern. He didn’t like Blake Slytherin but he could see Harry definitely did. He looked whiter than the ghosts.

Harry swallowed thickly, giving a curt nod, “I’ll be fine,” he croaked out.

Neville clasped Harry’s shoulder, “Do you want to leave?” even the adults looked stunned. “Come on, let’s get out of here.” Before they descended upon him, asking him questions, the vultures wouldn’t care.

“The reporters will be all over him, it’s best we return to Hogwarts,” Luna said, able to urge Harry up out of his seat.

“You can take your butterbeer with you,” Rosmerta suggested, “Be quick,” having heard both Neville and Luna’s words. A jug of butterbeer in her hand, she’d just been pouring it into peoples glasses, topping them up. She was always extra busy on Hogsmeade days, not that she minded, it kept her in business after all. She didn’t mind losing a few flagons it wouldn’t kill them. Everyone knew who Blake Slytherin was, the fact he’d adopted Harry and despite the speculation of whether he was working for Voldemort or not…well it has just become very clear he was willing to do anything for the safety of his ward.

“I’ve got them,” Neville murmured as Luna helped get Harry moving.

“Can you believe it?” Hermione said, stunned beyond belief at what had just happened.

“They must be up to something,” Ginny said, shaking her head, refusing to believe what was in front of her. “What could they be up to?” she didn’t believe for a moment Blake Slytherin really wanted to end Voldemort.

“Let it go, Ginny, they can’t be up to anything, this proves it once and for all that Blake really is on our side,” Ron retorted immediately, he was quite frankly annoyed by her constant need to put down Blake all the time. Sure he didn’t like him, but Ginny was obsessing over it, and had Hermione pulled in too. He was frankly tired of hearing his voice all the time. “They have to duel and they will have to fight to the death…there can only be one winner. If either of them don’t turn up they lose their magic. Nobody would ever risk their magic for anything.”

Ginny scowled at her brother, hating that he was actually making sense and not just complaining like he normally did when Blake Slytherin was mentioned. She couldn’t think of any reason as to why Blake would do this…it didn’t benefit him any? Unless he genuinely wanted to defeat Tom. Why though? It was obvious he was a Death Eater, so what if he hadn’t been marked? Poor Harry and many others had been duped by him, but not her, she wasn’t easily manipulated, not anymore. She had learned from her youthful mistakes.

Ginny glanced at Hermione, expecting her to be just as puzzled and perplexed as her, but instead she looked deep in contemplation and even a little ashamed. What the hell? Surely, surely not, Hermione couldn’t be buying into this, he had to be up to something. “You’re not buying into this are you?” Ginny asked, aghast.

“Ginny…there’s no way around a duel, especially not one to the death.” Hermione murmured, “It holds more sway than even an unbreakable vow. He’s either going to defeat Voldemort or die in two days’ time.” He was going to duel Voldemort, and the fact he was spoke of his character…he
was doing his for Harry, for the magical world. He wasn’t Voldemort’s servant, wasn’t a Death Eater. He truly had taken Harry in because he cared, he wasn’t trying to turn Harry against them or the light side.

“He might not be a Death Eater then but he’s still a despicable person,” Ginny stated, as the shock begun to wear off, everyone began to cheer and drink in Blake Slytherin’s name, each of them all evidently wishing him well in the duel.

“Let’s get out of here,” Hermione said, as the loudness began to hurt her eardrums, they were going to be completely drunk in a few hours. She’d rather not hang around and wait for fighting to start or worse.

Ron simply nodded his agreement, normally he would have been quite happy to sit and continue to drink his butterbeer and watch the free show. Getting amusement out of seeing the drunks acting like idiots. Unfortunately, he just didn’t feel like it, he felt guilty, and more importantly worried for Harry. He’d looked so shocked when the announcement had been made. He lost his best friend, it was his own fault, his own actions had led to this…but it didn’t make his feelings for Harry go away. He’d been best friends with him for years, and yes, he got needlessly jealous and petulant over things that weren’t Harry’s fault, he deserved it, but he had genuinely cared about Harry. Not the Boy-Who-Lived, never that, despite how it looked, especially when they first met. He prayed that Blake would win, not just for the sake of the magical world…no, but for Harry. He didn’t deserve to lose someone else. He’d already lost his parents…and the Dursley’s hadn’t been fit.

“Come on, Ginny,” Ron ordered, he couldn’t leave her in here, his mum would have his hide if he let anything happen to her.

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“Harry, mate, you alright?” Fred asked seeing the approaching trio, they had heard the announcement. Speaking himself, right now wasn’t a joke and neither Fred or George felt like trying to joke about something as serious as this. “Look he’s brilliant, he can do this.” He said patting the teen on the shoulder, giving it a squeeze in reassurance.

“Yeah, he is, he will do it.” George added, patting his other shoulder, “Just…try not to worry too much,” no point to asking him not to worry at all. For George would worry if it was someone he cared about. They didn’t wonder why he was doing it, to them it was obvious really. Blake cared about Harry a lot, he was doing everything he could to ensure Harry survived. Training him, teaching him, and now…now he was doing the ultimate protection possible. Trying to rid the world of Voldemort in order to ensure Harry’s wellbeing and safety.

“You heading back to Hogwarts?” Fred asked, when Harry didn’t speak, he wasn’t crying or looking ready to be sick or anything dramatic like that. He just looked worried, then again, he would be too in Harry’s position. “I think he needs to have a word with Blake.”

“Agreed,” Neville murmured, “Plus the last thing he needs is people asking him questions.”

“Yeah, well we best get going then,” George said, nudging them in the direction of the school, looking behind them at a group of their peers all looking ready to interrogate Harry.

“Go!” Fred said, wand out, looking ready to create havoc as the three began to walk hastily.

Fred and George remained behind them, wands out, glaring at anyone who looked ready to go anywhere near Harry or ask him questions. They were well known to be vicious when they put their mind to it, but they rarely had a reason to be. They were normally quite laid back, preferring
to be cheerful and cheer people up with jokes and pranks. Although, if you hurt any of their brothers or their sister...they made them pay. They were never caught, nobody could say it was them, but people knew.

“He’s a hell of a dueller, he’s got more than a chance,” Fred said, after fifteen minutes of silence as they finally begun to approach Hogwarts. It was obvious nobody knew what the hell to say to make things better, but they wanted to try. Neville and Luna seemed content just to be at Harry’s side...but Fred and George didn’t know what the hell to do with silence. It wasn’t something they were used to. Growing up in the Burrow, you’d be lucky to get seven hours of silence, less than seven hours when Ginny was younger.

“Fred...stop, just stop,” Harry said, “It’s fine, I’m fine, it’s just...I knew he was going to do it, I just...well, it’s still a bit of a shock.” He admitted, Fred and George were not good with words of comfort, and seeing them trying was painful to watch. If it had been any other situation he would have laughed or grinned watching it. He continued walking,

“Wait you knew he was going to set up an official magical duel with You-Know-Who?” Fred gasped, wondering why the hell he was really surprised? Harry and Blake were close, their was trust between them, a rare trust you didn’t see nowadays. Especially for Harry, after all Blake was a Slytherin at the end of the day. He knew something must have happened to create that sort of trust but he had a feeling he’d never find out.

Fred continued to stare at Harry in silent query as they stepped through the gates of the school. Disturbing the stones as they walked, but they didn’t pay one iota of attention to it. They were used to the stones by now, having been leaving through the gates since they were thirteen.

“Yeah, didn’t expect to hear it though,” Harry said, he wondered if Blake had realized he would be heard by everyone.

“Official duels are recorded, and heard by everyone its always been that way,” George shrugged his shoulders, it was old information though. You’d need to read the right books, and Fred and George had read everything that sounded remotely interesting while at Hogwarts. Which would surprise many, but Fred and George were smart, smart enough to take advantage of the huge library which hosted a lot of information. Their exam results also showed just how wicked smart they were, they were just a different kind of smart from Hermione and the rest that usually thought themselves above others. Even their mother had been flabbergasted how well they did with their OWLS.

“How do you know that?” Harry asked, and it wasn’t because he didn’t know how smart they were. “I read the book after...” he trailed off, after Severus read it, he’d asked to borrow it, realizing there had to be a reason Severus would take an interest in it and read it. There had been of course, as he had learned later. “It didn’t have anything about the duel requests being heard.”

Neville and Luna glanced at the twins, not able to tell them apart, not like Harry could. They too were curious about their answer.

“No, we didn’t read it in a book from the library, we actually read the newspaper clippings of old duels,” Fred corrected him, they’d been curious to know how the duel between Grindelwald and Dumbledore went. Ironically enough, any mention of the duel hadn’t been available at Hogwarts. They’d found it in the Daily Prophet archives which were available for public access.

Harry nodded, not confused by Fred and George’s reading habits, already well aware. They’d actually sold their Lockhart books and bought a few second hand ones to replace them. He’d seen them and honestly? He’d questioned them then only to regret it. Their likes were quite broad a vast
many and different subjects although creating jokes was definitely their best subjects.

“Common room?” Neville suggested, “Or somewhere else? ROR?”

“Do you want to go and visit Blake?” Luna asked, realizing Harry might want to be alone with his magical guardian.

“Actually I like the sound of letting off some steam in the ROR,” Harry admitted, “I’ll go see Blake after dinner,” no doubt Blake was with Severus and he didn’t want to interrupt them. He could see they liked each other, and kept hoping they’d bloody just reveal they liked each other. As of now…nothing yet, he honestly didn’t understand how they could be so blind to each other but so smart and perceptive about everything else.

“Want us to come?” Fred questioned, wondering if Harry didn’t actually want to be on their own.

“I’d like that,” Harry said quietly, he didn’t want to be on his own, Blake had been on his own so long and look how that had turned out? Don’t get him wrong, Blake is a good wizard, brilliant even, but he wasn’t very sociable, when he wasn’t charming everyone just to get them on his side he supposed. He’d gone so long without much in the way of social interaction, he was getting better though.

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Sirius froze staring blindly at the wall in the small office in his therapists property. The wall was covered in framed awards and her master’s and bachelor degree, both Muggle and magical indicating years upon years of work. She was dedicated to helping her patients be the best they can be. Doctor Teresa Abbott.

Even his therapist was outwardly stunned by what just happened. Then again, his therapist knew Blake Slytherin, Blake had recommended them as a stipulation for remaining in Harry’s life. He’d resented the ultimatum, been furious, seething over it actually. It had made him loathe Blake with a ferocity only matched by what he’d once felt for Severus Snape.

As time had passed though, Sirius begun to realize it was doing him good. He was sleeping easier, feeling better than he had long before he was thrown in Azkaban. Seeing a new side of everything he’d done and endured. It begun to click that he was not good for Harry the way he was, and he begun to work as hard as possible to ensure he got better. Harry deserved someone who could help him, and so he would be that person, no matter how long it took.

Nowadays he held respect and wariness for Blake, he knew better than just to trust anyone, especially since finding out Dumbledore had known all along…and had left him to rot in Azkaban. He hadn’t gotten over it but his therapist said, there was no getting over such a horrific betrayal, but one can move on and live the rest of their lives instead of letting Dumbledore win. For Harry. For himself. For his future.

“I think…I think it’s best if I come back tomorrow? Please?” Sirius said, still reeling over what he’d heard. Remus was inside his house, he had literally just felt him Apparating in, the wards were alerting him.

“I think perhaps I should see you at your normal appointment next week,” his mind healer said, giving Sirius a small comforting smile. “If you need to speak to me before then make an emergency appointment.”

“Okay,” Sirius said automatically, still trying to get over what he’d heard.
“But…before you leave, tell me what you’re thinking, what you feel,” Teresa asked, staring intently at Sirius, who had come to her in need of real serious therapy. She had feared that it was too late, given the extent of the damage and time in Azkaban. She had refused to give up though, determined to do her best, and to her immense satisfaction and pride…he was beginning to show vast improvement.

“I’m thinking of Harry,” Sirius said, a worried look on his face, “He…cares for Slytherin, and I…I think he will be worried maybe even scared.”

“That’s good,” Teresa said, giving a nod of approval, “Go on,” urging him to continue.

“He better win, for Harry’s sake,” Sirius said, “He doesn’t need to lose someone else…he already lost his parents and as much as I’d love for Harry to stay with me…I don’t want to see him hurting.” He spoke about Slytherin constantly, he respected him, admired him, maybe even loved him. Why wouldn’t he? He had saved Harry where every single person – including him – had failed him.

“Is there a part of you that hopes he will?” Teresa asked impassively.

Sirius frowned, thinking about it, before realization dawned, “No, not at all.” And that did surprise him. A few months ago, he probably would have prayed for something like this to happen.

“Thank you for your time, Sirius,” Teresa said, after a few more minutes of silence, Sirius had asked her to call him by his given name. Not only was he not fond of his name, but he rather hated everyone referring to him as Lord Black. Which was his official title even if he didn’t acknowledge it. “I shall see you at the same time next week,”

“Thanks,” Sirius murmured, abruptly standing up, he quickly moved out of the office, then shuffling through the hallway and out of yet another door, not seeing healer Hanna as he left, who helped him with his meditation exercises. Hastening through the living room and out of the front door before Apparating as quickly as possible. The property was very secure, you couldn’t Floo or Apparate anywhere on the property, he’d bet Portkey’s couldn’t be used either. Hence why he had been forced to flee through the home as quickly as possible.

As the property he’d bought from Blake Slytherin was his completely, he could Apparate anywhere he pleased upon his property without compromising said security. Not even the Weasley’s could get into his new home, instead they remained in the outhouse. He wasn’t vindictive enough to leave them without any security whatsoever. Leaving them to fend for themselves would result in them dying. The Weasley’s had no money to buy themselves a new home or adequately ward their home – the Burrow – not even with all their elder sons employed.

“Remus,” Sirius whispered almost reverentially, the one person he trusted above all others. “You heard?”

“Of course, everyone did,” Remus said wryly, “Anyone with a drop of active magical blood did.” Including the Muggle-borns as a matter of fact.

“Yeah,” Sirius murmured slumping onto his seat, closing his eyes warily.

“How is Harry? Do you know?” Remus asked Sirius with worry. Suspecting Sirius didn’t, he knew he was supposed to be at his therapist appointment. He’d dropped his own errands for the day, he could do them another time.

“I don’t know, yet.” Sirius replied, “He doesn’t carry the mirror with him, so I’ll have to wait until
curfew tonight,” he’d given James’ half of the mirror to Harry so they could talk whenever Harry needed to. With him back at Hogwarts, they couldn’t meet up like Blake had begun to allow before school started again. Since revealing the truth Harry and he had been getting on better. He was finally getting to know his godson, he could name Harry’s favourite colour, food and his choice of career if he could accomplish them. He owed it to Blake.

Now Blake was about to risk his life to keep Harry safe.

By going out to duel the Dark Lord Voldemort.

Merlin help them, he could only pray that Blake’s confidence wasn’t misplaced.

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Two men sitting together, heads almost touching as they conversed in the darkness wasn’t such a strange sight anymore that anyone was concerned. Or rather, if it had been anyone law abiding they might have expressed concern. As it stood, the silencing spell surrounding them prevented any sound escaping and both were cloaked in darkness, with black floor length black robes on. also the time of night it was gave credence to the fact they were up to no good. Who feels the need to meet up with someone at eleven o’clock at night? In secrecy? Nobody could tell if they were young, old, ugly, powerful or even hags. The only thing that could be definitely stated was that they were tall and thin.

“I need this dealt with as soon as possible,” Dumbledore demanded quietly, never speaking above the merest whisper. Sitting in his brothers pub, Hogs head having met up with his ‘contact’ who owed him, as an added incentive he shoved a bag full of galleons into his hands. Revealing nothing about the information he found in the book. It wasn’t common knowledge so the wizard would have absolutely no idea. It was a small comfort, especially as he didn’t have anyone else he could…enforce this on.

“Albus,” the unknown wizard rasped out, the sound of teeth gritting accompanied it. “I know I owe you…but this…is asking a bit much.” It was murder, for Merlin’s sake, he couldn’t believe Albus would ask that of him. Let alone be implicated in one.

“I know, I know,” Albus sighed, looking suddenly decades older. “I understand it, truly I do, but I wouldn’t ask it of you if it wasn’t for the greater good.”

Visibly startled, “The Greater Good?” he echoed, incredulously. Entirely sceptical given what he had been hearing in the newspapers and not to mention the gossip.

“Mr. Potter is in extreme danger from this wizard,” Dumbledore explained tiredly, “My hands have been tied, and to make matters worse…he has successfully spread so many rumours and lies about me that…that I’m afraid my reputation and standing might never recover. I’ve done nothing but aid the magical world for its betterment, and yet everyone is so quickly to judge me on something that’s entirely false.”

“Why not just wait until the duel is over?” he asked, staring blankly at Dumbledore, but shifted uncomfortable under his stare and the information he just gleaned.

“It must be done before,” Dumbledore retorted immediately, his tone serious and booking no disobedience. “You have two days to see it through, one now, this is a short list of how.” By short he meant two ways on how to accomplish it and the deeds on how it’s done.

He accepted the paper, his stomach churning as he glanced at the written note. It wasn’t
Dumbledore’s usual scrawl, but considering the contents inside – which weren’t that insidious unless you know what they’d been discussing – it couldn’t be a surprise.

“Don’t do it just for me, do it for Harry, for everyone, the magical world is depending on you they just don’t know it,” Dumbledore said, voice suddenly soft and persuasive. “You have a son just one year younger than Harry…if you want to see him grow up…to see the magical world flourish…you’ll do this. Then you can consider our debt repaid.” Magic flared indicating that it would hold Dumbledore to his will.

What the hell had Blake Slytherin actually done to receive Albus Dumbledore’s ire so royally that he wished him dead? Even Grindelwald hadn’t died by Dumbledore’s hand…not that this was by Dumbledore’s hands but it was all semantics really. He couldn’t see why Dumbledore would be so eager to see him dead…but when it came to Dumbledore you never really got to understand him. He wasn’t exactly the paragon of light everyone liked to see him as, well, one could argue he was, since without Dumbledore giving him a second chance…he would have been caught and in Azkaban. This was the first time he’d asked anything of him in the years since.

Not that he’d expected this to be the price of repayment for the debt he owed Dumbledore. He was no longer in the business, he had a family, a life, he’d settled down and he was very happy. He was not sure he could actually go through with this. Yet a picture of his son flashed over his face and his two young daughters not even yet Hogwarts age.

“How does this have anything to do with the war?” he asked eventually.

“You will just have to trust me when I say it’s vital, I would be willing to swear an oath to that effect,” Dumbledore informed him sincerely, and he would be speaking nothing but the truth.

The wizard watched in disbelief as Dumbledore removed his wand, and swore the oath, insisting that if Blake Slytherin should fight Voldemort in that duel and win…that the magical world would fall into darkness, that Voldemort would return and wreak havoc and there would be nothing he could do to prevent it. The oath took and Dumbledore used magic to prove he had been speaking the truth.

Of course, Dumbledore believed this so it was the truth. Whether it was the whole truth, a false truth or no longer irrelevant…did not matter to magic as it read only intent and truth of what he believed.

“I’ll do it,” he informed Dumbledore grimly, for the sake of his children he would do anything…even something he would find entirely distasteful.

“Good, good,” Dumbledore sighed, relieved beyond belief, he hadn’t been sure whether he could convince him to do it or not. It wasn’t as if he could force him to do it, just hope that repaying the debt he owed would be enough at the end of the day. He was pleased by how this went truly, but only because it was literally the last resort.

He just prayed things would work in his favour.

Judging by how things had been going as of late…he feared it might not be the case.

“Then we’re done.” He stated, wanting to get as far away from Dumbledore as possible. Spend some time with his wife…and kids, just in case. Although, judging by the words on the parchment, there was a ninety percent chance of success. Of him getting away with it…fifty-fifty on whether they succeeded over all.
Later that night, he stared down at his wife before glancing out the window…wondering…what the hell was he doing?

Meanwhile Dumbledore went to bed, feeling accomplished and hopeful for the first time since this Blake Slytherin had ruined everything.

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Will the next chapter focus on a family day for Severus, Harry and Blake? Or will the next chapter focus on the battle? Will Blake cease to exist or will he be given a second chance? Will he find the spell Lucius used on him and realize the Death Eater had given him the ultimate gift? Realise he had known all along what he was doing? Will Lucius find redemption in this story? Hmm…I didn't add in any of Draco because honestly…I forgot and it wouldn't be very long, smaller than even Voldemort's I reckon…will the Death Eaters show up in hopes of Voldemort being defeated for his treachery and be the end to the war? Will they acknowledge they are wrong with the information Blake puts out there for them all to see? Enabling them to watch their lines flourish with new members? Renewed hope for them all and give peace to the Muggle-borns as life becomes easier for them as they realize they aren't alone? If this happens then the story will be a little longer obviously! :) R&R please!
Chapter 40

The Games They Play

Chapter 40

Severus made his way towards Blake’s quarters immediately upon actually having more than a few seconds free time, and his duties done for the night. Dumbledore had kept him much longer than needed, and it had almost resorted in him pulling his hair out in exasperation. Dumbledore kept asking about Blake’s powers, his abilities, whether he might actually stand a chance in defeating Voldemort again. He’d asked him all that yesterday while he heard the damn duel announcement. He wasn’t sure why the old fool had insisted on asking him repeatedly, in tiny different ways, like it would suddenly change his answer, Severus had been tempted to lie to him, but he didn’t have it in him. It was clear Dumbledore did want some sort of lie, whether he wanted to have it acknowledged Blake could kill Voldemort or if he’d be killed. No, he knew why, with all the information they’d uncovered Dumbledore was just terrified that Voldemort was defeated without his little Horcruxes being destroyed. Which of course, they would be, but Dumbledore didn’t need to know that.

He wished the duel was happening on a Monday so that this was the weekend. So that he could spend actual real time with Blake before everything changed for them. Unfortunately, it wasn’t to be, and they had to continue their classes and life as if everyone wasn’t on pins and needles just waiting. Between Blake training Harry, the few students who wanted to be Aurors but needed higher grades and Neville well, his time was very limited.

If this was the only time he had left with Blake, then he would take it, take all he could get. Harry rarely left Blake’s side either, evidently feeling the same thing as he did, but in an entirely different way. Harry saw Blake as a mentor, a father figure, and Severus…well quite the opposite really.

Opening the door he wasn’t at all surprised to see Harry there himself, curled up in a blanket with a hot chocolate in his tremulous hands. He still couldn’t see Harry in Blake at all, but Harry wouldn’t become Blake anyway.

“Sirius is angry at you,” Harry admitted, staring into the fireplace, evidently too lost in thought to hear Severus or just ignoring the new presence. Which was true enough, Sirius had spent hours last night swearing and furious over Blake challenging Voldemort to a duel. Although, he had remembered to ask him how he was doing, and then promising to kill Blake himself if he got hurt and thereby hurting Harry. He understood why Blake felt he had to do it, why he was doing it but it didn’t make the feeling of dread and fear any better.

“I think you mean you are, Harry, it’s okay to be angry at someone you care about,” Blake said, patting him on the arm quietly, his stomach grumbling. “Dobby?”

“What can Dobby get Master Blake?” the House-elf asked, popping into the room immediately, gaze focused solely on Blake.

“Bring me up something to eat please, handle it all yourself, and bring it up right away do not turn your back on it.” Blake ordered.

Severus’ eyebrows rose in shock, “Paranoia for paranoia’s sake or for good reason?” his eyes suddenly narrowing, yes, Blake was cautious but not to that extreme. Not with Dobby either, normally he was a bit more tolerant towards the creature. He’d been too preoccupied at meal times
Harry’s hot chocolate was nearly spilled all over the floor, as his body jerked up, finding himself staring intently at Blake too. He hadn’t thought to wonder until Severus said something actually.

“Everything I’ve ordered from the kitchens has had something poisoned, if I hadn’t used the detection spell from the future as well… I would have been dead. Fast acting and potent.” Blake explained, patting his hand to the chair next to him, the fireplace warming the room. Which meant he hadn’t eaten at all today, except some toast that Dobby had personally bloody made for him and brought back, hastily eaten before class begun. He’d checked it too before even thinking of consuming it. Like Wizards House-elves were easily tricked, the Imperius worked on them too after all. So he had to be careful even with Dobby, whether he liked it or not.

Severus looked deeply troubled and uncomfortable, but whether it was the information he had learned or being offered a seat so close to Blake nobody knew. “I very much doubt it was Voldemort, he is much too vain to believe anyone could get the better of him. Admittedly with good reason, he is one of the fastest and deadliest wizards I’ve seen duel or duelled myself.” He had learned from the Dark Lord and very quickly too. Plus, the Dark Lord knew about the old ways, he’d be contemning himself if he tried to poison his opponent.

“You haven’t seen me duel like I mean it,” Blake said darkly, a glint in his eyes that would have had most sane men running for the hills. “Believe me, I know all his tricks, he won’t be able to get the better of me easily. I mean to take him down even if I go down with him.” it was his whole purpose of coming back. Tomorrow at nine am the duel would begin, and by the end of it, either he or Voldemort, or both of them would be dead.

Harry flinched at the words, feeling his heart sinking into his gut, the thought of losing Blake hurt. He didn’t want to lose him, he knew technically they were the same person, but they were both so different, different enough that he hardly thought about it. “Who?” who could be trying to poison Blake before a duel? “Dumbledore?”

“I doubt very much he’s behind the actual attempts, he’ll have someone doing the dirty work.” Blake said dryly, accepting the food Dobby popped in with, and thoroughly testing everything on the plate, including the vegetables until he was sure that nothing was actually tampered with. “Dobby? Remain here, do not go down to the school kitchens or respond to anyone calling you except for me. It will remain that way until at least the duel is over with is that understood?” he didn’t want to see Dobby die because someone was out to get him.

“According to the Black Headmaster… trying to intervene in an official duel has severe consequences….” Severus blurted out, “Why would he risk his life for that? What would he accomplish?”

“Another reason to use someone else,” Blake sighed, “He believes what he’s doing is for the ‘greater good’ and nothing and nobody will change his mind. I can’t say whether it would actually affect him, but magic itself is a vindictive bitch when she feels wrong.” His lips twitched just imagining magic punishing Dumbledore for interfering. “Nothing will come of it anyway, it’s not like it was a success.” The second the war was over he was out of here, whether it would be under his own free will or in a body bag well… that would remain to be seen.

“Because he thinks only I can defeat Voldemort and he doesn’t know about you. He thinks you’re screwing all his plans up.” Harry murmured quietly, sipping his hot chocolate, of course, why hadn’t they thought of that earlier? Of course, Dumbledore would attempt to intervene he was that desperate to see the end of Voldemort his way he’d do anything that required it, even sacrificing Blake, and even him come to think of it.
Severus’ nostrils flared, anger and disgust coursing through him, yes, even he hadn’t thought of it which made him feel stupid right now. Blake had always checked his food, not always obvious about it either, made him wonder why Dumbledore was even attempting to get someone to poison his food, unless he hadn’t observed Blake at all. Yet he must have done, he must have done, he suspected Blake of many things, even if they were disproven. Yet here they were, in a situation where Dumbledore should know that it wasn’t going to work, Blake was much too cautious to fall for that, and thank Merlin for it too.

Severus hoped and prayed that Dumbledore paid for what he was attempting, that he wouldn’t get away with it like he did everything else he has done in his life. Praying never worked though, so he doubted very much anything would come of his thoughts.

For good or ill tomorrow morning…the duel would be on.

“Do you have anything else requiring your attention this evening?” Severus asked, an idea striking him.

“No,” Blake said shaking his head, “Why?”

“How about we get out of Hogwarts? Go for a bite to eat?” Severus suggested, somewhere that Blake could actually eat without worrying it was damn poisoned. Plus, he didn’t think any of them had eaten anything much today, too worried, and quite frankly, Severus knew going hungry would hinder not help.

“What do you think?” Blake turned to Harry, arching a brow, knowing better than to think Harry would let him out of his sight. He was making the most of what time they had if the worst happened, and Blake couldn’t blame him for that…he was too. If this was going to be his last evening on earth…there was nobody he’d rather spend it with than Harry and Severus.

“Let’s do it!” Harry said determinedly, his stomach grumbling in complaint, he wasn’t used to going hungry anymore, not even for a day. Blake had made sure he ate every day, and he could consume actual meals that normal teens could – except Ron, who had a bottomless pit – which normally didn’t happen until at least the middle of the school year. He then tapered off a little when he knew he was going to the Dursley’s, to try and limit the shock to his body at having only one thing day if he was lucky, usually a cold can of soup or something and stale bread which he usually had to give to Hedwig.

“Indian? Italian? Chinese or the chip shop?” Blake asked idly, summoning his wallet, which had Muggle notes in it. Certainly more than enough to pay for any size of meal they decided upon.

“You decide,” Severus and Harry decided, before Harry came to Blake he hadn’t had much of any of that, the Dursley’s did regularly but got nothing for him. Now he could safely say he’d tried quite a few food staples, especially anything with pasta or rice, mostly pasta though.

He wondered how much of that was the same for Blake before he came back here.

Blake was that hungry he actually decided on an Italian restaurant, it was just a simple matter of flicking their wand and they had on a muggle attire that would pass inspection. Although, they got looks regardless of their clothes, two men and a young teen was enough to raise eyebrows and curiosity. Not enough that it put a dampener on their night out or meal. Blake nor Severus cared what Muggles thought, and Harry…had been judged harsher and glared at more meanly to even blink at their looks.

They shared a pizza for starters instead of soup, Margherita, made to perfection. Then Harry
ordered Lasagna, Severus decided on Fiorentina Steak and Blake had Carbonara. They didn’t discuss the war, Dumbledore, tomorrow or anything like that. They just enjoyed the evening out, in a Muggle restaurant, not caring that technically Harry shouldn’t have been outside of school grounds even with Blake as his magical guardian.

“Do you think you’ll remain at Hogwarts? I mean after the year is up?” Harry asked, pausing in their conversation as they were asked what they’d like for dessert. “I’d like Cannoli please,”

“Tiramisu and an espresso for me,” Severus said smoothly.

“Tiramisu and Panna Cotta as well, another round of drinks, Diet coke, Orange and Coke,” Blake asked, all of them giving back the dessert menu’s, a lot of their drinks were unsurprisingly coffee, but they didn’t want to drink coffee with their meals, much too dry. He wasn’t surprised by Severus ordering a coffee, he drank a lot of it, but running on so little sleep…hardly surprising.

“I actually quite like teaching, I’m not sure it’s something I’d like to keep doing, not with Dumbledore around.” Blake mused thoughtfully, “He can and will often make peoples lives intolerable without actually doing anything which is rather annoying.” After what he’d been through it is mere annoyances. To make matters worse, it is actually something Blake could see himself doing.

Severus snorted in complete agreement.

“What about you?” Harry asked thoughtfully staring at Severus, biting a piece of left over garlic bread.

“Fine you well know I detest teaching,” Severus said dryly with enough sarcasm to sink the titanic. It was just unfortunate, that Hogwarts was his home, the one place that he’d ever called home. Spinners End was not home, and never would be. The cottage though…now that was the first time he’d known true peace, perhaps that was as close to a home as he’d ever have. He was actually alright with that.

“But as Hogwarts chosen Headmaster, you’d actually have the time to brew to your hearts content, but still remain within Hogwarts walls, your home.” Blake said, his tone sombre, “Should you choose to accept her offer,” then again, without Dumbledore’s death due to the removal of the Horcruxes from the playing fields, Dumbledore would probably remain at Hogwarts for a significantly longer period of time.

“There is no way I’ll remain once its over,” Severus declared, as he leaned back allowing his desert to be placed in front of him, Harry switching with Blake when he got the wrong dessert. The glasses were put down, and the expresso given to Severus after he raised his hand that it was his.

“You’re both going to be leaving?” Harry asked, not sure how he felt about that, it was odd to begin with, having his guardian at Hogwarts but now…now he didn’t want it any other way. He liked having them there with him, watching out for him and keeping him safe from any of Dumbledore’s overt or subtle attempts at manipulation. Maybe he should leave as well after his OWLS, he didn’t want to end up having to deal with Dumbledore on his own.

“We’ll wait and see,” was all Blake had to say, not wanting to end the night on a sour note, there might not be a future for him anyway, so making plans was pretty puerile. “Try that, you’ll love it,” Blake added with an amused tilt to his head, the secret only three of them share.

Severus snorted softly, black eyes gleaming the only show of his amusement. He was very grateful that he hadn’t been called, there’d been no Death Eater meeting, and no one had approached him.
He could imagine how the Death Eaters had reacted to the news that they were serving a Half-blood, even if he was a descendant of Salazar Slytherin. Only a select few actually knew, but kept it quiet, quite frankly Severus wouldn’t be surprised if the Death Eaters hunkered down and tried to pretend the whole war hadn’t started back up. They hadn’t ruined their future yet, not like they had in Blake’s time which resulted in them having to continue otherwise it was prison for them really and loss of freedom.

He rather hoped it was this way, and they weren’t going to have an uprising on their hands. Perhaps with a little luck, it might all end with Voldemort’s death.

Then again when were they ever lucky?

Luckier than they should have been... Severus acknowledged staring at Blake calmly consuming the food with a gleam of enjoyment in his green eyes. He was letting his guard down with them, almost fully, it was a good feeling. This had been a good idea, they needed it, to get away for a bit.

“Thanks for suggesting this, Severus, I needed it,” Blake admitted, in sync with Severus’ own thoughts.

“I think we all did,” Severus said wryly, and wasn’t that the truth.

Harry just watched both of them with a grin, honestly those two, how long were they going to dance around each other? They liked each other, he could see that, once upon a time it had freaked him out a little but not anymore.

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“Do you have your cloak and map in your bag?” Blake asked Harry, as the teen groggily joined him and Severus at his breakfast table. All three of them had returned to Blake’s quarters last night, and ended up staying the night instead of returning to their respective beds. Dobby was currently cooking breakfast in the small kitchenette he had, with ingredients from the Potter family larder.

“Yeah, why?” Harry murmured out, not quite firing on all cylinders yet as he sat down.

“No,” Blake shook his head amused as he finished his first coffee for the day. The cup making a little clinking noise as it was put on the table. “You’ll remain here until it’s time to leave.” He couldn’t afford Dumbledore interfering with what Harry had to do, it was the most important part, other than the actual duel of course.

Muffling a yawn, Harry nodded, jumping slightly when a coffee was plonked in front of him, exactly how he liked it the few times he actually had any. The smell of breakfast helped wake him up as fast as the coffee, the anxiety hadn’t had a chance to bubble up much. He didn’t have the chance really, he knew this morning was going to go extremely fast and he needed a way to deal with it, to deal with what he had to do next, which meant he would need to be strong. He had to destroy the Horcruxes. Not only that but he’d be completely oblivious to anything that’s happening. It wasn’t a good feeling at all.

He didn’t like the feeling of being side-lined, even though that wasn’t what it was at all. Blake was counting on him and he wouldn’t let him down, regardless of whether he was anxious or not.
Thankfully the food that was served wasn’t greasy, not like the food in the Great Hall. He didn’t think he could stomach anything greasy in his stomach right now.

“Can you imagine the look on Dumbledore’s face when you show up as my second?” Blake asked, a vindictive sort of amusement on his face. As he dug into his scrambled eggs, having already checked everything, he wasn’t about to abandon a habit of a lifetime.

Severus snorted, almost spewing coffee everywhere, “It will be a sight,” he agreed. The look of mixture between shock, disappointment and anger would definitely be a sight to see.

“Forget Dumbledore, what about Voldemort? He’ll be pissed off!” Harry chimed in, and a pissed off Voldemort was a dangerous one, he should know.

“He’ll already be pissed off, he’s been simmering for two days,” Blake said, shaking his head, “He will have lost a lot of his followers, those that remain will have feared too much for their lives. I doubt very much he’s even called them together, they will be furious that they’d been following a Half-blood all this time. You have no idea how deeply ingrained the pureblood nonsense is, they’re taught from a very young age that they’re better because their blood is pure.” Voldemort had boasted his Slytherin blood, and had been embarrassed when he figured out his father was a muggle and kept it under wraps.

Dumbledore knew of course, and decided to keep it hidden, instead of revealing the truth and putting a stop the first war. It was almost like he wanted that war, to be a hero again, to get more acclaim and hero status. Only to be told that it wasn’t him, but a young Harry Potter who would be the hero of the hour. He suspected Voldemort’s interest in Horcruxes for decades but it wasn’t until the thing with the diary that he had ultimate proof of the fact.

“Angry people make mistakes,” Severus added mostly for Harry, who he could see had become even more anxious after the words instead of comforted. “He will be more like the Dark Lord that Blake is used to.” he added, which was true enough.

“Um…Master Blake?” came the vulnerable squeaky voice of Dobby, he sounded dazed, stunned.

“What is it, Dobby?” Blake asked, staring at the House-elf oddly.

“Outside,” was all Dobby would mutter, glancing at the door as the pounding begun.

“What the fucking hell…” Blake arched a brow and swiftly stood, moving over to the window and was met with the sight of millions of little dots, that indicated that people were flocking to the school in droves. “Dear Merlin, do they all have death wishes?”

“Outside,” was all Dobby would mutter, glancing at the door as the pounding begun.

“What the fucking hell…” Blake arched a brow and swiftly stood, moving over to the window and was met with the sight of millions of little dots, that indicated that people were flocking to the school in droves. “Dear Merlin, do they all have death wishes?”

“This is the biggest thing that’s happened in decades, nobody got to see the last duel with Gellert and Dumbledore.” Severus explained pensively, staring out the window himself, “They won’t want to miss it, it will be the most talked about duel for decades to come, albeit if you win…” if he didn’t well, nobody would discuss Blake Slytherin if they valued their lives.

It truly was a last stand of sorts.

“Idiots,” Blake muttered under his breath, staring out in annoyance, “Who the bloody hell is at the door?”

The door slamming closed followed by, “Reporters!” Harry called out, huffing in annoyance.

“Oh for Merlin’s sake!” Blake pinched the bridge of his nose in exasperation.
“Didn’t see that one coming did you?” Severus said smoothly, lips twitching into an amused smirk. Blake chortled, “I must admit I didn’t,” he said, with an almost sheepish look about him.

Severus found he liked that look very much.

“It’s time,” Harry said, his voice sombre as he stared at the clock, Blake would have to leave now to get to the pitch on time or be seen as forfeiting the match.

“Remember, remain strong, destroy them all,” Blake stated firmly, standing in front of Harry, “Once its done what you do next is up to you.” Whether he remained down in the chamber or come up and view the rest or results of the match. “Just remember what I’ve told you, okay?”

Harry nodded, this was it, feeling Blake’s hands on his shoulders, squeezing that had him slamming forward and wrangling the guy into a hug. It might be the only chance he has. “Be careful,”

“I will be.” Blake insisted, he unlike everyone else knew and experienced what the world would be like if Voldemort won again. He might not have set out to come back, but the fact was, he had, accidental or not, he would take advantage of it.

Severus watched them, eyes gleaming as he strengthened himself up for what was to come. He wanted to do the same thing, it might be his only chance but he couldn’t risk it. He didn’t want to confess his feelings and risk losing him, to death or worse rejection.

“Dobby?” Blake called to the House-elf, who was as always still there, as he had been ordered to be by his Master. “Accio box,” concentrating on the particular box, cutting his finger he pressed his thumb to it and murmured under his breath, “There, the Horcruxes are in there, just destroy it all, as soon as you get the Patronus message to proceed, alright? By either me or Severus,”

Harry stiffened his spine, “I will,” he wouldn’t let him down.

“Good, Dobby, take him to the chamber of secrets, do not answer anyone else’s calls,” Blake ordered.

“Yes, Sir, Dobby will do as Master orders,” Dobby said, taking Harry’s hand in his own and with a click of his fingers the box as well as Dobby and Harry were gone, leaving Severus and Blake alone.

“Do you intend to go out there into that crowd?” Severus asked, trying to fill the void, so he didn’t end up discussing what he really wanted to discuss in hearts of hearts.

Blake just gave him a ‘what do you think’ look that was very self-explanatory. Huffing out in annoyance, staring out at the spectacle that awaited him outside. Damn, he hadn’t expected this to happen, should have considered it but things were so different from what he actually remembered it was oddly disconcerting really. “I’m going to look like a show off no matter what I do next, either that or make an enemy of every single reporter here.” normally he wouldn’t care but if he survived this he’d be stuck here in this time the last thing he wanted was the reporters reporting nonsense all the time in order to get back at him.

“Show off?” Severus enquired, a vision of Blake appearing on a damn dragon appearing in his mind, where Harry Potter had rightfully been during the Triwizard tournament.

Blake hummed a little, “Yes, using a broomstick,” grimacing at the thought, “I love flying, I’ve missed it, but…alright, let’s get through the reporters it is.” Severus loathed flying, and wouldn’t
get on a broomstick unless it was to save his life. This didn’t really count as saving his life.

“Try not to kill any of them…unless you’d rather wait until the crowd disperses?” Blake said, the amusement in his tone making sure the suggestion wasn’t taken to heart. It would take a hell of a lot to wind Severus up to the extent he wanted to kill or maim.

The was a tempting offer, but he did desire to see Dumbledore’s face when he saw what was happening.

Blake didn’t wait for a reply, he opened the door raising his hand against the flashing lights, annoyance thrumming through him. Making sure that nobody, absolutely nobody got a decent picture to use for their inconsideration. He felt Severus at his back, closing the door, and the pair of them, ignored the hollering and shoving as they swiftly made their way through the crowd, which was quick to follow at their back, still taking photos and asking questions.

“WHOS YOUR SECOND?”

“ARE YOU TWO TOGETHER?”

“ARE YOU CONFIDENT YOU’LL WIN!”

“How do you feel this morning?”

“How does Harry feel?”

“How will Harry feel losing another guardian?”

“WHY DID YOU DO IT?”

“WHO IS YOUR SECOND?”

The list was endless and very repetitive, and Blake refused to even open his mouth, using non-verbal magic to get them out of his way without hurting them, of course, if they refused to let him by. He wasn’t going to allow them to do a stitch up job on him, take what he said out of context, absolutely no way. Oh, he knew their tricks and he would not fall for them.

Unsurprisingly, Dumbledore was in the thick of things, guiding people on where to go, making sure the actual pitch was free of people. When people begun going mental, he stiffened a little and glanced at the gates, confused, Voldemort wasn’t there, why were they…he followed their gaze, and his jaw dropped, staring incredulously for mere seconds before he regained control of himself.

“Well, I think we have our answer,” Severus hissed through gritted teeth, he’d never seen Dumbledore’s composure slip so badly. He looked almost as pale as the damn ghosts that roamed Hogwarts. If he hadn’t been watching Dumbledore closely he wouldn’t have seen the damn slip up.

“We already knew it, regardless,” Blake murmured quietly, trying to keep it as low as possible so the reporters couldn’t hear.

“I cannot believe he would have…no I can, actually,” Severus sighed, suddenly sounding so incredibly tired.

“Severus? What are you doing here?” his voice slightly elevated but the rest of his composure impeccable, or so he believed. “You can’t be…” can’t be his second, surely not? What about his duties? Where was Timothy? Why hadn’t he done his duty?
“I believe, you should join the spectators, Dumbledore, with everyone else and allow the Aurors to do their jobs,” which was to protect everyone there. “You acting above the rules is making your Gryffindors think they can as well,” pointing towards the Gryffindors still on the pitch.

“But I must…” Dumbledore tried to take control, but three Aurors seemed to surround him, urging him off the pitch, at the very moment it went silent, as the Dark Lord Voldemort made his appearance in his normal dramatic fashion. Only this time, instead of being surrounded by others, he was alone, there wasn’t a single wizard or Death Eater with him, nobody acting as a second. Everyone suddenly wanted to get off the pitch, and before long, there was only three people in its vicinity.

“You betrayed me, Severus,” Voldemort hissed out, red eyes flaring brightly in agitation, but not truly surprised. He hadn’t fully trusted the wizard that had returned to his side, and apparently it was for good reason.

“You betrayed me first,” Severus said coolly, much to Blake and Voldemort’s surprise. He had asked for one thing, one thing, in his years of service to the Dark Lord, a promise had been made, and he had betrayed that promise. He had gone that night and killed Lily – whether he had originally intended or not – and he had never forgiven that. Severus had known he wouldn’t keep his promise so had done what he could to try and save her. It had not been enough, and he’d have to live with that for the rest of his life. She’d been the one good thing in his life that he’d never wanted to see touched by the darkness, let alone killed.

“You will pay for this with your life,” Voldemort snarled furiously.

“If you get that chance,” Blake said wryly, “I do believe you know how to duel, Voldemort? I trust you were taught that much?” taunting the Dark Lord like the Dark Lord had taunted him and Harry.

Voldemort’s nostrils flared, baring his teeth, but he said nothing, instead he stepped onto the duelling platform without taking his eyes off Blake or Severus.

Blake opened his mouth, wanting to tell Severus how much he meant to him, but he couldn’t. Instead he stiffened his spine, giving him a nod, before he too made his way to the other end, trusting that Severus would have his back.

Stalking forward till they were facing one another, completely ignoring the announcement, officiating the duel, as tradition dictated. Wands raised, before yanking downwards before taking three steps back before stepping into their own duelling stance.

Blake remained loose limbed with his wand pointed at the platform floor, Voldemort had his arm up, wand at the ready.

The second the words “BEGIN!” were out, Voldemort immediately fired off a spell that was so quick that it made most spectators dizzy just trying to figure out what the hell had happened and what he’d cast.

And the duel was on.

“Crucio!”

Blake quickly side swept it, well aware that this would be one of Voldemort’s first choices, considering how frothing mad he was it was no surprise. He would then begin to work his way through his extensive collection of the Dark Arts with a few Unforgivables smattered in in order to
try to defeat Blake quickly.

“Anima Captionem!” was Blake’s rapid fire spell casting retort.

Icicles shot up out of the ground, taking the spell on and the ice shattered, the spell easily dissipating. Voldemort had felt alarm crawling up his spine, it would have trapped him in this body and shattered the remnants of the soul he had, it wasn’t a gentle way to go and not many actually knew that spell. He clearly had someone who had delved into the Dark Arts on his hands…which was…very concerning. “Why stay on the light side? With the old fool? You’re as dark as they come!” he spat out, worried enough to play mind games on Blake in order to get him to cease fire.

“There is a difference between being a dark wizard and being an evil motherfucking asshole,” Blake retorted, “Ulcere sanguis! And you’re the reason magic is getting constantly restricted! Because you couldn’t control your impulses!” he wasn’t going to stand there and allow Voldemort to get into his head.

“Extentero!”

Severus winced the second he heard that spell, Voldemort did not like to be spoken to that way and he was showing it in his spellcasting. Blake proceeded to fall back, allowing himself to bodily hit the platform and the spell whizzed harmlessly by, rolling and flipping back to his feet, it amazed Severus, even he didn’t think he could do that if his life depended on it, it might have something to do with all the Cruciatus’ curses he’d endured over the years though. The oo’ing and aahhh’ing of the crowd didn’t once register to him.

They weren’t Dumbledore and Grindelwald, this duel wasn’t going to be reluctant on both ends, with no desire to kill. This was going to bloody, quick and brutal. They were so fast, it was true, the duels he’d seen were nothing on this, it wasn’t just fast paced, they were barely uttering a word, using non-verbal spell casting in order to trip each other up.

“Tormentum!” Blake didn’t fully move enough in time, sweating and near enough panting, and it was probably the equivalent of a missile that blasted into his side, careening him down and off the edge of the platform.

Severus swung around, heart pounding, Merlin, he prayed that Blake got back and finished this, he didn’t want him to die, and certainly didn’t want to have to fight Voldemort for that very reason. The seconds seemed to turn into hours, as the everyone hushed, craning their necks to see what was going on and if he was dead. there were even a few distastefully calling out ‘Is he dead?’ one of them was Seamus Finnegan, Severus recognized the accent.

If he survived this he’d make him regret that remark, he wasn’t sure if his heart could take it.

Voldemort was leisurely walking along the platform with a smug look on his snake face.

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Harry paced back and forth, his feet soaked through and through, as his pacing had caused the water in the chamber to leech into his socks and shoes. The waiting was driving him insane, what if something happened? What if he couldn’t get a Patronus to him? Time seemed to move at a trickle, and quite frankly Harry wanted to run back up the chamber and make his way to the pitch where the duel was taking place and see Blake for himself.

To see him with his own two eyes.

To make sure he was alive and kicking Voldemort’s ass.
Harry twisted around, staring at Dobby, “You can still sense him, right?” he demanded, his tone shaky.

“Dobby can feel Master Blake,” Dobby agreed, he wasn’t surprised that Harry was worried, he was always that way with anyone he cared about – even him and that bogged his mind – they were all he had.

“What about if he was injured?” Harry asked, wishing he’d known all this before.

“Dobby can feel that,” Dobby said, Harry had at least stopped pacing for now, and seemed to be a little calmer.

“How is he?” Harry then asked, brow furrowed.

Just then Dobby froze up, his Master hadn’t told him how to deal with this.

“Dobby?” Harry said, his voice filled with panic.

Opening the box ready to pulverise all the damn Horcruxes to help if it came to it.

“Master Blake hasn’t said to do it yet,” Dobby cried out in alarm.

Harry was torn, the urge to destroy them in hopes of buying his magical guardian some time was so strong. Yet he knew he might blow it all up, make things more complicated, Blake knew what he was doing he had to trust that didn’t he? Hand hovering over the box, before sighing in resignation, “Go see what’s happening, hurry back!” he remained knelt over the box, reigned to waiting, all the while praying to a deity he didn’t believe in, that Blake come out of this alive.

Dobby popped out, unable to help but acquiesce to the order, at the end of the day Blake Slytherin and Harry Potter were fundamentally the same person. Despite only being bonded to Blake Slytherin he still felt the urge to do as Harry Potter asked.

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Blake remained still, then it was like a great whoosh of air by Severus when a spell blasted its way out of Blake’s wand, surprising everyone, causing Voldemort to go careening this time, not as far and as dramatically as Blake a large open wound appearing on his shoulder the only show of damage for the spell Blake had cast, Voldemort was only incapacitated for a second, which only gave Blake a second to get himself righted.

Both of them had bandages wrapped round their injuries, Blake his ribs, and Voldemort his shoulder before the battle commenced once again.

“Tergum!”

Blake winced and rolled out of the way, roaring out in pain as he had to put pressure on his aching side. It was better than ending up on the receiving end of that bloody spell, which would have tore his skin from his body like hide. Wand peaking out the side, he sent a “Frustum Maxima!” back, hitting him in the arm which gave him those few precious seconds to get back up, arm clutching his side protectively, the numbing charm wasn’t working very well.

The blood that spewed out of the chunk Harry had taken from his arm ceased as he closed the wound and dressed it.

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“Master Blake is fine,” Dobby insisted, appearing back in the chamber.

Harry hadn’t moved, not to take the stuff out or walk off his agitation.

“Are you sure?” Harry asked, letting out a breath of relief, “What’s going on up there?”

“They are duelling,” Dobby said bluntly.

Harry pursed his lips, “You’ve been spending too much time with Severus and Blake!” he pointed to the House-elf dramatically.

Dobby grinned positively beaming over the compliment, and to him it most definitely was.

He had too but that so wasn’t the point!

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“Bombarda Maxima!”

“Septumsempera!”

Severus straightened at that, that was a deviation from a spell he had created when he was a young boy. He idly wondered what it would do if it hit Voldemort. Not that he had a chance to find out, either hit their targets, as killing curses left Voldemort’s wand in rapid tandem, it was clear he was beginning to tire if he was starting on those. “Avada Kedavra!” “Avada KEDAVRA!” “AVADA KEDAVRA!”

Harry could do nothing but conjure birds, summon a glacier and duck the last spell.

“Crucio!”

The dramatic gasping was comical as the spell hit Blake, but what had everyone freezing in shocked disbelief, even Voldemort, was Blake standing up.

Even Severus was astonished.

“You’ll have to try harder than that.” Blake rasped out, ‘Obstupefio!’ he enchanted mentally, the spell shooting out of his wand non-verbally.

“Sectarius!” every single male in the duelling stadium who knew the spell winced, at the mere mention of it. it would geld the recipient. It was clear Voldemort wanted to make sure Blake couldn’t have any children to continue that particular line of the Slytherin branch. To even try to use that spell on a human had you sentenced to Azkaban for life, let alone succeeding. It was meant to be used on animals only, livestock usually.

“Incaendium!” Blake was swift in his next spell, cursing when he only got Voldemort’s leg, which burnt severely, causing him to bellow in agony.

“Diffindo!” Voldemort snarled harshly, the sheer agony making it near impossible to think.

Dumbledore watched the duel with rapid attention, hardly daring to blink, his eyes lightning up when Voldemort’s spell struck Blake, in the neck. The Diffindo ripped through his skin and no doubt his arteries, there was no way possible he could survive that. Voldemort had won, everything was safe. His plans were still able to go ahead.

Severus felt his heart shatter into a million pieces, as he gripped his wand, wrath and fury
slamming into him like he’d never experienced before in his life. Then, just before the Auror could approach the body – blood spilling out alarmingly – the scent of burning flesh met their noses, as Blake cauterised the wound the old fashioned way, preventing any further blood loss.

Dizzy and disorientated, but not too much to give Severus the sign, it was time, they had to act fast.

“Expecto Patronum, NOW!” was all Severus demanded of the message before the Doe took off, not a lot of people focused on anything Severus was doing, after all, they were still staring at Blake as if he had just pulled of a miracle, returned from the dead.

“Langlock!”

“Crucio!” Voldemort hissed, why wont the irritating pest just die?! He was worse than Harry Potter! Like bloody cockroaches!

Blake summoned one of the Hogwarts flags, causing it to be blasted to pieces by the spell. Dizziness swamped him, causing him to sway, it was clear he didn’t have much left to give to the fight.

“Avada Kedavra!”

Blake summoned Gryffindors Hogwarts flag that was attached to the teachers post this time.

“AVADA KEDAVRA!”

The Hufflepuff one this time.

“BOMBARDA!”

Blake rolled over, his entire body shaking with the strain, Voldemort was making no attempt to move, which indicated his leg was agonizingly pained. Otherwise he would have been over to him and ending the damn duel Blake knew this. Without getting up, “Obfula!” aiming it at Voldemort’s leg, and he hit it, Voldemort couldn’t move any more than he could.

Unfortunately, he did manage to avoid it, flinging it back at Blake, who ended up with a sliced up thigh. Grunting, he quickly healed the wound, he couldn’t afford any more blood loss without falling unconscious and that was a good way to lose the duel.

Voldemort had fully prepared to cast the killing curse, yet again, while Blake was busy trying to heal himself. only to stumble slightly, going paler than humanly possible, shaking his head trying to understand what the hell was going on. What the blue blazes was this? There hadn’t been any spells cast! Belated or otherwise!

Blake weakly got to his knees, panting and dizzy. Out of the corner of his eyes he saw Dobby appear with Harry. Who looked at him completely horrified at the sight he made, well, Voldemort was standing it did look like he had the upper hand. Knowing this was his chance, the only chance he might get, “AVADA KEDAVRA!” the green light shot out of his wand and straight for Voldemort.

They expected him to duck, to do something, anything, but he didn’t.

Voldemort could only watch utterly horrified as the green spell hit him, leaving horror and surprise forever etched on his face. Or for however long he’d have his face, which wasn’t very, Blake slumped a little, his arm the only think propping him up as he watched Voldemort intently. What a fucking waste, he could have done the world a favour, smart and utterly charming as he’d been…
too bad he’d lost his way.

Dumbledore felt his heart sink, now everyone would think that Voldemort was gone for good. His Horcruxes were still out there, he wasn’t a hundred percent sure how many there were, but there was enough that he could return again and again. He would have to go through convincing them again, which had nearly destroyed his reputation before Blake had intervened.

Then to everyone’s astonishment Voldemort began to fade! Like he had been burnt to a crisp and his body was ash and it just floated in the wind.

“BLAKE!” Harry called out, running towards Blake when his hand finally gave in unable to hold his weight.

Severus moved at the same time, reaching him first by mere seconds.

“Don’t you dare take me to that damn hospital wing,” Blake slurred, before he allowed unconsciousness to claim him.

Harry helplessly laughed, relief and worry pouring off him in equal measures.

“Dobby? Take us to my quarters, then retrieve Poppy immediately,” Severus demanded, there was still a chance Blake could die, he wasn’t going to risk it by faffing around. He was still here though, he wasn’t fading despite the change in the future.

Dobby popped away with Blake, Harry and Severus just as Dumbledore was trying to make his way through the crowd eyes on them.

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There we go! Will Blake survive? Will the guy who tried to poison Blake leave a confession that causes Dumbledore a whole world of trouble or has magic already took its revenge and he be without magic? Will Severus become Headmaster and the budding family remain at Hogwarts - the only home all three have ever known beside the cottage - or will they all leave? Harry getting his NEWTS done independently in a few years?
True to his orders, Dobby did immediately pop them to Severus’ quarters, and then pop away to the hospital wing to find Poppy Pomfrey, she was waiting there everything already prepared for the eventuality of being needed.

“Matron Pomfrey, you is being needed in Master Snape’s quarters,” Dobby said, his voice almost stumbling over the words in order to get them out as quickly as possible.

“I have everything here prepared…” Poppy did not get to finish before she found herself surrounded by an empty area she’d worked on tirelessly. Her kit, which she had meticulously checked over earlier, the table filled with potion vials of the more needed draughts after a duel, everything except the bed had been taken.

“You come now,” Dobby declared, marching forward on his diminutive legs, and hooking his fingers around her apron and both of them were teleported from the Hospital wing to Severus’ quarters. When doing so, Dobby staggered, a little pained sound leaving his lips.

“Dobby!” Harry said, concerned for his little friend, he’d all but faceplanted on the ground. Only his quick reflexes prevented it, his nose just barely touching the flagstones in the dungeons floor. “Sorry, are you okay?” easing the House-elf up, his gaze going from Blake to Dobby rapidly as if he didn’t know who to focus on more.

Severus rubbed his chest, a frown on his face, Poppy was reacting in a similar manner. Although, her focus was primarily on Blake, who was lying on a bed that had been transfigured, mimicking a hospital bed. Which was good, normal beds were just no good, especially considering that all beds within Hogwarts – that weren’t Hospital wing beds - were double, four poster beds which weren’t very practical when trying to tend to injured parties.

“What’s happening?” Harry asked, noticing all this and really beginning to panic.

“I’m not sure,” Severus admitted, “Poppy?” gesturing towards Blake, they could figure out what was going on with them at another time. She was just standing there looking at Blake and rubbing her chest as he was doing.

“Albus Dumbledore is no longer Headmaster of Hogwarts,” Dobby spoke, his voice sure and if one knew Dobby as they did, they heard the surprise too.

“Wait, what?” Harry cried out, eyes bugging in surprise, “Has he…?” died? Had the Death Eaters came and begun fighting after they left or something? After what he had done to Blake though – or heavily suspected he had done – Harry found himself beyond caring if Albus Dumbledore died.

“Blood replenishers,” Poppy plucked them of the cart she’d put them on, grateful they were within sight and reach. Mind whirling, had something happened to Albus Dumbledore? She couldn’t be in two places at once, and she really should be in her hospital wing. Getting the blood replenishers into his system, she began systematically checking every single injury Blake Slytherin had, and they were numerous.

A clipboard and quill was busy dizzily writing stuff down, as she checked him over.
“These tattoos,” Poppy said, glancing at Severus and Harry suspiciously, if she wasn’t going insane, it was almost as though this was Harry Potter aged up. Every single tattoo had meaning, meaning to Harry’s life, why would his magical guardian choose to do that?

Severus’ knees buckled, as a glow encompassed him, crouched on his hands and knees, Severus’ face scrunched up as he shook his head from side to side relentlessly.

“Severus? Are you alright?” Poppy asked, kneeling half way trying to tend to both of them at the same time. This was the problem with being the only Medi-witch at Hogwarts, one she’d told Dumbledore about so many times. One person for a mass problem was not a good idea, and it happened more often than people assumed. It forced her to choose between people, and she did not like doing that, especially if they were both in pain.

“See…to…Blake,” Severus wheezed, still coherent despite his obvious discomfort and pain. Blake was in worse shape than him, that was for sure.

“He is being given the Headmastership,” Dobby said in awe, “He is Hogwarts chosen,”

“Whoa!” Harry murmured, eyes wide, seeing what was happening in a new light. Why Dobby had felt it, why Poppy and Severus had felt it. He was grateful to know what was going on, and that Severus was going to be okay, and nothing would happen to Poppy with Blake still in critical condition. It calmed his nerves, which were severely rankled. Not only by the images shown to him by the Horcruxes but…well, everything else afterwards. He’d of course known, Severus was Hogwarts chosen to be Headmaster, Blake had stated as such after Severus was returned to Hogwarts blooded and beaten that day…and Hogwarts had shown him the way.

He was still curious and cautious over Dumbledore though.

Apparently he wasn’t the only one, “Dobby, remain hidden and find out what’s going on with Dumbledore,” Severus demanded as he straightened, the feeling of receiving every single ward that Hogwarts brings to bear was intense. Painfully intense, but gratefully, it was easing, he could still feel the entirety of Hogwarts and every soul within her, it was like being privy to a whole new universe.

“At once, Headmaster Snape,” Dobby said, but nobody other than Harry was paying attention.

“These wounds are…” Poppy grimaced, “I don’t know how he’s still alive,” she admitted, as she healed the cuts to his throat, one by one, as blood continued to soak Blake and the mattress under him. “Give him another blood replenisher,” she ordered Severus, she had to get those wounds cut, she couldn’t continuing giving him blood replenishers, he couldn’t get them as often as he’d need. The sound of Blake’s heartbeat monitor the only sound other than their breathing.

Severus did as instructed, anxiety thrumming through him, he knew the worst wasn’t over. If Blake didn’t survive…he wasn’t sure what he would do. He didn’t want to be in a world without him, didn’t want Blake to die without knowing how he felt…despite the fact he knew he never would reveal as such. He’d never wish to mess with this closeness he had with Blake, it was…more than he’d had in over a decade, since Lily. Friendship was precious to him, not a lot of people could put up with his irascible nature, and he wouldn’t change for people, couldn’t change for anyone. Fortunately, Blake didn’t want him to change, in fact it seemed to amuse him to no end that Severus was who he was.

“That’s three blood replenishers, he cannot get anything for three more hours,” Severus murmured, quietly alarmed by the acknowledgement. She wasn’t anywhere near close to having healed all the wounds on his neck. Even with the spell to slow the blood flow, “Has one of his arteries been hit?”
“None of the major ones, they’ve all been healed,” Poppy explained, as her fingers worked her magic, “What the hell happened here?”

“Diffindo,” Severus informed her, before he pointed his own wand at one of the wounds and sealing it closed, surprisingly Poppy said nothing, and together they worked in tandem to get the dozens upon dozens of different cuts cleaned out and healed up. Unfortunately, any potions that were useful, were no good for flesh that had been ruined by spells such as Diffindo, especially to the extent of Blake’s injuries. Which were severe and very, very deep.

Poppy swallowed thickly, “He’s the luckiest patient I’ve ever come across if he survived this to the neck.” She’d seen such a spell rend and tear legs and arms off, he must have had some sort of protection, it was the only explanation as to how he survived this, the ONLY explanation. Lucky didn’t quite start to cover it.

Severus said nothing, well aware of that fact, as they continued to work in tandem.

Harry suspected they’d forgotten he was still there, but didn’t wish to disturb them so sat on Severus’ leather couch. Wrapping the throw on the back around his shoulders, it was always freezing cold in here. Glancing at Poppy and Severus then Blake, he pointed his wand at the fire and lit it up. The logs that had been placed inside of it, just waiting to be lit again, burst to life in a glow of orange and ember, as it ate through the wood and warmed the dungeons up a little at a time.

“Mister dumbledore is in the Headmaster’s office, unconscious,” Dobby informed them as he appeared back, wringing his hands, an indication that he was at a loss of what to do. “He wouldn’t wake up, I tried everything.” Everything he knew anyway, but he wasn’t a wizard.

Severus paused, glancing at Dobby in confusion, he had searched for Dumbledore in the wards… but he hadn’t felt a damn thing. Were they not working or was it because Dumbledore was unconscious? He didn’t know much about the wards, or how they worked, he was just going off instinct here, he suspected Hogwarts herself was helping.

A flash of the office in his minds eye, along with the picture Dumbledore made sprawled out on the floor. He must have fallen from his chair, had he had a heart attack?

“How’s he still breathing?” Severus enquired. “Is it too fast? His heartbeat?”

Dobby immediately popped away, ready to find out the information his Master and Headmaster required.

“Three broken ribs, the rest are in a sorry state on his left side, he’s going to be in severe pain for months,” Poppy mumbled to herself, wincing at the feel of them. once again her eyes were drawn to the tattoos. Noticing scars under the tattoos she felt for one that was familiar, flashing to healing one that Harry had that was identical. That was impossible, she must be imagining it, people got hurt all the time.

Levitating him she turned him on his back to see how severe it was there, only to inhale sharply. That was the dragon that Harry had fought, the Norwegian ridgeback. Then there was the Hogwarts motto, Blake had supposedly not ever attended this school, and the tattoo was not fresh. Tapping her wand against his bruised skin, bandages began to wrap themselves around his chest, compressing the damaged ribs.

Once that was done, she coaxed the wizard – who she heavily suspected was NOT Blake Slytherin – into drinking a potion to knit his ribs back together.
“He was hit in the thigh,” Severus said, vividly reminded of the spell hitting him earlier at the end of the duel.

Poppy in confusion, not seeing any blood, swiftly removed his trousers as well. There she found the red, blistered irritated wound. Seeing it made her feel sick a little, he had cauterised the wound, that would scar, there was absolutely nothing she could do for him. She did pick up a salve, and spread it on the wound, to lessen the scarring, and take the heat out of the cauterised wound. It was a good job he had cauterised it, otherwise he wouldn’t have survived, he’d been losing too much blood from the neck wound.

“He is breathing fine, Headmaster Snape,” Dobby said, popping back in, “Slow and steady,” despite his unconscious state.

“Bring him to the hospital wing,” Poppy asked of the House-elf, “I’ll see to him as soon as I am free,” Blake Slytherin definitely had needed her more, at least she was assuming so. He had probably just passed out after the wards transferred to Severus, she hadn’t even realized he wanted to leave Hogwarts and retire.

Dobby stared at Severus, who gave a curt nod, for Dobby to follow Poppy’s direction.

“What if Blake needs you?” Harry protested, speaking for the first time in over an hour. Barely registering Dobby disappearing for what felt like the millionth time tonight.

“I’m only a Floo call away,” Poppy explained, giving another glance at Blake, before her eyes found Severus’, “Is there something you want to tell me about him?” gesturing towards the wizard on the bed.

Severus arched a brow, “Such as?” not easily broken, not even by Poppy Pomfrey.

“Who is he really?” Poppy asked, her idea was ridiculous, she knew it was.

“Blake Slytherin,” Severus replied automatically, and it was the truth to an extent, Blake was no longer Harry Potter.

Poppy hummed, casting another diagnosis, “He needs a nutrition potion, I did not bring one with me,” she informed Severus, as she set up an IV for him, without knowing how long he’d remain unconscious…this was the best way for him to get the fluids his body definitely needed, especially with the severe blood loss.

“Will he be okay?” Harry asked, staring at Blake, he’d never seen him look so vulnerable.

Poppy pursed her lips, “I’ve done everything I can for him right now,” she confessed, not willing to lie to the boy. He’d lost so much, and it would hurt him to lose anyone else, she could see how much Harry cared, how much he loved Blake. Unfortunately, she couldn’t promise something that she couldn’t deliver, “His body has taken a severe beating, he’s lost a lot of blood, too much I’d say, and he’s in very bad shape.”

Harry swallowed thickly, not exactly what he wanted to hear.

“I’m going to give him antibiotics, just to be on the safe side,” Poppy added, administering the last potion she could give him. “I’ll be by every two hours to administer his potions and make sure he’s doing well. I’ve added a wellbeing spell, so if anything happens I can get here immediately.” It would be no different than if she was in the hospital wing.

“Understood,” Severus answered, “Call upon Dobby, he will answer immediately,” it was quicker
than using the Floo network.

“Very well,” Poppy agreed, she so badly wanted to reassure them that Blake would be just fine. Yet she couldn’t, it wouldn’t be very professional, especially considering she couldn’t guarantee it.

“Thank you, Poppy,” Severus said, straightening up, Blake would survive, he hadn’t done all this only to die now, and his fears of vanishing after defeating Voldemort were for naught. He was still here, and he’d be damned if he lost him now.

“You’re welcome,” with that Poppy did use the Floo to get back to her Hospital wing. Sighing softly, she sat on her stool, staring at the blood on her hands. An idea slithering into her mind, she could test the blood, find out if she was right about her suspicions…as ludicrous as her suspicions were. It wasn’t impossible though, time-travel, they had the ability to go back in time after all, and who knows what had occurred in the future to bring him here?

Staring at the blood, wondering…did she want to know? swallowing thickly, no, the scars upon that young man she suspected to be Harry…many of them cauterised…no, whatever future he was from…had to extremely bad for him to risk everything on an off chance of actually going to the past.

She knew deep in her heart that it was Harry, she didn’t need confirmation. With that she moved over to her sink, grabbed her hand sanitizer and methodically begun to wash every speck of blood off her hands and arms.

She could only pray that the Potter luck continued and that he’d survive, otherwise he would leave behind two utterly devastated men behind. Worse still, nobody else would really care, too busy celebrating…as they had done when Voldemort had been defeated the night James and Lily died.

Now…to find out what had happened to Albus, silly wizard attempting to stand down while alone.

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Severus absently walked into his kitchen and begun filling a bowl up with warm soapy water, finding a clean cloth, before heading back towards Blake. One of his tattoos was torn to shreds, but somehow, it wasn’t that important in the grand scheme of things. Yet he knew Blake loved all of those tattoos, they were a fundamental part of him. Dunking the cloth into the water, he began to methodically clean Blake with soft sure strokes.

“Dobby will go and get Master’s something to eat!” Dobby declared, popping away, feeling the need to do something, anything.

“He will recover, he’s strong,” Severus informed Harry, he could literally feel the worry exuding from the teen…either that or it was his own. “He’s been through worse.” at least he wasn’t alone. He wasn’t sure whether he was reassuring himself or Harry to be fair.

“I’ll get the covers, you levitate him,” Harry murmured, yanking the blooded covers off the bed, staring at the large pool of blood under it. “I’ll clean it,” he added, just about to go and begin getting the necessary things to clean blood out of the bed.

“Don’t bother,” Severus showed him the appropriate spell to clean up blood spillages, they were very cautious about any blood being spilled. Too many spells and rituals could be used with it, so it was no surprise someone had invented a spell to get rid of it. The mattress was cleaned up and looking brand new within a minute.

“I could have really used that spell when I was younger,” Harry mused, he didn’t know how many
times he’d had to get his own blood out of the Dursley’s carpets. Bunching up the cover, he wandered over to the laundry basket in the kitchen before making a beeline for the cupboard where Severus stored his bedding and towels and such.

Severus stilled, “Indeed,” was all he said to the teens back, the urge to kill Petunia had always been strong, he had immensely disliked her from the get go. Found it impossible to believe that Petunia and Lily were even related, and honestly thought the girl was adopted. Hearing what she’d put a defenceless child through out of sheer spite an jealousely well, it certainly heightened the fact. If he had been Blake and gone back…he wasn’t sure he would have had the willpower to not go and kill the ones responsible. If he’d had the chance…he would have killed his father, he knew that much. The world was better off without Tobias Snape.

Within minutes, Harry was back and putting a new sheet on the bed, with a few extra to cover Blake with. Once he was levitated back down, he put the covers over his Goosebumps filled skin, he would need to be kept warm. The third cover he put over him was one of those that went cold and warm when you needed it, he’d seen them in the hospital wing but never used one, he’d always gotten out as soon as he could whenever he came around. “There,” he said strongly, he didn’t feel all that strong but it would have to do.

The sound of the monitor going was the only reassurance they had, since Blake’s chest barely moving with each breath.

“Food for Master Severus and Master Harry!” Dobby declared, putting the soup and drinks on the table on the sofa.

“Thank you, Dobby,” Severus said in genuine gratitude, “Go eat,” he urged Harry.

“Only if you do,” Harry told him stubbornly and mutinously. His stomach grumbling hungrily at the warm aroma of the soup wafted up his nose. Hell, even the coffee was calling to him, and he didn’t drink it all that often.

Sighing in exasperation, “Very well,” he agreed, and both of them moved to the sofa, a soft sound leaving their mouths at the feel of the warmth penetrating their cold fingers, they hadn’t even realized they’d gotten so cold.

It didn’t take long for them to be dipping bread into the soup and eating it with relish after that first bite. The hunger just took over them, even if they did feel sick underneath it all, they knew they needed to eat to be able to take care of Blake.

They refused to even acknowledge the possibility of the alternative.

“I thought you didn’t want to be Headmaster?” Harry queried, his fingers wrapped around the bowl, it was half done already.

“I wasn’t exactly given a choice,” Severus admitted wryly, Hogwarts had been stubborn and relentless. Ultimately though, Severus reckoned that it wouldn’t have worked if there wasn’t any part of him that wanted to stay here.

“So you’ll what? Give it over to someone else?” Harry asked, picking his spoon back up and dipping it into the chicken noodle soup.

Glancing at Blake, “I honestly don’t know,” Severus confessed, on one hand he didn’t want to be stuck here forever…on the other hand he loved Hogwarts it was his home…the only home he’d ever known until the cottage that Blake bought. That place was so tranquil and homey that he just
loved being there. The seclusion helped too, he was an introvert, not at all fond of many people.

“Yeah,” Harry murmured, glancing at Blake too, they were stuck in limbo for the moment.

The Floo network flared back up, and Poppy came through looking pale and shaken.

“Poppy…what?” Severus stood, putting his nearly finished food aside, alarmed by her appearance.

“Dumbledore has lost his magic,” Poppy revealed, as Headmaster he had to be aware of everything under his jurisdiction.

“What?” Severus asked strangled.

“And I believe it was magic herself who removed it, this was punishment, there has been no spell cast on him.” Poppy informed him.

“So that’s how it chose to punish him,” Severus said, inhaling sharply.

“Excuse me?” Poppy asked, genuinely taken aback, apparently Severus knew something she didn’t.

Severus pursed his lips, “Dumbledore tried to interfere before the duel, he had been poisoning the food that was sent up to Blake’s rooms since he announced the match.”

“We thought maybe he got someone else to do it, so maybe that’s why it didn’t take his life but his magic…” Harry suggested, eyes wider than normal, unable to believe Dumbledore was a squib. He deserved it though, after what he had done. He would live to regret his actions.

“He believes in the prophecy wholeheartedly, that only Harry could defeat Voldemort…” Severus added, sighing tiredly, running his hands through his greasy hair.

Poppy snorted, unable to help herself, thankfully they believed like Minerva that she didn’t believe in divination. They’ll have no idea that she knew, knew that Blake Slytherin was Harry Potter, and he had fulfilled the prophecy after all.

“What will happen to him now that he’s a squib?” Harry asked cautiously.

“That’s entirely up to him, but he’s technically a Muggle, he has not an ounce of magic in him,” Poppy admitted, “I cannot give him potions, he will need to come round himself,” she didn’t know how his body would react to the potions, they had magic in them, even if only a little. Squib’s could get them, yes, they had magic just not an active magical core…Dumbledore for all intents and purposes was a Muggle. His core had died off entirely, the only thing left was the remnants of mother magic which was fading fast now that it’s task was done. If she hadn’t done the old rituals all her childhood she wouldn’t have been familiar with mother magic’s family tang of magic itself.

“He might never wake, his body will have gone into shock,” Severus pointed out the obvious.

Poppy nodded grimly, that was indeed true. “I am not sure how to inform anyone of his particular…predicament?” did he have anyone who would care? He had a brother…but as far as she knew he wasn’t his next of kin to contact if something went wrong…if she recalled correctly Minerva had been listed. “Minerva will have to be informed, she is his emergency contact.”

“Then you’ll need to inform her, in the hospital wing, after lunch might be best,” Severus told Poppy, everyone would be eating lunch, no doubt gossiping happy style over the duel. The duel that could still cost him the wizard he loved. Wondering if anyone was curious over Dumbledore’s
absence of if they were expecting it since everyone would be busy, the Ministry especially with the news of Voldemort’s demise. They certainly were the last time, Dumbledore had been absent for near enough two days after the end of the war, only returning for dinner on the third night and informing everyone that he was truly gone and raising his goblet in remembrance to Lily and James Potter and then gone on a length spiel about Harry – the Boy-Who-Lived – actually he’d been a bit too vigorous for a wizard who was grieving the loss of two pupils.

Minerva would likely remember that, and will have taken over, unaware of the fact the old man had passed out in his office and wasn’t at the Ministry.

“Yes, I should eat myself,” Poppy admitted, stomach rumbling, rubbing her eyes, she’d been anxious all night last night. She hadn’t gotten much sleep, she didn’t think many adults had, knowing how…vital this duel was…and whether they’d sleep tomorrow knowing he was gone or one step closer to his goal of world dominion. The students would have no doubt been extremely excited at the prospect of actually seeing a duel. “I better get going, I thought I ought to inform you.” With that she used his door to leave, it was easier to get to the Great Hall from the dungeons than it was to get there from the Hospital Wing.

“Yes, bloody hell,” Harry muttered, “You’re going to love this, Blake!” he added to the wizard, “Don’t sleep through all the good parts, wake up soon.”

“Well, it appears we have our confirmation that he was involved,” Severus said bitterly, the second the old man was awake he was going to ensure he was thrown out of Hogwarts on his ass. This whole Headmastership was actually beginning sound good.

“Bigger question is, did he do it alone or is there someone else out there who took part? If so did he or she lose their magic too?” Harry mused thoughtfully.

“Indeed,” Severus agreed wholeheartedly, it was his thoughts too. He doubted Dumbledore would have used anyone in the Order, that was too obvious, plus none of them would be aware of his true nature, except for perhaps Mad-eye Moody. “Perhaps you should go to the Great Hall and make an appearance?”

“Why so they can ask me a million questions?” Harry asked, scowling darkly, “No thank you,” he didn’t want to leave Blake on his own, or rather, he didn’t want to be apart from him.

“Holding off isn’t going to make it any easier,” Severus pointed out, but he too probably would be doing the same thing.

“Then technically as the Headmaster you should be there,” Harry informed him with a grin of delight, just imagining the reactions of every single person in the school. Only the Slytherin’s would be happy for him, the others would be shocked to the core.

Severus just smirked ferally, “I’ll give them a chance to get over the duel and the fact the Dark Lord is dead,” oh, it was going to be glorious to see their reactions, he wondered how many would faint dead away…and how many would protest.

Harry just grinned right back, yeah, he could get behind that.

Their amusement was short lived, as they were both vividly reminded that Blake was in a very bad way. Severus eased himself down on one of his chairs, watching Blake pensively. “Poppy knows, or suspects, you better be careful about answering any questions around her.”

“Yeah, anyone who sees those tattoos are bound to wonder…” Harry admitted, it all pointed to
being him like a big fat red target to zero in on. It was why Blake kept them hidden all the time, he sure as hell hadn’t gotten them then regretted it and decided to hide them out of shame. “If it wasn’t for the Hogwarts motto…” then it would be quite easy to misguide them.

In a few years maybe, he could say he got it after teaching… if he survived.

“Perhaps,” Severus agreed, then against most people didn’t actually know Harry enough to join the dots except a few. He doubted even Sirius Black would bat an eyelash if he ever saw Blake in all his tattooed glory, he didn’t know his own godson enough to hazard a guess. Not completely his fault, but he hadn’t made any effort whatsoever. This much he had gleaned from Blake’s iciness with the wizard and the show down that he’d heard so much about.

“If you’re staying then get Dobby to bring you something more comfortable to change into, after you have a bath, you positively stink of fish.” Severus gave Harry a pointed look not to argue with him. It would give Harry something to do, he needed that something, to take his mind off this situation but remain nearby.

“I slid into the water,” Harry grimaced, staring down at his ruined robes and clothes, really smelling it for the first time now that it had been called to his attention. The path was slippery, he’d been in a panic, it had been just as disgusting as the last time, with the horrible crunching of fish bones.

“Use my bathroom,” gesturing for the teen to go, seeing the hesitance on his face. “You’ll hear if there is any change. Trust me.” It was loud, loud enough to wake someone who was dead to the world, wrong use of word, but true nonetheless.

Harry did as suggested, going for a long soak in the tub, dumping his wet and smelly clothes in the hamper. His nightclothes, gown and slippers were in the sink when he emerged, feeling ten times better, and a little lethargic from the long soak, not so surprising since he hadn’t slept much last night. When he had it had been nightmares of this exact scenario. He knew this was how Blake wanted to go out, taking care of Voldemort…but he wasn’t ready to see Blake gone from his life.

“Is there any change?” he immediately asked, as he padded out in his slipper clad feet.

“Poppy has been by to give him his next doses of his potions, and left the rest he’ll need for tonight,” Severus informed Harry, eyeing the teen, he definitely looked better. “Dobby has made you some hot chocolate,” he needed the sugar, he was looking way too pale. If he let anything happen to Harry while Blake was out of it, he’d receive hell.

Time floated on by, as both Harry and Severus just got themselves comfortable and dozed here and there, while they watched over Blake.

Severus jerked awake yet again, pinching the bridge of his nose, glancing over at Harry. Finding him reading a book, or pretending to. His eyes weren’t moving even the slightest, “I’m going to go for a quick shower,” he told the teen, his lips twitching in amusement as Harry jumped out of his skin. The book falling to the floor.

“Okay,” he said, sounding slightly breathless, plucking the book back up.

Severus moved over to the bathroom, closing the door behind him, rubbing his tired eyes. There had been no change at all in Blake, and it wasn’t a good sign. There should have been at least a little change, especially in the hours that had passed. Poppy agreed, and he didn’t know how on earth to tell Harry. He could barely process it himself.
Severus had just put the shower on and stepped in when the alarm blared loudly, terror seizing Severus’ heart.

Blake had stopped breathing.

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Aysia this is for you :) you said you like my HP stories so I decided on this one for you! I hope you enjoy it! Well, Blake didn't disappear but will he survive? I'm honestly tempted VERY tempted to write a sad story for once :P I'm too predicable giving HEA's all the time! I'm not sure how others do it lol anyway here you go! R&R please!
Chapter 42

The Games They Play

Chapter 42

Severus turned around so swiftly he almost slid with one foot in the shower, righting himself, he flicked his wand – grateful he never took it off his wrist – and his clothes were back on, despite the wet trailing down his body. Which was easily absorbed by the material of his clothes. Yanking open the door he shot out like a bat out of hell, noticing that Harry was performing CPR on Blake while shouting at him.

“Don’t you die on me, don’t you dare die on me! Not now! We won Blake, we won, please come back!” pressing down against Blake’s chest, trying to get his heart to restart.

Severus grabbed a hold of the teen and backed him up, using a spell that did CPR compressions it was much easier on Blake’s already wounded side. Having someone in a blind panic trying to press down on the wounds would be painful and could potentially lead to a rib being accidentally thrust through his lung. The spell would get him breathing, but whether he would begin breathing on his own…well, he didn’t know but he prayed for a miracle, for once in his life, he prayed for something to go right.

“He can’t die!” Harry choked out, the absolute fright he got when he heard that sound go off…he’d been sleeping but he’d immediately lurched up to do whatever he had to in order to save Blake’s life. Terror almost rendering him speechless, and immobile.

Severus swallowed thickly, he had no words, he couldn’t think of one thing to say. Not when he was feeling nothing but total devastation himself. All he could do was clutch at Harry, and watch in desolation as Blake died before his very eyes.

The longer he went without breathing…the worse that feeling came. It was mere seconds, for most part uncounted, except for now. Those seconds were vital and terror inducing.

Dobby suddenly popping in with Poppy Pomfrey didn’t surprise them at all. They’d been expecting it, even if it did feel like hours opposed to the reality of being under a minute.

Poppy immediately hastened towards Blake’s side, nodding her approval at the CPR compressions. Silencing the alarm, so she could work without distraction. She begun by running a diagnosis to see what the possible problem could be, and found it immediately. A rib was pressing against his lungs, had actually punctured it, thus making him unable to breathe.

“I need the restitutio pathologica pulmonis draught immediately, Severus!” Poppy called out, draining the liquid from his lungs, knowing he had charms on his cupboards to prevent just anyone from summoning his potions for safety’s sake, which was quite irritating right now.

That wasn’t a much needed potion, and the did not keep it in the Hospital wing. Thank Merlin, Severus was always an overly cautious individual and had brewed nearly every potion conceivable and kept them viable by stasis charms and the like. “Accio!” Severus chanted, summoning the potion to himself, not budging, not that he could have, Harry had a strong grip on him at the moment, his eyes never wavering from Blake’s face.

“Poppy,” he warned her, as it floated towards her, she snatched it out in mid-air while she guided the rib back into position, he’d need another rib mending draught, she thought. Dumping the potion
into his mouth and massaged his throat, getting the draught down his gullet as quickly as humanly possible. “It’s repairing the damage, ease off the spell,” Poppy told him, anxiety thrumming through her, this was make or break, Blake was either going to survive or die.

Severus reluctantly did so, and the three waited with bated breath for the outcome.

Then the most blessed sound met their ears, breathing, as wheezy and shallow as it was. He was breathing on his own.

The three let out shaky breaths, closing their eyes, swallowing thickly, thanking Merlin for mercy. “He needs a rib mending draught, but he can only get three millilitres,” Poppy informed him, already digging into her bag to get the aforementioned potion. Using an oral syringe to measure it out and get it down Blake’s throat. The rest of the potion was set on the tray with the other vials.

Once she was done doing all she could for him, she unsilenced the spell that allowed them to hear Blake’s breathing. There, that would give them peace of mind, and her, she thought. Sitting down, she manually wrote everything down on the clipboard, including the potions she had just given him.

“Would you like a coffee, Poppy?” Severus asked, hiding his shaking hands, of course, Blake had to make things difficult, it was his MO really. Dramatic ass that he was, scaring the life out of everyone.

“If you wouldn’t mind,” Poppy agreed, muffling her yawns, she felt like she’d just gone to sleep.

“Dobby can do it,” Dobby declared immediately, causing all of them to startle, surprised to see the house-elf still there. They shouldn’t be Dobby had always been very loyal to Harry, and that loyalty had transferred to Blake as well, obviously. Not only had Blake employed him, given him a Master again, but it was fundamentally his Harry Potter just older.

“No,” Severus retorted sharply, before his tone softened, “No, I’ll do it, Dobby,” he needed something to do otherwise he felt as though he was going to go insane. Still hiding his shaking hands, he moved into the kitchen and began the prep for coffee.

Closing his eyes, he pressed his hands against the counter, breathing evenly as possible. Trying to regain his equilibrium, he’d done a lot of shit in his life. including spy on an insane son of a bitch, who would have tortured him to death for weeks if he’d found out. He’d done all that with stable hands, yet Blake not breathing had reduced him to a near mindless panic.

Once he felt a little more calm, the sound of the heartbeat aiding him surprisingly. He made the coffee’s and placed them absently on the tray along with milk and one cube of sugar, it’s how Poppy took it normally, but he wasn’t sure if she’d want it this late. Once he was sure his hands would shake, he took the tray and brought it through to the sitting area.

“Sit down,” Severus told Harry, waiting until he did so before handing over a coffee. He contemplated the idea of drugging it with a Dreamless sleep draught, but nixed the idea. If anything happened to Blake during the night…Harry would never forgive him. He had grown to care for Harry, very deeply, to his surprise.

Severus handed Poppy hers, before taking a seat closest to Blake as possible. He doubted very much he’d get a shower or sleep tonight. So he had no problem consuming as much coffee as possible in order to remain awake.

“How did Minerva take the news?” Severus asked Poppy as he cupped the mug, waiting for it to
cool down to a more drinkable temperature.

Poppy pursed her lips, “Not very well, she was understandably shocked and upset.”

“Is that the reason she hasn’t been wondering where her student is?” Severus asked, a bit of bite to his voice. Every single one of his students were in the dungeons, he knew this, and if one wasn’t… he would be hunting Hogwarts for them, concerned for their wellbeing. It wouldn’t be the first time, but it might well be the last though. He could no longer teach potions or be the Head of Slytherin house, as Headmaster he had to remain impartial, and he would do so, he would not be like Dumbledore. He had rigorously favoured Gryffindors to the extent they felt untouchable and that had made them very dangerous. Here he was thinking about Sirius Black and the incident that had scarred him for life.

“Oh, Severus, Minerva isn’t stupid,” Poppy said, tutting softly, “She knows he’ll be with Blake, and saw you go with them. She’s aware I’ve been helping him. Minerva isn’t unaware as you like to believe.” Admittedly over the years, she could have taken better care of her lions, but with three different sets of duties, it was hardly any wonder the ball slipped the net occasionally.

“For once,” Severus muttered, he’d never been overly fond of her, and with good reason. Minerva was as blind as Dumbledore when it came to the Gryffindors. Giving students points for ending up face to face with a troll! He would have given his students detention for being idiots and made sure they thought twice before approaching danger on their own like that. They should have immediately summoned a teacher to deal with it. End of story. The other Heads of Houses actually agreed with him on that front – which had been a surprise – but Minerva with Dumbledore’s backing had gotten her way as always.

Poppy pursed her lips, but said nothing more, well aware of the animosity between them. Or rather should she say, animosity Severus felt for her, while Minerva failed to realise that there was anything wrong between their relationship. Then again Severus was the same with Minerva as he was with the rest of the Hogwarts population, both student and teacher.

Well, with one obvious exception, she admitted, Blake.

“Has she even realized that I am Headmaster and not her?” Severus asked, a subtle smirk on his face. What could he say? He was a vindictive bastard when he was wronged, and he had a whole lot of wrongs done to him over time.

Poppy coughed, “I’m afraid I didn’t ask,” finding herself a little amused despite herself, “I do hope you’ll allow me to see the reaction, Severus?”

Harry laughed softly into his coffee, grinning a little, it seemed he wasn’t the only one.

“You may,” Severus said imperiously, eyes gleaming. “You may be needed regardless, I believe many of the students will…ah, require your aid.” To bring them around.

“I assume you’re going to be out of commission until Blake gets well?” Poppy deduced, the way he was behaving was a great indication.

“I am,” Severus declared, “The students wont be focused on their work anyway, and I’ll require time to find a new Potions professor.” He did know a lot of people who had been exemplary potion students, but whether they were Masters now or not…he did not know. He didn’t keep up with all his students, once they graduated that was it.

“You’re giving them free days? What’s next cancelling exams?” Poppy teased.
“That will not happen,” Severus said deadpanned. “None of my students parents were happy that they had to take their children to the Ministry to take their exams. Especially those who had to pay for the N.E.W.T’s. I’m not sure how the Muggle-borns managed to afford it.”

“Wait, what?” Harry gaped, “But I never had to take exams.”

“No, and you’ve still not taken your first or fourth year exams,” Severus explained patiently. “Technically you’ve not passed your first or fourth year tests, it won’t impact your grades now, but overall, if you were anyone else…and what happened during your first and fourth year wasn’t known, it would have been a sign of laziness, and those looking for someone to employ do not like laziness.” Or someone they know they wouldn’t be able to rely on.

“Nor the Weasley’s, they cannot afford it,” Poppy pointed out.

“But wasn’t Percy in his fifth year…” eyes widening realizing what that meant.

“Percy worked with staff during the summer holidays to earn enough to take his exams, even me,” Severus revealed, much to Harry’s shock. He wasn’t vindictive enough to prevent an extremely smart boy, which Percy was, much like his elder brothers, from getting their N.E.W.T exams because Dumbledore had cancelled them on account of the Triwizard Tournament.

“No wonder he hates me,” Harry muttered, surprised that the others didn’t as well. The twins wouldn’t have cared much for exams but Percy most definitely did. Ron went into the twin category. Let’s not forget everyone else, he hadn’t been aware of all this, why hadn’t anyone came at him over it?

“Hardly, they as well as the rest of the students blamed who should have been blamed,” Severus said dryly, “Which is the only time they went right.” The rest of the time they were children being children, selfish and judgemental while they tried to find themselves doing seriously questionable stuff along the way. Like going with the masses instead of gaining their own individuality.

Severus and Poppy were watching Harry’s reaction to the news, it wasn’t surprising really, that the students hadn’t thought of the consequences when they all cheered at the announcements when Dumbledore made them. However, Harry’s face jerked towards Blake and his eyes widened.

They swung around themselves, Severus’ neck creaking in the speed of which he did so.

“Blake?” was echoed by both Severus and Harry, as they loomed over Blake.

Dazed green eyes flittered open, a pained groan leaving his lips.

“Mr. Slytherin…can you hear me? Squeeze my hand if you can hear me,” Poppy said, placing her hand next to Blake’s so that he could grip if he was coherent enough. He shouldn’t even be awake, the amount of pain he was experiencing was probably immense.

A very, very weak squeeze was all she got in turn.

“Can you speak?” Poppy then asked.

“Yessss,” Blake croaked out, his speech a little slurred and it hurt judging by the grimace on his face.

“Between 1-10 how much pain are you in?” Poppy asked, it must be very high up.

“Ffffivvee,” Blake got out, grunting a little. He made no move to get up, to shift, to do anything.
Poppy swallowed thickly, the amount of pain he was in and he was going with a five? She was waiting for the ‘hundred’ that followed. It made her heart hurt to realize what this young man had been through that he felt that this pain was only worthy of the word five. If it had been anyone else they would have been screaming and begging for pain relief, to the point they would have been willing to knock themselves out. Rummaging in her bag, she pulled out the strongest one she could give him.

“What…appended?” Blake muttered blearily, inhaling sharply as pain radiated down his side. Severus glanced at Poppy, did he mean with his injuries or had he forgotten the duel? Did it really matter in the grand scheme of things? He was awake, sort of coherent and blessedly alive.

“We can discuss that when you’re better, you need rest now,” Poppy declared, despite the fact Blake was an adult, she treated him like she always treated everyone, like a mother. The fact that he had woken up and seemed coherent was a very good sign…especially considering it shouldn’t be possible and he’d almost died no more than half an hour ago.

Licking his dry lips, he grunted his agreement, in too much pain to argue, he couldn’t fight to prevent unconsciousness much longer. He did brush his hand against Harry in silent reassurance though and it took everything out of him. He had no need to fight it off, as Poppy fed him the potion and within minutes his body ceased hurting, and exhaustion swamped him to the extent his eyes slid closed and sleep overcame him.

“Has he forgotten about the…” Harry asked staring down at Blake still. Still feeling the phantom press of Blake’s fingers on his arm.

“It’s likely just trauma induced, he will remember when he recovers,” Poppy informed them, brushing his covers back into place absently. “He’ll sleep through the night now, now both of you get some rest, there’s no point to all of us being up all night.”

Unsurprisingly, nobody got sleep that night.

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Yes I know it's short but Ms. Grinch here decided to feel a little guilty about the cliff-hanger and decided to give you a little more LOL it wouldn't have been fair to make you all wait ages for an update 😊 so here it is, enjoy. R&R please
Chapter 43

The Games They Play

Chapter 43

Despite having been unconscious, Blake could hear everything around him. It was far away, almost like trying to swim through tar to hear properly. He had no idea how long he’d been unconscious, or how many days had passed, the constant pain relief draughts had been making him sleep while he recovered. Despite how vulnerable it made him, he was grateful for the potions, he was used to pain, it was an old friend…but to be without it was a blessing. One he never took for granted, and never would.

He could hear Severus talking to him, his tone wistful? Struggling internally, trying to listen to what he was saying. He didn’t think he’d ever heard Severus sound that way before…then again he’d been through two wars and died in the process. He’d never gotten to know Severus in his past – the future – as he did now.

“I’m not sure whether to remain Headmaster or not, I’ve never once been an indecisive man, yet I’m beginning to feel it now.” Severus told the unconscious Blake wryly. “Not that it’s a matter of what I want…not fully…I want your opinion as well.” which was true enough, Severus did.

Blake wondered if he should give him a sign that he was awake, and when he tried, he realized he could do nothing but listen. He couldn’t move a muscle yet, he’d tried, even just a finger, but nothing, no outwardly reaction from Severus. He probably shouldn’t listen, but he didn’t have a way to turn off his ears. It felt too private, he’d done the same when Severus was unconscious after his vicious torture by the Dark Lord earlier that year.

He wondered if Severus had heard him then.

“I might not be indecisive but I’m most definitely a coward at the moment,” Severus continued, Blake could hear the scowl in his voice. Just hearing Severus refer to himself as a coward made Blake want to jerk in shock. He knew from experience that Severus absolutely loathed the thought of being a coward never mind calling himself that.

“How difficult is it to ask someone if they’d go on a date with you?” Severus continued rhetorically.

Jealousy flared within his breastbone, Blake was not able to stop it, not for the life of him.

“You almost died and I still cannot bring myself to tell you how much I care…” Severus told him self-recriminating. “I’d rather have your friendship and you in my life than risk you distancing yourself completely.”

Blake felt his heart give, Merlin, help him, Severus had been through so much. So had he, but his world as he knew it had ended, making taking risks quite easily for him. The ironic thing was, despite everything, he was more like Severus than he imagined. He had remained stoic in face of his attraction to him, fearing that he would lose the one person who understood him above all others. Nobody else would ever know about him being from the future.

Or so he thought.

Blake had no choice but to sit and listen to Severus pour out his heart, unable to move, give a sign
or wake up properly. He did know what he wanted to do when he managed to come round properly. It didn’t take long for his mind to exhaust itself, and sleep once again overcame him, and sleep muzzled his racing mind.

The next time he came around, he heard Harry’s voice, reading from one of his Dark Art texts.

“Blake? Are you awake?” Harry asked, staring at Blake wondering if he’d imagined the low sound he’d heard emerge from the wizard.

Another groan, before drowsy green eyes opened, relief passing over his features, he could move.

“SEV!” Harry all but hollered for Severus. “He’s awake!”

Blake groaned, wincing at the loud sound, his throat was so dry that it was so painful to make any sound at all.

Severus immediately came into view, pressing a goblet of water with ice cubes in it, to his mouth with a knowing look on his face. He’d suffered enough to exactly what someone would want upon waking up after an extended period of time unconscious. “Take your time,” he murmured, tone almost soothing, doing it absently despite the fact he knew Blake would know what to do.

Blake did indeed take his time, despite the fact he wanted to guzzle the entire contents of the goblet. If he did that he ran the risk of being sick, and what he wanted to do when he had the energy…didn’t go hand in hand with sickness. He did suck in an ice cube and began chewing on it, before licking his dry lips, “Thank you,” he said gratefully, and this time it didn’t hurt with his throat well and truly lubricated.

“How are you feeling? Do you need another pain reliever?” Severus asked setting the goblet aside, but well within Blake’s reaching distance, the goblet was already refilling with both water and ice. “Poppy will know you’re awake and she’ll check you over as soon as she can.”

“No more of those potions, I’ve slept long enough…” Blake stated, squeezing Harry’s hand, “Wait…how long has it been?”

Harry felt nothing but stark relief that Blake seemed coherent, seemed to remember then again he hadn’t spoken much. “You remember the duel?” needing reassurance.

“Yeah,” Blake nodded, grimacing, “Maybe some potion, level four maybe?” he reckoned he’d been on the highest level, number ten pain reliever draught.

“Of course,” Severus agreed, barely having to glance at the vials before uncorking it and handing it over to Blake. He had to refrain from babying him too much, he wanted to take care of him, but like him, Blake was very independent and he’d find it stifling to be catered to like a child.

It took some time, but Blake managed to get the vial up to his lips, hands visibly shaking with the strain before he gulped it down. Only then did Severus grasp the vial and set it aside. “It’s been seventy-two hours since the duel, you’ve been unconscious for most of it, you did wake up the first night for a few minutes.” Severus explained seriously.

“You stopped breathing,” Harry said in an accusatory manner.

“I’m not easily gotten rid of,” Blake said, reassuring Harry, not telling them he’d been awake at least once more. He vividly remembered the one sided conversation Severus had with him, when he thought he was unconscious. “I’m fine…” rolling his eyes at the sight of their disbelieving face, “I’ve had worse.” he protested, and he’d survived that too.
That sobered them up.

“What’s wrong with me anyway?” Blake asked, pressing his hand against his side, letting go of Harry’s hand for a few seconds. “My side hurts like a son-of-bitch.” Not to forget his neck, which felt like someone had gone over it with a cheese grater.

“Diffindo to the neck, the injury I’m afraid got some of your tattoo. Three broken ribs, one of them penetrated your lung before the potion could fix the damage. It’s going to take weeks if not months for the damage to be fully repaired. The wound on your thigh has faded slightly, but it will probably never fade away. cauterising the wound saved your life, but has left you with quite a scar.” Depending on Blake’s pain tolerance he supposed. Plus, Blake would need to remain as immobile as possible, to aid the healing, otherwise he could exasperate his injuries.

The bindings around his chest would help with that, but not fully, and he had a feeling Blake wouldn’t like being cooped up.

Blake frowned, the tattoo could be fixed, he just needed someone good enough to accomplish it. Not just anyone either, someone brilliant. That wouldn’t be a problem, but it was a problem that could wait, three broken ribs, and unlike Bones they couldn’t be healed within twenty-four hours. Ironic though with Skele-Gro an entire arm of bones can be grown overnight, but ribs still took months. He was going to be out of commission for ages, and that annoyed him. Still, Voldemort was gone, he could do it as his own leisure.

“Alright,” Blake murmured, sighing softly, “So, what have I missed?” had he heard Severus was the Headmaster? Had Dumbledore quit to what? Hunt down Horcruxes that were already destroyed? He wasn’t surprised it had gone straight to Severus instead of McGonagall, Hogwarts had favoured Severus as the next Headmaster. He didn’t want to cotton on that he’d heard Severus, so he asked in a round about way. Closing his eyes tiredly, even just being awake was exhausting.

“Dumbledore lost his magic, he’s a Muggle now,” Harry blurted out, supressing a smirk of amusement.

Blake’s eyes snapped open, lurching up a little, only to have Severus pressing on his shoulder, preventing him from sitting up fully. “WHAT?”

“Easy with the movements,” Severus stated firmly, having expected the move.

“What the hell happened?” Blake asked, gaping in disbelief.

“Magic herself removed Dumbledore’s magic,” Severus informed him, not needing to say more for realisation to dawn on Blake.

“He did the poisoning?” Blake asked incredulously, he hadn’t been expecting that.

“That’s still not known, he’s remained unconscious since he was found,” Severus admitted, “The Aurors have been informed, but nobody else knows yet, surprisingly nobody has thought to snoop on Dumbledore as of yet. They probably think he’s too busy with the recent defeat.”

“Has there been any dead bodies popped up?” Blake asked, frowning.

“Two, one was natural causes, an old woman called Meredith Clearwater and a man…his death’s still being investigated I think.” Harry informed him, “I still have the newspapers if you want to read them.” he read the newspapers thoroughly following what happened, it was mostly about the duel, a detailed play-by-play of what happened and ‘updates’ that followed, which were a lot of bullshit, but that wasn’t a surprise considering he knew the Daily Prophet was full of crap.
At least they hadn’t said anything bad about Blake outright, if they had he knew Blake would bite back. He’d kept him safe from the vultures, and wouldn’t hesitate to sue them for anything they wrote about him.

“Still…I can’t believe he actually did it himself,” Blake muttered, “He NEVER gets his own hands dirty.” Dumbledore believed that if one marred their soul, they’d be condemned, it’s why he always had everyone else do the dirty work for him. For him to have done so…was completely mind-blowing to him.

“There’s no evidence he did, it was more than likely a House-elf.” Severus pointed out, “But magic has a way to sus out intent. It might explain Headmaster Black’s reaction…” he mused thoughtfully, vividly reminded of the portrait talking about the rules and regulations when he’d asked.

Blake shook his head, still reeling over this new information. Damn.

“It shouldn’t be a surprise, he will have been desperate, you said yourself he believes the prophecy fully. He doesn’t know about you, so he will think the war will start back up again.” Harry pointed out, grimacing just thinking about Dumbledore and what he’d done. He’d tried to kill Blake, take away his magical guardian…tried to take away someone he loved and cared for. Tried to take someone who cared about and loved him away. Hadn’t he lost enough?

“I became the Headmaster once mother magic stripped Dumbledore of his magic,” Severus explained, a conflicted look on his face. On one hand this was his home, on the other…he didn’t want to be stuck here for the rest of his life. Plus, with Dumbledore out of the way, Blake may want to leave Hogwarts behind and begin living his life now that the future was irrevocably changed.

“That was inevitable,” Blake said, with a small fond smile on his face, “Hogwarts favoured you, Severus, because you’d make a good Headmaster.” He’d never had a chance to prove it past the war due to his death, but afterwards everything he’d done for all the students had come to light, he’d done his best…but now? Now he’d see exactly what Severus was capable of.

Severus’ cheeks went a pale red, barely noticeable unless you were watching him intently like Blake was. No doubt he wasn’t used to being ‘favoured’ by anyone, more used to being abandoned when he needed them most. Used to the point of apathy when it came to others.

“What was McGonagall’s reaction?” Blake asked, she’d been pissed in his original timeline, absolutely furious, but remained for the sake of the students. Say what he liked about her, she did care about the students…them as individuals not so much, but yeah, overall, she cared about them.

“She’s unaware of the switch,” Severus stated bluntly.

Blake blinked, Merlin only knows how she’s ignorant to it, but she wasn’t used to a bond with Hogwarts of the wards even as a Deputy Headmistress…perhaps she assumed that’s how it would be as Headmistress, but that was impossible surely she had to know she’d feel the bond?

Severus just shrugged his shoulders, he didn’t get it either, and to say anything would be to insult the bright witches intelligence, and she was intelligent.

“She can’t remain unaware for much longer,” Blake pointed out, it was shocking that she still didn’t know.

“You’d think so,” Severus agreed.
“I’m not missing her reaction,” Harry declared, man this would be the most fun he’d had in ages when he got to see the entire school’s reaction.

“Nor am I,” Blake said bemused, “I do suggest heading to the Great Hall…when’s the next meal?”

“You really should remain immobile as much as possible,” Severus cautioned him, already knowing he was wasting his breath. If Blake wanted to do something he would do it, regardless of what advice was offered to him. “It’s going on lunch,” he added.

“I’ll use the Floo network to get to the antechamber,” Blake compromised, much to Severus’ shock.

“Actually that will cause more harm than good, the jostling around in the network,” Severus pointed out.

“Use Dobby,” Harry suggested, it was even better than Apparation, no sick feeling or jarring. It was probably the smoothest form of magical transportation available.

“Good idea,” Blake agreed, “I’m glad I won’t have to deal with Aurors,” he mused, slowly sitting up, grimacing in pain, but no less determined.

“Harry called Dobby?” the House-elf appeared. “Master Blake is awake!” ecstatic to see his Master up and about again.

“Bring me a change of clothes down, please Dobby,” Blake stated smoothly. “It’s good to be awake.” He added to the House-elf giving him a small smile.

“Dobby will be doing that!” Dobby said excitedly, popping away.

“May I borrow your shower?” Blake then asked Severus, for having been unconscious for three days, he felt clean enough, considering the amount of blood he’d lost…he suspected he’d been given a sponge bath at some point. Hopefully not by Poppy.

“Of course,” Severus agreed immediately. “Do you think you can manage on your own?” he asked, blank faced.

“I should be fine,” Blake said thoughtfully, “I’ll keep the door open just in case,” he wasn’t sure whether Severus had individual silencing spells in his bathroom. Regardless, if he needed help, the door open would allow his voice to be heard. He doubted he would need help though, he was too stubborn for that.

Severus shoulder’s unconsciously relaxed at that, giving Blake a nod. The urge to help strong, but he remained where he was.

Dobby returned putting the clothes in the bathroom sink, after ensuring it was dry of any water droplets. Then he disappeared again, presumably off to help the Hogwarts House-elves prepare for another celebratory meal – the celebrations were still ongoing even for Hogwarts – over the defeat of Voldemort. Or as even the House-elves called him You-Know-Who.

Twenty minutes later, Harry and Severus heard quiet shuffling and saw Blake emerging. You could see that he was in pain, he didn’t have his usual confident stalk and his back wasn’t as straight back as normal. It would be his normal gait for a while, until his ribs healed at any rate. He did look better, he had a red flush to his cheeks, but that could be exertion.

“Are you sure you want to be doing this?” Harry asked, watching Blake move slowly. He was
surprised the wizard would want to be seen vulnerable, not that he would be. Both him and Severus would make sure no harm came to him while he was recovering.

“And miss the fun?” Blake asked, smirking outright, “No way, it isn’t as fun watching it in a pensive.”

Harry muffled his own amusement, eyes gleaming just as excitedly as Blake’s just without the inner jadedness.

Severus inhaled sharply, not quite ready to deal with a petulant McGonagall, the only good thing about doing it in the Great Hall, it would ease her reaction. She would raise hell in private, of course, but initially he’d be able to sit down and enjoy his meal while she grew accustomed to her disappointment. Not that he really cared about her disappointment, but he’d rather not endure her sniping complaints and disbelief.

“Don’t worry, she’ll be too preoccupied with the problem that Dumbledore’s presented than you,” Blake informed him, struggling to put his cloak on, until Harry helped him.

“Ready to go?” Harry said after fastening the clasp, making no big deal about it.

“As I’ll ever be,” Severus scowled, go figure Blake would get amusement out of this, he would too, if it wasn’t going to directly affect him.

“If you don’t want to, then we don’t need to,” Blake stated, sensing Severus’ inner turmoil.

“No, I’ve been putting it off too long,” Severus conceded, now that Blake was on the mend, he truly had no more excuses up his sleeve. “We need to get back to normal,” the ‘we’ slipped effortlessly off his tongue.

“Did you find someone to cover your Potions classes?” Harry asked curiously, with it being so close to exam times, it was a vital time for the students to get the last minute education necessary to pass their exams.

“I’ve asked Slughorn to return for a few weeks while I try to find someone, he’s graciously agreed.” Severus said grudgingly. “He will be here by tomorrow, the news of my Headmastership status will probably already be going around in certain circles.”

“Who?” Harry asked, blinking in confusion, it was almost like Severus expected him to be familiar with him.

Blake chuckled, “You’ll hate him until you can’t help but like him,” he was a fame hound but he was also very likeable.

Severus conceded that description with a cock of his head in agreement. It was quite a true description of Slughorn.

Harry screwed up his nose, before shrugging his shoulders, “It’s only for a few weeks anyway,” which was also true enough. He was near enough finished his fifth year of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and for the first time, he hadn’t had to worry about being killed and had been forced to focus on his education. He never thought he’d see the day where he finished a year at Hogwarts without Ron and Hermione at his side. He thought they would have been friends for life, but it obviously wasn’t meant to be.

“It’s ironic how much ends up staying the same…” Blake admitted shaking his head, Slughorn still came out of retirement. At least this time he didn’t need to be convinced by dangling him like a bit
of bait. The knowledge that Voldemort was gone for good might have convinced him though, he supposed. “Did you tell him exactly how it came to be?”

“I did,” Severus agreed, he knew from Blake that the old fool had obliviated the memory from his own mind. To prevent his own conscience getting the better of him. The news he shared probably shook it free, and no doubt left him with a load of his shoulders. “Charmed so he couldn’t talk about it, not that I think he will.”

He’d kept his mouth shut thus far after all.

“Ready to go?” Severus asked, eyeing Blake as if he was close to imminent collapse. Which might not be far off it, actually. He really shouldn’t be up this soon after beginning his recovery, Poppy would more than likely give him hell for it too.

“Yes,” Blake declared, “After I get my shoes on, you guys go on ahead, I’ll meet you there,”

“Shouldn’t you get someone to put them on…bending over…” Harry said, not the best of ideas, he was familiar with how painful it was, although his ribs hadn’t been broken…at least he didn’t think so. Magic could have healed him, but he’d been too young to know the difference.

“If I can’t I’ll get Dobby to do it, go on,” Blake said, with a wry smirk, at least Dobby could just click his fingers and it would be done, no need to endure someone physically putting them on for him. The thought of being seen as an invalid was stressful.

“Very well,” Severus conceded, “I’ll see you soon.” with that both he and Harry left Severus’ quarters, not feeling good about leaving Blake at all. What if he collapsed? The only reason they actually moved was because Dobby was going to be there to take care of him, and if anything happened the House-elf would let them know immediately.

“Maybe you should tell Poppy you’re going to the Great Hall,” Harry suggested as he matched Severus’ long strides out of habit now.

Severus smirked eyes gleaming in amusement, “Oh, she’ll be there, she won’t miss a meal unless she has to. Not with the prospect of seeing this, a healer she may be, but Poppy was only human. She liked to see drama as much as the next person. He did however, make a mental note to get Poppy’s memory of Minerva being informed of Dumbledore’s Muggle status…and Dumbledore’s reaction if and when it occurred. He could die before he woke, he was an old man now, without the magic he was born with, his body might not be able to handle it.

“I don’t know, she never leaves the hospital wing when she has a patient,” Harry pointed out, she ate in her office from what he understood.

“Regretfully, there is nothing that can be done for Dumbledore,” Severus replied, rounding yet another corner of the dungeons and the corridors lit up as they reached the main entrance.

Harry absently wondered how it was possible to put so much sarcasm into one single word. Regretfully his ass, Severus didn’t care, if anything he was getting amusement out of it. quickening his stride, not wishing for Blake to beat him there, not that he wanted to see everyone’s reaction to Blake, no it was Severus’ headmastership that truly made him want to do a dance and just see everyone’s reactions.

Harry’s first action as soon as he stepped into the Great Hall was to check the table and glance at the door to the antechamber behind the teachers table. Nothing, Blake hadn’t made his appearance yet.
“Harry!” Hermione called out, relief visible on her features, and that begun an echo of ‘Harry’ from everyone else, all of them surprised and happy to see him.

They didn’t react to Severus’ presence at all, as usual they elected to ignore him when he wasn’t taking house points or detentions.

“Take your seat,” Severus informed Harry, most of his masks back in place, but not as impassive as he normally would be. He no longer had to play a part, it would take some time for it to sink in, but just knowing Voldemort was gone for good had him relaxing unconsciously.

“Yes Sir!” Harry said wryly, saluting him before he moved off towards the twins and Neville. They immediately surrounded him, not asking what had happened…no they were all about if he was alright, if Blake was alright, and if he’d been injured. For Ron that would have been an afterthought after getting all the juicy gossip except for their first year he supposed. Credit where it was due and all that, and Ron had immediately asked if he was alright, admittedly, after he asked him.

Minerva stood from the Head seat as Severus approached, “How is he?” genuine concern written across her features.

“He’s fine,” Severus replied, catching the Antechamber door opening from the corner of his eye. “However, I do believe that you’re in my seat, Minerva.” That seat was reserved for the Headmaster or Headmistress, something of which Minerva was not.

“Excuse me?” Minerva retorted, her thick Scottish accent showing through more than normal in her confusion.

“I am the Headmaster of Hogwarts,” Severus stated, and to prove his point, he raised his hands in the air and Hogwarts banners unfurled everywhere, not the house colours, but Hogwarts banners that hadn’t been used in decades. The Great Hall doors closed and the candles flared brighter bringing more light than needed into the hall. The doors opened once more and the candles dimmed, Severus was just showing off now.

Minerva’s jaw dropped incredulously, as the student body gasped in shocked disbelief almost as one. Then the Slytherins begin cheering outrageously loud, ecstatic that their favourite professor and Head of House had become Headmaster. Regardless of how loud they were…they heard McGonagall’s reply and quietened to hear Severus’ reply. Suspecting it would be something scathing.

“That’s…that’s impossible,” Minerva stuttered, cheeks flushing red, whether it was due to her stuttering or anger nobody knew.

“No way!” Seamus cried out, his accent helping to identify him, the hall was so silent that he was heard regardless.

“Don’t you know, Minerva, that Hogwarts is sentient and often time chooses her Headmasters?” Blake said coolly, as he made his appearance. The cheering commenced immediately, all of them cheering for his recent defeat of Voldemort. Blake predictably ignored the cheering. “Headmaster Dippet was one such person it’s why he was capable of more than Dumbledore when it came to controlling the wards.” Dumbledore used his wand, whereas Severus or Dippet didn’t have to, giving them a more powerful appearance. Of course, Dumbledore concealed his wand up his sleeve, while he performed his ‘displays’ making it seem as if he was more powerful than he was. Not that he was a slouch, he just wasn’t as powerful as he liked everyone to believe.
“Surely you suspected, Minerva, Hogwarts hasn’t responded to you yet,” Severus pointed out, the House-elves brought up the food and she had yet to display the banners or make any changes to Hogwarts. If she had attempted it, he would have known.

Minerva flushed much darker at the declaration, “I was the Deputy Headmistress, the next in line to receive the Headship, it’s only natural to assume I would be the Headmistress after Dumbledore passed the baton.”

“Ah, but he didn’t pass the baton, he had his magic forcefully ripped from him by Mother Magic for attempting to interfere with a lawful duel.” Blake didn’t make any bones of keeping it a secret, “He tried to poison me in order to prevent the duel from taking place.”

The outcry was immense, the Slytherins’ believing it, the Gryffindors crying out that he was lying, that it wasn’t true. Defending Dumbledore to the last, not only because he was a fellow Gryffindor but because Dumbledore had favoured them so much that they believed they were special, better than everyone else. The Ravenclaws demanded evidence and the Hufflepuff’s were horrified that someone would go to those lengths during an official duel.

“Silence!” Severus shouted loud enough to be heard even at the front of the Great Hall.

“I see you didn’t inform the students of the real reason Dumbledore wasn’t here.” Blake said coolly, sweating a little, as he shuffled in and grateful took a seat, the pressure now off his ribs. “Bad form that.”

“But Dumbledore wanted You-Know-Who gone he wouldn’t have done that!” Hermione protested, as always quick to defend Dumbledore.

“Then explain to me, Miss Granger, why Dumbledore has lost his magic?” Blake asked sardonically, “Why it was ripped from him by Mother Magic immediately following the duel?” Mother Magic’s magic was…unmistakable. Especially for those who have followed the old ways even for one single ritual, which was all pureblood’s and half-blood’s in the magical world…Muggle-borns perhaps a few who were curious and participated but most did not.

Hermione had a look on her face that could be considered constipated. Mother Magic? Really? But given how everyone was reacting…perhaps it was a thing. She did not like being ignorant to things. The urge to race to the library was very strong indeed.

Minerva’s lips were pursed, yet she was not surprised, she had suspected then. Not truly surprising she was intelligent and more importantly…she knew Dumbledore well.

“You already knew, or suspected…tell me did you know the lengths he’d go to in order to stop the duel? Did you find my life worth taking due to Dumbledore insane belief that only Harry could stop the son of a bitch?” Blake asked, furious beyond belief that she would go along with Dumbledore’s insanity. His chest ached like blazes just puffing out in fury, it almost sent him to the floor in agonising pain.

“No, no,” Minerva said immediately, panicked and shocked that someone would think that of her, “I did not know what he would do, or condone it, I would never allowed him to do such a thing.” She wished she could say she couldn’t believe the lengths Dumbledore had gone…but his belief in the prophecy…it was solid. He believed it to the whole of his being that he had risked his life and in turn lost his magic for it.

The Great Hall was buzzing with students whispering to each other, all of them trying to talk over one another but also listen to the spectacle going on at the Head table.
There was only one student getting his kill over what was happening; who had looked forward to it immensely. Harry.

“How can you be enjoying this?” Hermione hissed at Harry.

“Oh, Hermione, use your brain…”

“He already knew about it,” the twins muttered shaking their head, mock disappointment displayed across their features.

“Dumbledore wouldn’t do a thing like what Blake’s suggesting!” she hissed back at them, shaking her own head in disappointment, but it sure as hell wasn’t mockingly.

“Hermione…if he lost his magic, then there can be only one reason for it, just be glad he didn’t die…” Fred said bluntly.

“Because that’s normally what happens to someone who tries to interfere with a magically sealed duel.” The twins once again spoke finishing each other’s sentences.

Hermione was just about to open her mouth and protest again, refusing to believe that badly of Dumbledore. Just like she refuses to see the reality of what he had done to Sirius Black. Dumbledore was a beacon of light, a champion to people like her, Muggle-borns who were discriminated in the magical world when a woman entered the Great Hall, screeching for Dumbledore at the top of her lungs.

“ALBUS DUMBLEDORE!”

“Can I help you?” Minerva asked the woman, frowning at her appearance. She looked like haggard and worn, utterly disgusting in appearance, wearing clothes that looked like she had been wearing them for weeks and her hair was greasy and lank.

Severus cleared his throat, giving her a pointed look, he was the Headmaster not her.

“Where’s Dumbledore?” she demanded eyes flashing with sorrow and fury in equal measures.

“I’m sorry but Dumbledore is not available,” Severus stated firmly, concerned for the woman. “Is there something I can do for you?”

“I want ANSWERS!” she screeched, “The old fool forced my husband to poison someone and now….now he’s dead! My Tim is gone…” her heartbroken whimper heard by all, as her legs bucked unable to carry her weight anymore.

“Poppy?” Severus murmured, she needed help, rest.

“There was a Timothy who died, suspicious circumstances three days ago…” Poppy informed him as she passed, making her way towards the woman who was suffering from utter devastation. Weakly clutching a letter to her chest, tears pouring down her prematurely aged face.

Poppy tried to ease her up, “NO I WANT ANSWERS!” she shrieked, digging her nails into Poppy, shaking and shivering, clearly not thinking straight.

The students were subdued and silent, watching the woman with sympathy, the eleven-year-olds more scared than understanding. Too young to really understand what she was going on about. Well, understand it maybe, but comprehend it, no.
“Shh, we’ll get you answers, I promise, shhh,” Poppy consoled and soothed the agitated woman, she didn’t have any potions with her, so she couldn’t give the witch anything. She believed if she summoned a House-elf to ask for a calming draught she’d just set the woman off again. “Follow me, that’s it easy does it,” guiding her to her feet, “Do you have children?” judging by the stickers on her cloak she knew the answer to that.

“They’ve lot their father…how do I tell them?” she sobbed, “I want my Tim back,” Poppy cuddled her close regardless of the smell. She was grieving, hygiene wasn’t exactly going to be the biggest concern in this woman’s life.

Everyone heard her and Poppy’s words, Severus staring after them blank faced. His eyes though, held a great deal of understanding and pain. Nobody deserved to lose their significant other, especially for such a pathetic reason. Whoever this ‘Tim’ was, he didn’t feel wrath or fury, he just felt a subdued understanding. He knew just how good Dumbledore was at manipulating the people around him. Hell, he could probably guess what he’d used as incentive. Such a needless death, Dumbledore had so much to answer for.

“Was the name in the paper Timothy Redfern?” Blake asked Severus, an impassive look overcoming his features.

Severus scrutinised Blakes’ face, looking for clues, “Yes,” he confirmed what Blake already suspected.

Inhaling sharply, he nodded just once, features set into stone.

“Students!” Severus called out, “Tomorrow classes will resume, today you may do as you please. However, it’s important that you all try and get some studying done.” He told them, “Exams will commence as normal, you’ll find your times on the noticeboards in your common rooms.”

Small groans could be heard, from select students, but overall, nobody seemed overly disheartened by the announcement…one could say a lot of them were greatly relieved by the information Severus had given.

“For now, try and eat,” Severus waved his hand and the food appeared for them all, but as expected, there wasn’t great big rush to eat. As all of them were digesting the new news they’d been given. From Dumbledore trying to kill Blake…to some stranger coming in and accusing him of more nefarious deeds. Even the teachers were subdued, seeing the witch in such a state had definitely made them feel rather sick to their stomach.

To say it was a very tense half hour would be putting it mildly, barely any sound was made, except for the expected noise, thudding of the goblets and the clinking of cutlery. Severus barely touched his good, but made sure Blake ate something, he needed it, to gain strength, to take his potions. Refraining from asking what was really on his mind. How did Blake know Timothy Redfern?

“Dobby?” Blake called, Severus stood, realizing that Blake was leaving.

“I’ll see you in your rooms?” Blake suggested, asking permission to remain here in a roundabout way.

Severus sighed, giving a nod, “You’re always welcome,” he’d prefer it actually.

“Take me to Severus’ quarters,” Blake told Dobby, and with that the exhausted Blake was gone.

“Professor Snape, Sir…is Professor Slytherin alright?” that shout came from the Slytherin section, Blaise Zabini if he recalled correctly, but all of them looked worried. It came as no surprise that he
was liked by the Slytherins, his no nonsense attitude and the lack of favouring any house at all got him a lot of brownie points with the often secluded house.

Severus straightened up, “Professor Slytherin is beginning his long journey of recovery, he has three broken ribs and a punctured lung that’s healing nicely. He will be hindered for the next month while his ribs heal. The worst is fortunately over with, and he will make a full recovery.” Severus declared, “Now students, be prepared for tomorrow’s classes, I do not want to hear any excuses or absences, you’ve already had three days off.” Their exams were so important, it would dictate what they could and couldn’t do when they left Hogwarts. There were students who had to get a job right out of Hogwarts due to circumstances, so yes, they had to do the best they could on exams. Happiness comes at a price, happiness of no exams the price was their future.

With his piece said, he moved to follow Blake down to his rooms.

“Severus…”

“Minerva, I shall have a meeting in the staff room at four o’clock just before dinner, all your questions can and will be answered then. Attending the meeting is mandatory.” Severus explained patiently, before he left, Minerva would need to make a decision. She could not, would not, get to continue to do three jobs, she would need to choose between being a Head of House or Deputy Headmistress. She would thank him one day. Maybe.

Once he got into his quarters, he was unsurprised to see Blake there, he was slightly worried about his crumpled form on the couch. Deliberate or exhaustion? Or perhaps a bit both? Closing the door he made his way over, crouching down and touching Blake cautiously.

Green eyes flashed open as his body tensed, relief exuded from him as he relaxed. “Hey,” he murmured, vividly reminded of the conversation he’d heard from Severus.

“You should be in a proper bed,” Severus pointed out, he needed actual rest, he’d done too much.

“That is not a proper bed,” Blake replied wryly, gesturing towards the hospital like bed that had been conjured for him.

“It did it’s purpose,” Severus said, had he ever been this close to Blake when he was conscious? He didn’t think so, not since he had been tortured and Blake had healed him at any rate.

“Mmm,” Blake murmured in agreement, before taking cautions in the wind and grasping Severus’ neck and drawing the wizard down and pressing his lips against his.

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There we go! SOOOO what do you want to see about this story before it draws to a close as you can see it's nearly finished! So this is your chance to ask for what you'd like to see in it before it's finished! :) another story nearly done I'm really pleased with the process! Hope you're still enjoying it! R&R please!
The Games They Play

Chapter 44

Severus reeled back after regaining his senses, stunned beyond belief over what had just occurred. Regretting it immediately, once their locked lips were no longer attached. The urge to continue what Blake so blatantly and brazenly started was so strong that he leaned forward again before forcing himself to stand. He could not, would not put his heart out there only for it to be squashed. He had to know what Blake intended, what his intentions were. As much as it pained him to admit, he couldn’t just have sex with Blake and be done with it. It was different with him, his feelings were involved, had been involved too long. Gritting his teeth, he asked, “Why?” just one question, just the one.

“Surely you know why people kiss, Severus?” Blake pointed out wryly, his head raised as he watched the wizard pace clearly caught of guard. Did he tell Severus what he’d heard? Or did he just leave that can of worms unopened?

“You’ve never expressed any desire to do so,” Severus bit out, he’d watched him carefully enough to know.

Blake inhaled sharply, realizing he would have to be truthful, that they both would have to in order to have any sort of relationship. If he wasn’t, he knew Severus would close down any hope, and would convince himself of all sorts. “No, I didn’t, just as I didn’t want to get attached, to you or Harry.” He confessed, eyes glazed, “I had no idea what would come of me, Severus, time-travel wasn’t exactly an exact science or branch of magic you know. Unfortunately, I couldn’t keep both of you at arms lengths, even if I tried convincing myself it was for your own goods. Then I became selfish, the most selfish I’d ever allowed myself to be.”

Severus stiffened, listening intently to Blake speak, and moved to slump on the sofa next to him.

“Was it wrong to want to be liked? To be mourned if anything happened to me? Probably.” Blake sighed, brushing his hand through his hair with his good side. “To want companionship and care if this was the end? Yes. I wasn’t strong enough to do it all stoically. At the end of the day Severus, I truly believed something would happen to me, and I’d never risk leaving a partner behind to grieve like that.”

Severus swallowed thickly, was Blake implying what he thought he was?

“I like you, Severus, a lot,” Blake continued, he couldn’t say it was love, not yet, that took time, “I’d like to think the feels are mutual and reciprocated. If they aren’t tell me now and I’ll never bring this up again.” he knew that Severus felt the same, but if he wanted an out…well he was giving him one. This was all on Severus now whether he wanted to accept the risk of dating someone, dating him.

Letting out a shaky breath, staring at Blake who was showing more emotion than normal. He had a feeling that Blake was…sure of their mutual attraction to one another. Yet he asked that sort of question, why? Realization quickly dawned in his bright, intelligent mind. Blake was giving him a way out of this potential relationship. The question is…could he do it? Lay himself bare? “You wish to begin a monogamous relationship not a one-time thing?”
Blake’s eyebrows rose at the stress Severus put on monogamous, he suddenly didn’t want to know who Severus had been with in the past for Severus to ask that question. Although, if he found out who it was…then he would make sure he couldn’t use his dick for anything other than pissing.

“Yes, Severus, I cannot guarantee it will have a good ending, nobody can, but I’d very much like to try.” He wasn’t stupid enough to believe that all relationships worked out.

“I would…very much like to try, yes,” Severus finally opened his mouth and confessed, “Your feelings are very much reciprocated, but you have the absolute worst timing.” He complained.

“Oh, how’s that?” Blake asked, his tone utterly dry.

“Number one, you’re injured, two I have a meeting in a few hours, three I have very little doubt Harry will be making his way back here.” Severus said sardonically, he wasn’t pouting, he absolutely wasn’t. He’d often dreamed of being with Blake, making love and being loved in turn, and now…when it was all coming together…he found he was going to have to wait. He was truly in no condition for sex, the pain would be an extreme turnoff, regardless of his pain tolerance.

Blake burst out laughing, the look on Severus’ face…it was comical. It softened considerably hearing him laugh, and he couldn’t help the surge of hope, perhaps they could do this without destroying their friendship. Both were stubborn to the core, but they’d worked so well so far, able to compromise. A grimace spread across his features, laughing was not a good idea, he absently rubbed at his side. “So…Headmaster?” he asked, changing the subject, he was regretfully quite correct, they couldn’t act on their baser urges, not yet.

Letting out a breath, “Yes,” he confirmed, “I am still unsure if I want to be Headmaster.”

“Now that’s a lie if I’ve ever heard one,” Blake stated, his tone firm booking no lies, “Don’t lie to yourself, Severus. Do not worry about what others will think, what other people desire, think only of yourself, is this what you desire?”

“I became a Potions Master because I loved brewing, I detest teaching,” Severus told him, all of which Blake was already knowledgeable about. Leaning back against the sofa, and truly relaxing.

Blake nodded, “As Headmaster you won’t be teaching, you’ll be in charge of the school, students and professors. During your free time…which when you’ve got the school up and running as you desire it, you’ll be able to brew to your hearts content.” He pointed out, “Hogwarts has always been your only home, a safe heaven, as it has for me.” Nothing time or space did would ever change

“Not quite so accurate anymore, the cottage…is idyllic.” Severus admitted.

“The cottage or the people?” Blake asked softly, “It’s new, holds no bad memories, of course you’ll be fond of it. Just because you’re headmaster, doesn’t mean you need to remain at Hogwarts all year around. During the summer months you can go there and decompress, or travel the world, visit new and interesting places…or both.”

Severus conceded this with a cock of his head, it was true enough.

“You don’t have to pick and choose, you can have it all,” Blake pointed out, “You deserve it Severus, don’t sabotage yourself or sell yourself short.”

“What about you?” Severus asked, voicing one of his fears.

Blake blinked, “What about me?” he questioned curiously, he wasn’t questioning whether to remain at Hogwarts or not because of him was he?
“What is it you want?” Severus asked, what did he want to do with his life? Could they have a future together? He knew Blake only agreed to become a teacher to prevent Umbridge for digging her claws in at Hogwarts and harming his ward. His ward, he’d very rarely spoken of Harry as his ‘younger self’ and it had rubbed off on Severus.

“To be quite frank, I rather enjoy teaching, Harry hasn’t felt that bite,” Blake admitted, “With Umbridge I had a chance to see what it was like and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was nothing but a distant memory for me, of course, between everyone expecting me to be an Auror and the war…I didn’t have a choice in career. Teaching has been…quite a rewarding and liberating time. I’m just not sure whether it has something to do with the freedom I’ve experienced this year.” It was true enough, this was the most freedom he’d ever had, not constantly on the run.

“You wish to remain as the Defence professor?” Severus’ hope soared.

“As long as the new Headmaster allows it,” Blake teased, a mischievous grin adorning his features.

Severus almost did a doubletake, but managed to keep his features under control. This was an entirely new side to Blake…had it always been there? Buried under his façade? Or something new? Was it the simple fact that Voldemort was gone for good that was allowing his masks to crumble just enough to let him in? “I think he might be able to be convinced,” he said back, something in him loosening at the playful banter.

“That’s good,” Blake said wryly, “So, who are you meeting?” was it Timothy Redfern’s wife? Had Dumbledore woken up? What exactly had he missed?

“Faculty meeting,” Severus answered, his hand reaching out and tangling with Blake’s, “You are not obligated to attend,” he was injured, that was reason enough for a non-attendance even if he had deemed it mandatory.

“Of course,” Blake answered, he should have thought of that. “I’ll attend.” He confirmed, it was just sitting down, there wouldn’t be a lot of physical exercise involved.

“Very well,” Severus sighed resignedly, he wouldn’t be able to talk him out of it, and truly? Blake knew his own mind, knew his own body and knew his own limitations. Until he had seen evidence of Blake’s inability to take care of himself, he wouldn’t get on at him for anything he chose to.

“Just because we can’t have sex, doesn’t mean we can’t kiss,” Blake told Severus after a few moments of silence, jerking him forward with their intertwined hands. “Unless of course…” he didn’t get to finish before Severus’ lips descended upon his.

His kisses was tentative at best, slow and careful, and it was driving Blake mad.

“I’m not going to break,” Blake snipped, giving Severus a baleful look, “So either kiss me like you mean it…” before he could threaten him further, Severus shut him up with a more forceful kiss.

Severus strained, forcefully stopping himself from pressing up against Blake’s warm and welcoming body. He knew he couldn’t do that yet, so he used both his arms keep himself centred so he didn’t accidentally do anything to harm him. Which did make kissing a little awkward, but no less tantalising and Blake was certainly making no bones of his enjoyment judging by the little sounds that was escaping him.

“Is everything…OKAYYY…I could have done without seeing that,” Harry blurted out turning around, staring at his own crotch in embarrassment. It wasn’t like this was the first time he had been hard…but come on! This was himself and Severus Snape! If he hadn’t already been aware of
the fact he was gay – thank you Blake – this would have been more shocking. Fucking hell, he had
to get out of there pronto this was humiliating.

Blake’s laugher caught him off-guard for a moment did he know what the problem was?

“I’ll see you later! BYE!” with that Harry took off like shot, not even glancing back to look at
them, his face tomato red. It was bad enough that he was constantly hot for Fred and George, who
were his friends, and regretfully leaving Hogwarts this year, without popping boners around Blake
and Severus.

Severus watched him go frowning at his peculiar behaviour, “I hadn’t factored in his reaction,” he
conceded. Now quite worried about it, how would Blake fair if Harry didn’t approve? And
everything about that sentence knowing what he did made his head hurt.

Blake just smirked finding it wholly amusing.

“What is so amusing?” Severus asked silkily, giving Blake a shrewd look.

“You’re worried about his reaction aren’t you?” Blake asked wryly, “You needn’t be, he’s not
exactly shy about being vocal these days if something doesn’t meet his approval.” Harry just
wasn’t as loud about it as he had been.

“You think he approves?” Severus arched a disbelieving brow.

“Yes,” Blake replied, shrugging his shoulders, “Did you hear him vehemently cursing in disgust?
Screwing up his face utterly repulsed? No, he just reacted as a child would seeing their parents in a
compromising position. Which was to hightail it out of there.”

Severus startled at that, there was no way Harry could see him and Blake as parents…could he?
Did Harry even think of Blake as himself anymore or was it always his magical guardian?
Someone to look up to? Someone he wanted to do well for? It’s too bad he’d never know, Harry’s
Occlumency barriers were quite strong for his age. “I see,” he murmured, still slightly perplexed
but relieved.

“Even if he didn’t approve it would have changed nothing, I’m a grown man and I do not need my
own or anyone else’s approval to start a relationship.” Blake stated firmly, “Anyone that does need
approval need’s their heads examined.”

Speaking of heads examined… “How is it you knew Timothy Redfern?”

Blake blinked at the abrupt shift in conversation, “I knew him in my time…” Blake confessed, a far
away glaze entering his eyes, “He saved many peoples lives, kids, doing what he could after
stashing away his own kids making sure they were safe.” Instead of staying with them, “One of the
bravest men I knew…” none compared to Severus’ bravery though.

Severus winced, yeah, that couldn’t be a good place for Blake to be right now. Knowing Timothy
Redfern had tried to kill him…while knowing such goodness about him.

“He was atoning for a bad past, he was an assassin, an appointed one, went where he was told.”
Blake gave him a pointed look, the government wasn’t as clean cut as everyone would like to
believe. The world wasn’t as clear cut as everyone liked to think. “Finally gave it up when he met
the love of his life, settled down had four kids…maybe three in this time…he said one was a baby
when I knew him…”

“I’m sorry,” Severus replied, it was lacklustre, he knew, the sorry, what good did it do? A friend by
the sound of it, or acquaintance had tried to kill him and it resulted in his death.

Blake mutely shook his head, “I’ll choose to remember how he was with me,” and that would be it.
“Plus, you and I know he didn’t do it willingly, Dumbledore must have held his past against him.
It’s the only way he would have killed again. He detested killing, only did it if there was no other
option, especially if kids were endangered.”

Severus nodded back grimly, yeah, he already suspected as much.

“Blasting stupid old fool,” Blake slurred out bitterly, his eyes fluttering as tiredness drained him
entirely of what energy he had left, which wasn’t much to begin with.

“Sleep,” Severus said quietly, but Blake was already going under, the last thing he felt was a
blanket draped over his body, heating him up allowing Morpheus to take him all the much more
easily.

Severus barely moved until it was time for the faculty meeting, refusing to risk wakening Blake up.
If he was anything like him, even the slightest sound would wake him up, and he’d take ages to get
back to sleep once roused. Merely plucked a book from the table and began reading, it was the one
that Harry had been reading to Blake for days, Defence book, so it was something he could sink his
teeth into. Regardless of whether he had read it before or not.

Unfortunately, Blake did express a desire to go to the meeting and he didn’t want to discard his
wishes. So, when it was mere minutes before the meeting was due to start, and no doubt the rest of
the faculty was already there…Severus pressed a hand to his face, not at all surprised when those
mesmerising green eyes fluttered open at the first touch. Severus had to stop himself smiling into a
gooey puddle at the lack of coldness in his gaze as his defences were down. “If you wish to attend
the meeting we must go now.” Severus informed him, none of those internal pesky feelings
showing on his face or in his tone.

Blake groaned, aiming to stretch only to stop and freeze as the pain reminded him it was not a good
idea. Goddamn it, that hurt, he guessed stretching was out for the foreseeable future.

“Here, it’s a pain reliever, number five with a muscle relaxant,” Severus spoke causing Blake to
stiffen a bit and relax fully. He hadn’t even been aware of Severus either moving or summoning
the potion. He didn’t like the thought of letting his guard down so fully…but if he couldn’t with
Severus and Harry who could he do it with and trust fully?

“Thanks,” Blake groaned in sweet relief as the draught did it’s work, his muscles a pile of goo
within minutes as though he had just had the most relaxing massage possible.

“You won’t be able to take anything more until ten o’clock tonight,” Severus warned, “And I
would suggest nothing more than a level four pain reliever.”

Blake nodded curtly, as he eased himself to his feet, he wasn’t a Potions Master but he knew when
and how often he could take potions. “Dobby?” knowing they had to get there pronto, Severus
wouldn’t have woken him up until the very last minute.

“Take us up to the Staff room please,” Blake requested, feeling bad for using Dobby as a means of
transport, but he knew he wouldn’t be able to endure the Floo network and definitely wouldn’t be
able to walk there. Even with the pain relief draughts running through his system, he was still very
aware of every injury he’d sustained, even the wound he’d cauterised was pulling at his skin and
painful to touch, not that he’d tried much, even the brush of clothes against his skin was awful.
Dobby immediately clasped Blake and Severus’ hands, his masters’ hands and popped them right outside the door. He didn’t hang around, knowing that if they needed him, they’d let him know, he’d know through the bond. So, until then, he would simply help the House-elves at Hogwarts prepare dinner and make sure his Master’s food wasn’t tampered with by watching and preparing it himself.

“Are you sure you wouldn’t rather return to our quarters and rest? This is going to be tedious,” Severus gave him one last chance to back out, rubbing his own temples in silent agitation.

Blake smiled at the ‘our quarters’ bit, but shook his head, opening the door and trying to walk in as he normally would. He didn’t think he accomplished it, judging by the looks on their faces, heck, they probably thought he was constipated. Wouldn’t surprise Blake the slightest if they did.

“How are you fairing?” Filius asked, a concerned yet knowing look on his face.

Out of them all, other than Severus, Filius probably DID know best. As a champion dueller, he no doubt had to deal with his fair share of collective injuries that happened while competing. If he were a Muggle, his X-rays would have been interesting…instead it was the diagnosis that would be amazing to read through. For such a small guy, he knew the professor would have a massive wad of diagnosis coming out the wand that performed the spell.

“I’m well as can be expected.” Blake informed Filius inclining his head in thanks.

“You’ll be as right as rain in a few months,” Filius said cheerfully, which was also true.

Blake barked out a laugh, “Well too bad we haven’t figured out how to go ahead in time as well,” he teased softly, as he took his seat, Severus sitting next to him.

If anyone noticed their closeness nobody commented on it.

“How is it that Hogwarts came to you?” came the curious voice of the Head of Hufflepuff house, “I don’t mean that in a bad way, Severus, I’m just baffled!” it should have gone to the Deputy Headmistress, it was the way it had always been, hadn’t it?

“In all you’ve read…where has there been a mention that Headmaster Dippet was in fact the Deputy Headmaster before he became the Headmaster?” Blake was the one who answered her question. “He was the Transfiguration teacher only when he was elevated to Headmaster status.” He then employed Dumbledore, who went from Transfiguration to Defence before back to Transfiguration until he became Headmaster. “Hogwarts made that decision, when the previous Headmaster stepped down, it went straight to Dippet, he gained control over the wards and was appointed Headmaster, by Hogwarts herself.”

“The wards? Dear merlin! Severus are you well?” Filius asked, eyes wide, gaining control over the wards unexpectedly…it must have been terrible and painful indeed.

“I’m fine,” Severus reassured the Ravenclaw head of house, truth be told, he’d barely registered the pain or the presence of the wards with his worry and fear over Blake. He’d only started to become aware of it when Blake actually started to heal, started to get better.

Minerva remained quite close-lipped over the entire thing, watching everything through narrowed eyes. She’d worked at Hogwarts for decades, working her way up the food chain so to speak, almost killed herself to prove she had what it took. Worked more so due to Dumbledore’s frequent trips to the Ministry or the international conferences he attended.

It wasn’t fair, she was utterly heartbroken that she had not received the Headmistress position. A
position she had worked her ass off to get when the time came. It irked her too that Severus got it because he didn’t care about the students, didn’t want to be there, had detested teaching.

“First things first, the role of Head of House for the Slytherins, I’d like to pass to Professor Slytherin, if he should desire to take on the role.” Severus informed them, getting to the crux of the meeting. He wasn’t going to spend hours listening to them gossiping. He’d get it done and get Blake back into bed for rest. There was nobody else he would trust more with his snakes, perhaps except one other professor, who would be offered if Blake did not accept the position.

“I’d be honoured,” Blake nodded once, agreeing to the position despite his short time working at Hogwarts. Better still, he knew Severus wasn’t doing this because of their recent turn from friendship to partnership. Severus wouldn’t place his snakes lightly in anyone’s care, regardless of whether he was sleeping with them or not.

Severus nodded curtly, pleased that Blake had agreed, knowing he’d put them into good hands. As Headmaster, he could not be the Head of Slytherin house, it would be too much for any one person to take on and could cause prejudice. “As for you, Minerva, I’m afraid you’re going to have to choose between being Deputy Headmistress and Head of Gryffindor house.”

Minerva went pale, shock lancing through her at the ultimatum. “W-what?” she managed to rasp out, once she was capable of speech again.

“It’s against the bylaws set forth by the founders, in Hogwarts charter.” Blake explained his tone softening a little. “Both Head and deputy head cannot, and should not be the Head of any of the founders houses. Dumbledore broke the rules by allowing you so many jobs, which stretched you much too thin to give the care the students needed of you.”

“Excuse me?” Minerva straightened, nostrils flaring at the slight she felt on her character.

“How often do you help your students with their homework?” Blake asked suddenly, a knowing look on his face, “How often do you offer them reassurances their first week at Hogwarts? How often do you spend with students that are struggling and help them as you’re supposed to? Do you even know the first thing about your students home lives? You don’t because. You. Are. Never. There. For. Them.” enunciating the last sentence heatedly, aching but refusing to stop until he got his point across.

Minerva immediately began to flounder and fluster over the questions Blake was asking her.

“As their Head of House it is your duty, a duty as temporary magical guardian to ensure they do the best they could. It’s what Head of Houses’ were implemented for.” Blake continued on undeterred by her spluttering red face. “You’ve failed every single aspect of what being a Head of House entails.”

“It’s not my duty to help them with their homework!” Minerva managed to get out through clenched teeth.

“Pomona? Filius? Severus?” Blake waved his good arm, theatrically giving them ‘the floor’ so to speak.

“I help my students in the common room for one hour Monday through Friday, and two hours on Sunday afternoon. If they’re really struggling I give them private tutoring but only if I believe they need one-on-one attention.” Filius informed the room bluntly, the silence was almost stifling. That wasn’t including what he did for the charms after school club, which was quite popular.
“I myself offer up the same services, but only Monday through Friday, the weekend I spent tending to the plants barring no emergency.” Pomona replied, her arms wrapped around her ample belly. “A few even offer up their time to help, it helps them understand plants more in the process…”

“I normally spend two hours each night in the common room with my students, every day, including the weekends.” Severus confessed, “I not only help them with their homework but ensure they are up to standard when it comes to their Defence lessons, not something I had to continue this year…thankfully, otherwise I do not think I would have had the time to give them the adequate help they needed.” His spying duties couldn’t be put on hold, especially if he’d wanted to live to see another day.

“The only one-on-one time my ward has ever had with his Head of House was this year, during his career day interview.” Blake explained blankly, “No other help has ever been offered to him OR any other Gryffindor student. Hermione Granger did something despicable…because she felt she had nobody else to turn to.”

That certainly got everyone’s attention, all of them talking all over one another to find out exactly what the girl had done. All variations of ‘what’s happened? what’s she done?’

“She obliviated her parents and sent them off to Australia,” Blake informed them coolly.

“But that’s insanity,” Filius blanched, “Australia is notoriously difficult to get into, one little wrong turn…”

“She would never do such a thing,” Minerva immediately retorted hotly, refusing to believe her star pupil would be so silly.

“Which is exactly what happened, with the magical urge to leave still propelling them, they won’t return to their home.” Severus interjected, completely ignoring Minerva. “What we have found out so far is that they were NOT granted entry into Australia and were escorted back to Luton Airport, since then they’re dropped off the map. The money they had I estimate had to have run its course six months ago, that’s if they were smart and spent fugally. Not to mention how they’d feel mentally, with a unexperienced Witch rifling through their memories changing things she wished.”

He had assumed they were going to correct her actions on their own, but Blake had brought it up, so evidently not.

“When did you find out about this? And how is it the Ministry don’t yet know?” Pomona questioned, clearly struggling to accept what such a clever girl like Hermione Granger had done.

“Summer holidays,” Blake confessed, pinching the bridge of his nose, “She’s a bright girl, I didn’t want to see her future destroyed over this. Hoped I could get through to her, make her see the ramifications of her actions. Get her parents back to normal and allow them to punish her as they saw fit.”

“I was informed, in due course, and both of us have been looking for the Grangers, to no avail.” Severus sighed, “We may need to use the Aurors resources that they can bring to bear against this mystery. The longer the Grangers are missing…the worst it will get for her.” Which was true enough, the Unspeakables might be able to come up with a way to reverse the damage that isn’t known by the general population.

“You have it wrong, Ms. Granger is too smart to do something so utterly foolish,” Minerva retorted in a clipped manner.

“Right, because we’d waste both our times coming up with ludicrous fairy-tale that could be
completely dispelled within a few moments? Haven’t you seen just how tense and run down the
girl has been this year?” Blake asked incredulously, and this was her Head of House.

“It’s an important year,” Minerva blindly protested.

“Indeed,” Blake sighed, giving up with a shake of his head, glancing at the other teachers with a
look that said, this is what you have to put up with? She was very similar to Hermione, who
absolutely refused to see anything she does as wrong. The ‘greater good’ came into play often
enough to sicken him.

“Slughorn has graciously offered his services as Potions Master while I line up interviews for a
new Potions Professor for the new year.” Severus elected to continue on the faculty meeting,
keeping to what was meant to be discussed.

It took an hour to discuss everything that he needed to impart upon them. It was the most tortuous
hour he’d ever had to endure. He regretted deeply making the damn faculty meeting for that night.
He wanted nothing more than to be alone with Blake, they had so much to discuss still.

Unfortunately, he knew the moment they got back Blake would be out for the count. Even now,
while listening intently, Severus could see the struggle Blake was enduring in order to remain
awake and alert.

Which meant they wouldn’t get much talking done until tomorrow.

They had time though, that was all that mattered. A few days ago he feared for Blake’s life,
watched it slip out of his grasp like sand only to return with renewed vigour and more
importantly…with a desire to spend his life with him.

Nothing could dim the new fire and hope spreading within him.

Not even the Aurors who had surprisingly showed up at Hogwarts in the night, Severus reckoned
he knew which of his teachers were responsible. Hermione Granger was escorted from her
common room and out of Hogwarts with tears streaming down her face, begging and pleading for
mercy, that she’d 'just wanted to save them’ not heeding her rights by remaining silent, and
everything she said was going to be used against her in court of law.

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Do you want to see the Aurors escorting Hermione Granger out? What will Minerva choose? If she
becomes Deputy...who will become Head of House for the Gryffindors? will Lucius and the other
Death Eaters manage to evade justice yet again? Or will we see them all being arrested via the
Daily Prophet in the next few chapters? I'm thinking perhaps 5 chapters before it ends...maybe 3-5
or thereabouts I'm thinking :) R&R please
Severus was roused from his sleep, blinking blearily wondering what on earth had woken him. Easing himself out of bed, making sure not to jar or disturb Blake who was sleeping deeply beside him. As soon as the meeting was over, he’d eaten some stew Dobby made and gone straight to his bed, after Severus had offered it up, it would be significantly more comfortable than the couch and the bed conjured for Blake when he was injured had been turned to its original fixture. He’d woken briefly an hour ago to take the potion when the pain came so unbearable it had affected his sleep. Then one thank you kiss he was out of it again.

Aurors, there were Aurors at the doors of Hogwarts, and the school was probing at him. Demanding that he get up and attend to what they wanted. Groaning softly, he plucked his wand from his bedside cabinet and dressed himself, mentally opening the doors, which he could feel grinding, it was the oddest experience of his life. The control he had over the school…the power it wielded, he prayed it didn’t go to his head like it had to Dumbledore.

“Severus?” Blake murmured groggily, even doped up on pain relief draughts he still woke up at the slightest movement.

“I’ll be right back, just sleep.” Severus said softly, watching over Blake to the point of possessiveness. He couldn’t believe it, he had Blake in his bed, soft and pliant beside him, trusting him. It was the most beautiful sight in the world. The fact Blake had risked their friendship on the off chance…he was a braver man than he.

He must have spent too long gazing at Blake, unable to wrench himself away from his sleeping form. Even in sleep though he was a little delicate with his body, even with the muscle relaxant he had added to his potions for him. Hogwarts mentally prodded at him, indicating to where the Aurors were, and with a silent grumbling complaint, Severus left his quarters as silently as humanly possible.

Once his quarters door was shut, he took off, his gait long and smooth as he exited the dungeon and made his way rapidly towards the entrance hall, where it seemed the Aurors had stopped. They remained there while Severus swiftly made good ground.

“Can I help you gentlemen?” Severus questioned as he approached from the shadows, smothering his amusement at the fact both jumped in fright, but at least they didn’t shriek like little girls. Newbies, they had to be, which begged the question…why were they? “We need to speak to Headmistress McGonagall,” the Auror said bravely stepping forward, trying to cloak himself in authority and failing spectacularly. At least with Severus who had seen many men command rooms with just their entrance.

“I’m afraid you’ve been misinformed if you believe that the Head teacher is McGonagall,” Severus said smoothly, “I am the Headmaster of Hogwarts. Appointed by Hogwarts herself.” Then to his disbelief they relaxed their shoulders and nodded in utter acceptance. Pureblood’s they had to be, otherwise they wouldn’t have accepted his declaration. Either that or wizarding raised.

“Headmaster Snape, we’re here to execute an arrest warrant,” he explained, handing forth the
Severus’ heart sank, wondering if they were here for one of his snakes who perhaps had taken the dark mark. He was aware that the Auror force was working overtime to arrest the Death Eaters. Thankfully his position as spy had come forth so no arrest warrant had been issued for him. When he unrolled it he blinked in muted surprise. Hermione Jean Granger was signed on the arrest warrant paperwork. One of his professors must have informed the Aurors immediately after the meeting…and he figured he knew whom. Pomona Sprout.

“I shall need to get her Head of House to escort you to her dorm room.” Severus explained, lips pursed, neither of the Aurors or Severus would be able to get up the girls dormitory. “She is in essence her magical guardian at the moment.” At least until she made a decision on whether to remain HOH or DH.

“Understood,” the second Auror, his ID identifying him as Oswald Orman, now that was a name he was familiar with, a Slytherin, he graduated seven years ago if he recalled correctly. It was good to know he was thriving.

“Follow me,” Severus informed them, stalking towards Minerva’ quarters, which were quite close to both her Transfiguration classroom and office as well as Gryffindor common room. All Head’s of House’s were close to the common rooms for a reason, not that Minerva had cottoned on apparently. The knowledge Blake had revealed earlier had been a surprise even to him. He had not realized just how little Minerva was involved in her students lives. Now the entire faculty was aware of her shortcomings. The professors had been surprisingly silent during the meeting, either too stunned to vocalise anything or they’d been vaguely aware and weren’t at all surprised.

Severus sent a Patronus message to the witch, hoping she’d receive it and be ready for them.

He was very pleased when he noticed that Minerva was awake and at their door as they turned the corner and approached. Apparently the Patronus message had worked like a charm. He almost chuckled at his own response, but refrained, he didn’t want anyone thinking he was insane after all.

“What is going on?” Minerva’s entire body acted like it had been electrified the second she noticed those familiar red robes. Why on earth were Aurors at Hogwarts? And more importantly…why was she needed? Severus was the Headmaster, her presence wasn’t needed she thought bitterly.

“These Aurors need escorted up to the girls dorms in Gryffindor common room,” Severus explained, wondering if an explosion was about to follow. “They’re here to arrest Hermione Granger.” Who was sixteen-years-old, legally an adult in the Muggle world…but not quite legal in the magical world. Although, her trial might not happen until after she reaches her majority depending on what the MPS decide, Magical Prosecution service had the last say whether they had enough evidence or not.

“What?” Minerva shrieked, “Are you out of your mind? She’s underage! A child! What are the charges?” she demanded, looking ready to spew fire from her nose.

“Ma’am, please calm down,” Auror Callum requested, his face pinched as if her shrieking at set off a particularly bad headache. “Your hysterics won’t help your student, who will be arrested regardless of your actions tonight, if you try to help you will be arrested as well.” his tone booking no arguments from her.

“As for her crime, the use of underage magic, the use of an illegal obliviate without due care or experience.” Oswald informed her, it was illegal for someone not practiced and legally given permission to use the spell. You needed permission from the Ministry, and most of those
‘permissions’ were for those that worked in the Ministry of magic itself in the department for magical accidents and catastrophise. It was rarely awarded outside of those working in the Ministry, and there had to be a very good cause. Anyone caught using that spell…well, let’s just say it didn’t bode well for this Ms. Granger at all.

“Minerva, escort them to the dorms,” Severus ordered in annoyance, he was tired, he just wanted to get back into bed with Blake and sleep. Well, that wasn’t entirely true, he wanted something else…something he would get for months while Blake healed.

“You may act as Ms. Granger’s legal counsel,” Oswald added, “She will need you or legal counsel with her when she’s questioned.” Which was true enough, without parents she had no money to afford a lawyer but she could seek out one that came with the Ministry that she didn’t need to pay for.

Minerva puffed up, “I will!” like a small animal trying to appear more threatening, more intimidating. It almost made Severus snort in amusement, but he knew it would just worsen the situation. Any other time he would have been all for it, but right now, he just wanted to get this over with.

It took all of four minutes to reach Gryffindor Common room, and right away it became apparent there would be no need for Minerva’s presence. Severus wished he’d known that before waking her up. Although, there was no getting out of telling her one of her students had been arrested. It just meant he wouldn’t have had to interact with her at all.

Whispered started up immediately upon the Aurors arrival, all of them gossiping on what they could be there for. All of them blatantly staring at the Aurors, eager to hear and see what was about to happen.

Severus pursed his lips, giving Minerva a pointed look, it was well past curfew. Every single one of them should be in bed, should be sleeping. Yet here they were, it was the same thing teenagers did when their parents let them run amok.

“This Students go to your Dorms immediately!” she shrilly demanded, “Ms. Granger, remain a moment,”

Hermione’s eyes widened, panic hidden within those warm brown eyes. She did remain outwardly calm, perhaps assuming wrongly that it couldn’t have anything to do with what she did. she’d gotten away with it for an entire year almost now, so her confidence wasn’t exactly misplaced.

The students did not heed McGonagall’s demand, at least not straight away, “Do not make me begin taking points, GO NOW!” annoyed beyond measure that they were not doing as she asked, especially in the presence of Aurors for Merlin’s sake.

“Hermione?” Ron asked, gazing at her in silent concern, he knew what she’d done, and knew there had to be a good reason the Aurors were there…it wasn’t good. He wasn’t the smartest person in the world…but he wasn’t utterly stupid.

“Just head up Ron, I’ll see you tomorrow,” Hermione answered, staring at the Aurors, but they gave nothing away.

“Come on, Ron,” Ginny said, propelling Ron towards the boys dorms with a shove, as everyone eventually left.

Severus could hear them crowding just out of view, listening. Typical teenager behaviour, he did
nothing to deter them. Being a little bit too vindictive, but hey, it would be a learning experience.

“Hermione Jean Granger you’re under arrest for the illegal use of an obliviate, the use of underage magic, you do not have to say anything…but it may harm your defence, when questioned in court of law. Anything you do say will be used against you, do you understand your rights?” the Auror explained, flicking his wand and Hermione’s arms were bound, preventing any harm coming to him and his partner or anyone in this room.

“WHAT? No! you can’t!” Hermione protested, struggling when the Auror advanced and grasped a hold of her arm. “I have exams to study for! I can’t be arrested right now!”

Severus closed his eyes, embarrassment and disgust warring within him. How could someone so bright be such an idiot? There was no denying that Granger was smart…but it was apparently only to a certain extent. Merlin help him, and save him from stupid hairbrained idiots.

“Be silent Hermione,” Minerva cautioned her, summoning her cloak, ready to leave Hogwarts with her student.

“Tell them! I didn’t do anything wrong.” Hermione protested still being dragged from the common room, all the students were now spread out across the staircases, blatantly watching the free show.

“Ms. Granger for once shut your mouth before you make things worse for yourself!” Severus snapped, pinching the bridge of his nose. Her grating voice getting on his last nerve.

At the same time Minerva cautioned her, “Hermione,” with her warning voice, not that it worked.

“I had to save them!” Hermione protested, and that sealed her fate. “I didn’t want anything happening to them! They can’t fight back! I had to protect my parents!”

“MISS GRANGER! YOU WILL BE SILENT!” Minerva all but shrieked, as the common room door closed, and Severus could imagine the burst of conversation that happened the second the portrait clicked closed.

Severus winced, Merlin she sounded like a damn harpy. He couldn’t help but wonder if the witch had a harpy somewhere in her family tree.

“But you believe me right? I was just protecting them!” Hermione insisted, twisting to look at her Head of House, desperation lighting up her eyes, giving an insane gleam to them.

“Please, be silent!” Minerva told her, horrified to see the way the girl was crumbling right in front of her. Severus and Blake’s earlier words rattling around in her mind, making her feel deeply uncomfortable and worried.

Unfortunately for Severus, Hermione Granger didn’t shut up, she continued to vehemently protest her treatment. Insisting she’d done it for the greater good, that she had to protect her parents from the Death Eaters who wanted to kill them because she was a witch.

Severus couldn’t have been more glad when they finally, finally, they left Hogwarts grounds. Rubbing his temples, glaring at the group of four, Merlin he’d be lucky enough to get back to sleep tonight after all this ruckus. Once he felt more than saw the gates closing behind the Aurors – it was too dark to really see much of anything out there – he stepped back inside ordered the castle to be locked for the evening once more, before swiftly turning and stalking back to his quarters, calling on Dobby as he did so.

“What can Dobby do for Headmaster Snape?” the House-elf called, quite chipper considering he
must have been resting surely.

“Make sure that every student from Gryffindor are in their beds within ten minutes, any that are not will receive a total loss of fifty points and detention for a week. Make sure they know that it was me who demanded it.” Severus stated, continuing to walk fast, despite the fact Dobby would struggle to keep up. It would ensure that the students knew he would keep his word, and Dobby no doubt would gladly inform him of anyone who disobeys.

“Yes, Sir!” Dobby said, ceasing his attempts to keep up with the wizard, now that he had his orders he popped away to deliver them.

Severus was grateful when he got to his rooms, stripping of his clothes, he slid back into bed. His lips twitching, fondness welling within him, just being back in Blake’s presence. He knew it was pathetic of him, that he was so far gone that it wasn’t even funny. Yet he couldn’t care less, he had Blake beside him, it was all he wanted.

“What’s happening?” Blake murmured, sounding groggy but his eyes were boring into Severus’ own fully aware.

“The Aurors arrested Granger, now go to sleep, my head is throbbing,” grumbling in complaint as he sidled closer to Blake, being careful of his injuries. Sighing softly, he burrowed his nose into Blake’s neck, the uninjured side of course.

“Huh,” was all Blake had to say regarding that particular matter, before he relaxed back into bed. It was a show of proof that Blake no longer harboured any fondness for the girl. Certainly didn’t express missing any particular person in his past, and Severus’ old future.

They would create a whole new future. Together.

Severus dreamt of that future that night, and despite the early rise he was feeling rejuvenated.

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A muted thump roused Severus from his very, very pleasant dreams, confusion swamping him for a moment. Then he lurched up in bed, noticing that Blake wasn’t present, but judging by the heat still lingering at his side...he had vacated it very recently.

A groan had Severus leaning over the bed, only to find Blake lying with a across between a scowl and a grimace on his features. He was quick to levitate Blake, especially when he realized that he had fallen on his injured side. “I’ll get Poppy...” these things were bound to happen from time to time, especially with someone as stubborn as Blake.

“No,” Blake retorted, “I need the damn toilet,” he grumbled, “I didn’t break anything, again,”

Checking the time as he levitated Blake through to the bathroom to use it. A mere five minutes before his alarm would have woken him anyway, it could have been worse he could have been up for hours before required. Standing at the bathroom door, he summoned Blake’s first potion for the day, the strongest one he gets, which would allow him to get about for a bit truly unaided.

He waited until Blake was finished his normal morning routine in the bathroom, face and hands washed after he did the toilet, before giving him the uncorked potion he drank it down before continuing to stand at the sink.

“Have you heard anything about Mrs. Redfern?” Blake asked absently, putting toothpaste onto his toothbrush and beginning to brush his teeth, the lack of sugar as a kid had done wonders, they were
still in pretty good shape.

Severus frowned, “No, I don’t really expect to,” he confessed, the woman wasn’t a student at Hogwarts. Poppy wasn’t legally obligated to inform him of any emergencies. This was a grown woman she was dealing with, a very heartbroken and grieving woman who lost her husband so suddenly and was lashing out. At least she was lashing out at the correct person. “I can ask Poppy for an update should you wish?” deciding to do his own morning ablutions while they were at it.

Blake wordlessly shook his head, spitting out the paste, “No, I’m not that interested,” he murmured, giving his teeth one last quick brush before gargling and spitting. “I was just curious, it was the other way around last time, he lost her.” And he’d never recovered, as long as his kids were safe he honestly hadn’t cared about living. He did it for them. The family was never going to suffer financially, he knew the guy had made a boatload of money doing the work he had done. His wife and kids were going to be finally secure for the rest of their lives, unless she was a big spender. Very big spender.

“What do you intend to do today?” Severus asked, arching his head around to see him, as he did the toilet.

“Find out what I can about the Death Eaters, name the ones that aren’t known and see about making sure they’re taken down.” Blake frowned, “Not really sure how to go about it without drawing suspicion upon myself. It’s not like Shacklebolt is the Minister…”

Severus snorted, he couldn’t help himself, “He becomes Minister?” had Blake told him that before? It didn’t ring of repetition, but after everything he’d learned…such a little inconsequential thing probably flew right by as he processed the more alarming details.

Blake just grinned wryly as he wiped his face, drying himself up, “Ah well, it I can’t think of a way to get them then I’ll just do it my way.” A dark gleam in his eyes, a cold hard promise that he wouldn’t let even the Death Eaters threaten what he’d just designed for Harry. To give the wizarding world better hope for the future, to give them the chance to thrive and flourish…if only they’d grasp the opportunity.

Severus pursed his lips, the knowledge that it might not be as over as one liked to believe made him want to sneer in frustration. Of course, just because the Dark Lord was gone…did not make them all safe, if anything some might be liable to strike out in their own rage. Then again… "I don’t think that will happen, what they learned before the duel, it will prevent them acting up. Too grateful not to be following a Mudblood to care.”

Blake conceded Severus point with a tip of his head, true enough. “Perhaps,” he guessed they’d wait and see, “Where are the Daily Prophets from the past few days?” reading them would allow him to scope out whether there would be trouble or not.

“Under the table, amongst the letters and documents,” Severus answered, things that weren’t thrown out in other words. It’s where he had suggested Harry leave them for Blake, the House-elves all knew what not to touch. And thus he didn’t have to worry about the House-elves rushing off with them. although, here was a copy archived in the library every day, so it wasn’t as if there wouldn’t be one available to him.

A ping alerted Severus to mail, finishing up, he moved towards the fireplace and the shoot that was next to it, which did indeed have a letter at the bottom of it.

Headmaster Snape
It was official, he was the Headmaster of Hogwarts, and everyone knew it. At least everyone within the Ministry of magic did. Still, what on earth did the Ministry of magic want with him? Minerva was still there with her, she didn’t need aid.

“That was fast,” Severus murmured, reading the missive wide eyed.

“What was?” Blake enquired, causing Severus to stiffen a bit before relaxing. Even while he was injured he was capable of being extremely evasive and sneaky, and more importantly quiet enough so that even he didn’t hear him.

“There’s already a trial set for Granger,” Severus informed him.

Blake’s eyes widened, “They’ve already found the Grangers? Damn, maybe we should have called upon them ourselves.” He and Severus had absolutely no luck finding them, admittedly it hadn’t been their primary goal, just a side job. The Horcruxes and defeating Voldemort had definitely been more important.

“There is every guarantee they haven’t yet,” Severus pointed out, it stung that he couldn’t fully trust his professors to keep their mouths shut. Unfortunately, it was asking a bit much, it wasn’t a simple school matter, what Granger had done was…illegal, and he should just be grateful that they hadn’t arrested him and Blake for simply knowing about the matter and keeping quiet. Perverting the courts of justice. It came with a heavy fine and price, that did include prison time.

“No, they’d need proof before they arrested her, which wouldn’t have been easily gotten this quickly unless they found the Grangers.” Blake mused, “Nobody else actually knew what she’d done so they couldn’t exactly confess to knowing what she’d done.”

“You’re talking like they care whether there is proof or not before they’re arrested,” Severus snorted derisively, the Ministry didn’t care for that. Black was a very good example whether he liked the guy or not.

“The people are looking to them far more than ever right now, the panic and celebration isn’t as immense as it was in the past. They’re aware of what happened the last time…and will be watching closely.” Blake replied, “He hasn’t caused the devastation he did in the past, when is the trial?”

“Tomorrow,” Severus replied, “I still can’t believe they’ve put it that soon, it’s unnatural.” They normally took at least a week or so to set up a trial.

“Only here,” Blake shrugged, wincing as he did so, shit, he kept forgetting. Rubbing his shoulder delicately. “Muggles sent people to a court right away sometimes, before either sentencing them or deferring that sentence to later.” The magical world were more theatrical than that, liked to make a song and dance out of everything…including bouts of accidental magic.

“So have you been called as a character witness?” Blake asked after sitting himself down, grinning when breakfast was set in front of him. Thank you Dobby. He was starving, quite frankly he could eat an entire Hippogriff.

“I do believe Filius, Pomona, Minerva and myself have probably been asked to come forth.” Severus replied. “Nobody surely believes I would make a good character witness.”

“That makes sense, core classes, only one really missing and that’s DADA but so many teachers passing through, asking it just stupidity since they wont get a chance to know the students.” Blake mused. “Not for the defence maybe, depending on the person, prosecution on the other hand…” he added wryly, green eyes gleaming.
“So much for getting back to normal,” Severus gritted his teeth, this was beyond the pale! If there was going to be continued disruptions he was going to demand the exams were postponed for a few weeks – which he knew was unlikely to happen – but he had to try if they were going to continue on like this.

“Take them to the Ministry,” Blake suggested, “It would be a warning to those considering other actions and well, frankly a learning experience for them.” it had absolutely nothing to do with humiliating Hermione Granger, Blake didn’t care enough one way or another in order to wish it upon her. At least this time she was going to get her parents back…he assumed anyway.

Severus frowned thoughtfully, the idea was a good one, but there was no way all the students would fit. So, perhaps only so many should go, as many as would get permission on such short notice anyway. He couldn’t remove the students from Hogwarts – even if it was just to the Ministry of Magic – on a whim, you needed written parental consent for such a thing. “Perhaps third, fourth and fifth years? I think only ten at least of the year groups will gain permission before it’s time to go. anyone else would be too far away or uncomfortable about giving their kids the go ahead to attend the Ministry.”

“Twenty of each group, maybe more,” Blake refuted, “Ironically I think more Muggle-borns and Half-Blood’s will attend more so than the pureblood’s.” they wouldn’t be able to help themselves, they’d want to see how things worked in the magical world.

“Yes, the parents will still be in a panic,” Severus conceded, he hadn’t thought of that, many of the students’ parents were Death Eaters. They knew their kids were safe in Hogwarts, but perhaps not so quick to agree to allow them to go elsewhere. “To do this will require more effort than just cancelling classes so that Minerva, Filius and Pomona can go,” the Ministry workers definitely hadn’t concerned the upheaval they’d cause demanding all four of them! This close to exam times! They evidently DID NOT have any siblings, children or cousins at Hogwarts right now, otherwise they wouldn’t have demanded this.

“I wonder how long it will take for Harry to show his face again,” A wicked smirk on his face, it became a full out grin when Severus frowned clearly confused. He waved Severus’ probing expression away, he was not going to tell Severus why Harry hightailed it out of there…he didn’t want to risk things becoming tense.

“It seems I’m going to have to get things sorted,” Severus sighed, wondering why he was contemplating Blake’s idea. It was ludicrous to take so many students to a trial. It was an open one, so the Ministry couldn’t say anything.

“Indeed you should,” Blake agreed, “Sooner the better, after her trial things will hopefully settle down.”

Severus nodded, pinching the bridge of his nose, and stalking towards the door.

“Aren’t you forgetting something?” Blake asked a thinly veiled taunt in his voice, puckering his lips playfully.

He snorted in amusement when Severus did return and kiss him before a moan was wrenched from him. Licking his lips he watched Severus leave with a satisfied smirk and he actually felt like pouting. “Bloody tease,” he grumbled, before eating the remains of his breakfast.

He ended up asleep within twenty minutes, his body still recuperating after his brush with death.

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“Okay, Harry, what’s wrong?” Blake asked the teen, he had been very quiet since he’d slunk in after lunch. It had been over an hour and Harry had barely said more than a few words.

“Nothing,” Harry said, shaking his head, burrowing his head further into the book.

Blake just stared at the book hiding Harry’s face, seriously? He was going to pretend there was nothing wrong? Sighing dramatically, he begun to tap his hand against the armrest, and waited. Tiredness was already beginning to pull at him, and he’d only been awake an hour and ten minutes.

“I want to help the twins start up their own joke shop,” Harry eventually blurted out, flushing red as if he expected Blake to know exactly why he wanted to help them so much. “They’re trying to save up enough buy a place in Diagon Alley, one’s just become available, they’re worried they won’t be able to save enough to buy it before its sold to someone else.”

“Ah,” Blake murmured, knowing they do eventually save enough to buy it, but as far as he was aware, the twins bought it around about this time…they must have done something after leaving Hogwarts to ensure they had enough….something they obviously hadn’t thought of in this time having stayed at Hogwarts. “Third partner or a silent partner?” he questioned, leaning forward, ready to give Harry advice.

Harry swallowed, relief that he wasn’t just being dismissed, “Um…what’s the difference?”

“Third partner means everyone will know you’re part of the shop. Silent partner is a piece of the business and nobody knowing you’re part of WWW.” Blake explained, “You’ll get the same percentage either way.” He hadn’t in his time of course, he hadn’t wanted anything in turn for giving Fred and George the tri-wizard winnings.

“You know…they succeed?” Harry asked, tone hopeful and perking up, Blake knew their name! They’d only just came up with it. Weasley Wizarding Wheezes.

“For a while before the war got too severe and they had to abandon shop,” Blake explained with a grim look. “That won’t happen this time, but what will happen is you’ll sign a contract getting a percentage of the shop.” It did well enough that it would be a very sound investment for him.

“Oh,” Harry murmured before brightening up, nodding eagerly, “Okay!” any time spent with the twins was one well spent.

“Is there anything else bothering you?” Blake asked, wanting this done with while Harry was in a chatty mood.

Harry vehemently shook his head, no.

“You can talk to me about anything, Harry,” Blake stated, “Nothing you can say will be used against you,”

Harry swallowed, looking entirely too conflicted before he blurted out, “I like the twins,”

“Yes, everyone happens to like them,” Blake said, staring blankly at him.

“No, I mean I really like them,” Harry whispered, staring down at his hands, entirely too conflicted.

Blake blinked before his eyes widened a little, okay, that hadn’t happened before. Then again, he’d become very close to the twins, during the summer and remained so, despite different years and classes, during the school term.
“As in both of them,” Harry said, cheeks flaming red.

“They are identical twins, it makes sense,” Blake said slowly and carefully, not wishing to land on a mine, “There’s nothing wrong with being attracted to two people you know. The twins are bi, they don’t care for gender,” even though George had married Fred’s girlfriend, he reckoned it was more for companionship and closeness to someone who had known his twin the way he had. Things had obviously changed drastically.

Including Fred’s death.

“I can’t just ask to date both of them!” Harry said, sounding scandalised.

“Oh? Why not? It’s hardly illegal in the magical world,” Blake said wryly, “If you like them both Harry, tell them, and decide together what you’d like to do.” Neither were dating at the moment. “Don’t wait until they’re leaving or worse…dating someone else. Trust me, life can be way too short…Fred died in two years in my time…George never recovered from that loss, not fully, just tell them how you feel. Don’t waste your life on worries and fears…the worst that can happen is them telling you they aren’t interested. You can go back to being friends and you can get over them and find someone interested in YOU.”

“But Incest…” Harry blurted out, eyes wide.

“Sirius Black’s parents were cousins, plus, nobody is asking the twins to have a sexual relationship with each other…just you,” Blake cut him off before anything more from the Dursley’s twisted belief’s became too apparent.

Harry’s face went bright red in the matter of fact way Blake was talking. “You’ve no room to talk! You’ve wanted Severus for ages and never made a move!” he protested, trying to get the heat off himself.

“Yes, I did, but I had no idea whether I would survive…Harry, and the last thing I would have wanted to do was leave a partner grieving for me.” Blake said softly, “Life is too short. Talk to them. I think you’ll be surprised…”

Harry nodded solemnly, the future where Blake was from wouldn’t happen, but it didn’t make him any less right or knowledgeable.

“Talk to them about how you feel first before you bring up the possibility of becoming a partner in their business.” Blake cautioned him, “Bring them down after dinner, I’ll have my lawyer write up a contract now.” Hopefully Harry would heed his advice, he might be too young and naïve to realize showing them the contract then telling them how he felt might make things seem as if he was doing this in turn for a relationship. Not that the twins would think badly of Harry of course, but just to be on the safe side.

Harry nodded again, looking as if an entire weight had been sloshed from his shoulders.

“Go on, I’ll see you after dinner.” Blake said quietly, smiling a little, exhaustion weighing him down again, he knew he’d be asleep again within minutes.

“Okay, I’ll see you later,” Harry said, sounding much more chipper than when he’d slunk into the room looking worried and depressed.

“Bye!” Harry said, before leaving, determination radiating from every pore of his body.

He was going to take Blake’s advice.
So will it be Fred/George/Harry or will Harry have his heart broken for the first time? Mpreg (mere mentions in the last chapter) or adoption? What about Severus/Blake? OR will they just spoil Harry's kids and have none of their own since they aren't exactly the friendliest of people? As for the idea to have them at the trial not my own it was suggested :D and the idea was a good one! :D R&R please!
Chapter 46

The Games They Play

Chapter 46

Surprisingly, there were very little excitement in the student body when it came to attending an actual court trial. Whether it was because it was Hermione Granger…or just a general disinterest. So, Severus only had a dozen students sign up to attend it. He was a man of his word, and the students WERE attending classes, for those core ones when the professors are unavailable, quizzes and the library. They’d had their days off and fun, he refused to allow them to do so more than they had. For many it was an exceptionally important year, he knew not all students were well off enough to allow their children to take exams in the Ministry. He had been one of them.

Most of those students were attending for Hermione, rather than the excitement of a trial.

Unsurprisingly, Blake had elected to attend, despite his injuries, in fact he’d been in contact with a lot of people within the Ministry. Written letters for now, informing his contacts – how he had them Severus did not know – of the Muggles’ capabilities, and how they shouldn’t be underestimated. That if they weren’t careful, magic would be caught on the CCTV cameras and the damage would be widespread and immense enough that they wouldn’t be able to control it at all. Going into great details about everything the Muggles could do, including their weaponry and how vast their CCTV is, and how they should make the general magical population aware to prevent exposure.

It was one of the decisions he’d came to when it became apparent he’d returned to the past. Oddly enough, there were dozens of legislations from people he hadn’t spoken to all doing the same exact thing. Including Lucius Malfoy of all people, which was a surprise. Unless his contacts were getting others in on it…perhaps they had failed to make any impact and were set aside, it would be the wrong move to make. So, he was going to have to fully immerse himself in the political world to ensure that it was passed.

The Muggles were the next biggest threat to the Magical world now.

One that Blake was determined would not come to pass.

“Sit down before you fall down,” Severus grumbled, as he eased Blake onto the benches, the other faculty members were already there. Including a very tense Minerva, who looked ready to explode any given moment. “Were Ms. Granger’s parents found?” he asked his Deputy Headmistress, a decision had yet to be made, but Severus wasn’t going to push for an answer until this was done.

“Yes,” Minerva stated curtly, not even glancing Severus' way.

Severus frowned but let it go, for now, quite frankly though, he was not going to put up with it long term. He wasn’t going to endure her attitude for the rest of her years at Hogwarts. He was quite rightfully worried that she would hold a grudge and just make life more difficult for all of the faculty.

“Huh, where exactly where they?” Blake asked, curious despite himself, he and Severus had been searching for near enough a year, on their own admittedly, without any help from the outside. Of course, the Aurors had found them very quickly and easily.

Minerva glared at Blake, “I do not know,” was her curt reply.
Blake’s brows rose in surprise, Merlin, if looks could kill…he’d be six foot under. Damn, whatever stick she had firmly lodged up her arse, she better get it out soon. Severus wasn’t going to allow her to get away with half the shit Dumbledore did.

“What do you think will happen?” Blake pondered, as the Minister began to call out loudly, naming everyone of importance of the trial from his own name right down to the scribe.

“I honestly couldn’t say,” Severus admitted, the Ministry went from one extreme to the other…there was no keeping up, truly it was all a matter of what the Minister himself was deciding. Bagnold had sentenced people to Azkaban without trial…Fudge was…just as bad, having people kissed without trial, they could only hope to have truly decent Ministers now and in future. Ones with their heads on straight.

Blake just nodded, a knowing look gleaming in his eyes, and honestly it didn’t surprise Severus the slightest that he might be thinking along the same wavelength as him.

“The Wizengamot don’t look impressed however,” Severus added, as he glanced back, observing them, they were still shaking their head as they read through everything pertaining to the case they were about to oversee.

Blake looked himself, wincing a little, it didn’t bode well for Granger at all. “Well, it is a highly restricted piece of magic…” and for good reason, he just didn’t get how she could be so stupid as to perform that spell. Surely, like all other times, she would have researched the hell out of it, and realized it wasn’t what she wanted?

“Bring in the accused,” the Minister called out, his voice quite soft and soothing, despite his looks and demeanour.

This brought Severus and Blake out of their thoughts as they situated themselves correctly. You would not think it had been such little time since she was taken from Hogwarts. Gone was the smug superior witch, gone was the desperate to be understood and applauded for her actions…in place was someone who was so utterly terrified. Her brown eyes were wide and fearful, terror written across her face, pinched as it was.

She was seated down, looking smaller than anyone had ever seen her.

“Hermione!” Ron called out, giving her a strained smile, letting her know he was there for her.

“You’ll be fine, you did the right thing!” Ginny declared, nodding encouragingly.

“Be silent!” Molly hissed at her children, watching Hermione with sad eyes, she unlike her children understood the reality of what would become of Hermione. It was a sad day really, if only the girl had come to her, she would have done something, installed them in Grimmauld Place…or asked Sirius at the very least, anything that would have stopped Hermione’s crazy plans. “They will throw you out,” he warned them when they opened their mouths, she was surprised nobody had said anything yet. Eyeing the twins and Harry, they were sitting a bit too closely for proper.

Severus was grateful Molly was there for once…to control her odious children.

“Your name and address,” Madam Bones asked of Hermione.

“Hermione Jean Granger,” Hermione informed them before she rattled off her old address, which wasn’t quite right, she didn’t live there anymore.

“What age were you as of July 14th?” Madam Bones continued, the entire wizengamot were silent
as they watched Granger with a gimlet glare. Furious with the girl for her serious disregard of magic and the restrictions.

“I turned Sixteen on the 19th of September,” Hermione explained, her birthday was during her Hogwarts months.

“You performed the Oblivion charm on your parents on July 14th is that correct?” they only knew because they’d performed the necessary spell upon her wand to find her spell usage. Which had been immense, they spent hours trolling through it to get to the needed spell.

“Yes but you don’t know the circumstances be…” Hermione tried to protest.

Much like Harry, she wasn’t allowed a word in edgewise.

“A yes or no answer is all that’s required,” Madam Bones stated firmly, underage magic wasn’t to be taken lightly at that age nor was her spell usage.

“Yes,” she replied, sounding disheartened.

“You performed underage magic, while at home for the summer holidays?” Madam Bones continued, but she wasn’t as relentless as the others had been during Harry’s trial.

“Yes,” Hermione admitted.

“How did you succeed without alerting the Ministry to the underage magic restriction?” Madam Bones demanded, and that was their biggest concern.

“I did it without my parents noticing, I wasn’t in the same room as them so I didn’t exactly perform magic in front of Muggles,” Hermione said, a small smug glimmer in her eye, that she’d succeeded where everyone had failed. “I also removed the trace from my wand while I was at Hogwarts before I returned home.” Something notoriously difficult to do. She’d beaten out the restrictions that got people found out for underage magic.

Blake inhaled sharply, surprise bursting through him, that she hadn’t done in his time.

Amelia stared in disbelief, she removed the trace? Merlin help her, she’d well and truly screwed herself. She’d broken so many laws that it was boarding on incredulity that she’d gotten away with it for so long. The fact that they could see despite her worry how proud she was of herself…did not bode well for her at all.

“Dear Merlin!” Molly blurted out, staring in horror at what the girl had just confessed to. She should not have done that, she’d just dug herself further into her own grave. Her words were drowned out by the loud buzz that went around the Wizengamot at the pronouncement.

Severus glanced sharply at Minerva, wondering if she was aware. He got his answer pretty damn quickly, she was gaping, frozen in shock, as she stared at her favourite student as if she hadn’t seen her before. Unable to comprehend the full scope of what she’d done. This hadn’t come out in the interrogations.

“You removed the trace,” Amelia said slowly, watching the girl cringe at the looks she was getting from everyone.

“I had to save my parents…you don’t understand! They were vulnerable! Voldemort was back and he was targeting Muggles!” Hermione once more pleaded her case. “I wasn’t going to be there to take care of them.”
“A yes or no answer!” Amelia Bones stated firmly, she sympathised with her, she truly did, but she had other ways to ensure their safety. What she had done was diabolical.

“Yes,” Hermione cried out, “But I had to keep them safe!”

“Do you know the penalty of using the Obliviation charm without the necessary credentials?” Madam Bones continued.

“No,” Hermione confessed, brushing her unusually bad bushy hair aside, a nervous tick she’d developed.

“Do you know the penalty for using underage magic wilfully without any lives being in danger?” Madam Bones then asked.

“You could be expelled from Hogwarts school of witchcraft and Wizardry without the hope of attending another school,” Hermione answered, a classic textbook answer.

“You were willing to risk your magical education, your magic, in order to use that spell and wilfully perform underage magic?” Madam Bones then asked.

Hermione suddenly found the floor entirely too fascinating.

“Ms. Granger?” Madam Bones prompted.

Suddenly she straightened, “I’d do anything for my parents.” She declared strongly. So sure that she was in the right and that everyone would see it her way. She was protecting her parents and everyone else would have done the exact same thing.

“Why not explain it to your parents and have them move?” Madam Bones questioned, something that had plagued her since the case landed on her desk.

“They wouldn’t have moved,” Hermione declared, “They aren’t afraid, and they have their own business practice, and wouldn’t abandon their patients.”

“Why not go to an adult and find out if there were other ways to protect your parents and let them remain where they were?” Madam Bones asked.

Hermione licked her lips, “Who? Nobody cares about Muggles…” a lick of truth in her statement there.

“Your head of house, your best friends parents…your teachers…or even the Ministry to enquire on how to keep them safe?” she listed off things she could have done, that she should have done.

Hermione shook her head, “They would have just insisted that my parents would be fine, stopped me doing what I had to do to protect them. and the Ministry wasn’t even acknowledging Voldemort’s return when I did it. You were all burying your head in the sand when it came to the true danger.” Glaring at them as if daring them to refute her statement.

Minerva slumped, as though any remaining energy had been sapped from her. Merlin help her, everything Severus and Blake had said during that staff meeting circling her mind. How could they think she wouldn’t give all to protect them? She cared for them, loved them in her own way…how could they be blind to that? She was utterly horrified that Hermione did not believe she could come to her about anything. She’d certainly sought her advice about the trial.

“You were aware that such spells are known to be irreversible, correct?” Madam Bones asked,
continuing to question the girl.

“Nothing’s irreversible,” Hermione said, “Magic is always expanding, it should have been easy to find a counter-spell.”

Everyone noted the ‘should have been’ unsurprisingly.

“Luckily for you, the Unspeakables just happened to have a counter-spell to your foolish actions, otherwise your parents would have died,” Amelia stated curtly.

Hermione blanched, “What?” shock coursing through her.

“Ms. Granger…you are in no way qualified to cast the spell, root around in someone’s mind let alone two at the same time and remove all their memories and force them to go somewhere they fundamentally wouldn’t wish to go!” Madam Bones shouted sharply, “Their continued need to remain away from Britain had them living in France in hotels, unable to put down roots because they still wanted to be in Australia, their funds ran out months ago! They’ve been living in shelters, half starved and half out of their mind missing something but unable to remember what!”

Hermione burst into tears, as the reality of what she’d done came crashing down upon her.

“They’re currently in St. Mungo’s recovering and aware of what their daughter has done. Electing NOT to press charges…but unfortunately for them, they don’t get a say in whether you are punished or not.” Madam Bones declared, staring at the girl sternly, she’d seen the girls parents, they were devasted.

“I didn’t…I didn’t want that to happen!” Hermione said through heaving sobs, “I just wanted to protect them.” staring at them all through her messy hair, pleading with them to believe her.

Ginny glared at Fred and George, what on earth were they doing? They were practically molesting Harry right there in the Ministry! How dare they? They were making Harry deeply uncomfortable judging by the redness of his face. She made a move to stand, to protect Harry, to help him from whatever her nefarious brothers were up to. She didn’t get to make a move, her mum stopped her, “But Mum…” she protested, only to have her mum shaking her head at her.

“Regardless of your intent, you were aware of the consequences before you began,” the Minister put forth, “Your honest will win you some points, Ms. Granger, but the consequences will be severe. Anything you wish to say in your own defence… speak now,” there was no need to be cross examined.

Hermione wiped away her tears hastily, clearing her throat, “I understand that I was underage, I understand that I was wrong. I did what I did out of the greater good. My parents were vulnerable and I didn’t want to risk getting a black letter from the Ministry informing me that my parents were dead. I didn’t know who to turn to, I felt as though I had nobody I could turn to. It was for the greater good.” She insisted, ending her statement, looking around the wizengamot looking for a friendly face in the crowd. There wasn’t one except for Ron and Ginny. Even the other students who had come to the trial were staring blank faced at her.

“Distinguished members of the wizengamot, you’ve heard everything you need to hear, and the evidence has been observed. A decision now needs to be made the wizengamot will now deliberate!” the Minister informed them, and immediately the wizengamot stood, leaving the room, and into a side room, nothing could be heard from within the room second the door was secured behind the last one.
“How long is this going to take, mum?” Ginny asked, looking bored now that the ‘spectacle’ was now over.

“It can take hours for the wizengamot to reach a decision, Ginny dear,” Molly told her daughter before shushing her.

“What? So, we are supposed to just sit here? where are the others going?” Ginny demanded to know, as the room was all but cleared, even Hermione was being led out, Minerva nipping at her heels.

“They’re probably going to the cafeteria dear,” Molly said, unmoved by the lack of people in the court room.

“Then we should too,” Ginny said slyly, a chance to eat out didn’t come along often, her parents couldn’t afford it.

Molly shook her head immediately, “No,” she stated firmly, refusing to be budged on that. She budgeted heavily to ensure her children always had food on the table and clothes on their backs. She’d never bought herself anything nice in over a decade, but it was a sacrifice she was willing to make for the sake of her babies. She got lovely things for Mother’s day, birthdays and Christmas’ from her eldest children and husband, so it wasn’t as if she was without precious items.

“Come on, mum, our treat,” George said, gesturing for Harry and Fred to get up, “Don’t worry we can afford it.” he reassured his mum, growing up they hadn’t really understood the sacrifices their mum made… but as they got older… they understood all too well, the strain they were constantly under and why his dad worked so long hours. The least he could do was buy them something to eat now and again. “We’ll take something up to dad too.” No doubt he’d be pleased with something other than corned beef sandwiches and fruit from their larder.

“Well...” Molly murmured, caving at the sight of Ginny and Ron’s pleading faces, “Okay, just this once.” She added, firmly. She didn’t even bother to ask them were they’d get the money, when she asked they were extremely evasive. To the point of giving her a headache, she just had to trust that while the twins were mischievous they weren’t into criminal behaviour.

Unbeknown to the rest of the Weasley’s the twins were celebrating the opening of their new premises and flat with their partner. In more ways than one, the twins had thought it was just a silly crush Harry had when they first began talking about it. Especially the way he just blurted it out in the come and go room. After a few harsh words, they began to actually talk things through. Fred and George admitted to Harry that they didn’t know how they felt, whether it was just fondness one has for a good friend... or whether it had the potential for more. With that said, they decided to give it a go, it was what dating was for after all. To see if they had the potential for more.

So they’d agreed, once the summer started, they’d spent time getting to know each other properly.

“You coming Blake...Headmaster Snape?” Fred hollered with a grin, not at all frightened of Blake Slytherin, despite not knowing exactly who he was.

“You head on without us,” Blake said dryly, sitting next to the Weasley’s was the last thing they wanted to do.

“Is that what I think it was?” Severus murmured lowly, watching the twins and Harry leave ahead of everyone else. Pursing his lips in amusement as he watched Miss. Weasley try to wedge herself into the closely joined trio and failing when either Fred or George nudged her out of the way with an unrepentant look on his face.
“Yes,” Blake said with an amused smirk, “Never thought about it myself…personally, but I didn’t come to know them as well as Harry did especially this past summer.” His comment innocent enough that anyone who overheard wouldn’t think much of it at all.

“Interesting,” Severus murmured, “I’ve only ever seen them…” dating girls.

“Oh, they’ve always been rather open with their sexuality, despite Molly’s belief’s.” Blake whispered quietly, “As did all the elder generation…younger ones not so much.” But the others had, had the opportunity to spread their wings, whereas the youngest two had not.

Severus rolled his eyes, “Of course,” he stated in exasperation, not at all surprised to hear Molly’s name come into play. “Perhaps we should go down, it might be amusing to see her reaction then…”

Blake laughed a little sardonically, “I’d rather not,” he admitted, he was in too much pain to endure whatever Molly Weasley might say. His temper might get the better of him. Normally he wouldn’t mind that, but his chest certainly wouldn’t thank him, nor his lungs.

“Very well,” Severus replied, “Do you need a another draught?” sensitive to Blake’s moods, plus, rubbing at his chest was always a dead giveaway. None of it showed on his face, of course, except perhaps a grimace now and again.

“Perhaps a level four if you’ve got one,” Blake conceded, he didn’t want to take anything more potent. At least not here, he’d rather wait until he was safe within the walls of Hogwarts.

“It’s like you don’t know me at all,” Severus teased him as he unrolled the makeshift potions lab he had brought with him. plucking out the requested potion, and uncorking it so that Blake could consume the draught. It was quickly replaced in slot he used for used vials to be washed out.

“Thanks,” Blake sighed, as the tightness in his chest vanished, as the pain eased.

“Ask next time,” Severus stated, “They’re always available, you have nothing to prove by suffering.” Not one for keeping his mouth shut, and he wasn’t about to change even for Blake.

“They are, but I’m not used to having them there to negate any pain I’ve suffered, Severus, just remember that.” Blake informed him seriously, “Compared to what I’ve endured in the past…this pain is manageable.”

“Then I’ll just have to remind you,” Severus declared just as seriously.

Severus and Blake continued to make small talk as they waited, and it didn’t seem like any time at all before the announcement came in that a verdict had been reached and that everyone was to return to the courtroom.

Blake froze when he saw Lucius Malfoy returning to the court room, he hadn’t even been aware that he was there. Severus gripped him tightly, grounding him in the moment, reminding him that this Lucius wasn’t the one from his past, the future. “How the hell did he manage to get out of it again?” his face a stony mask, one he hadn’t used since he first appeared in this very courtroom as a matter of fact.

“He has many connections,” Severus sighed, “There was never any doubt of him going free.” He was too smart, too sneaky, and his family always came first. Grimacing at the tight grip Blake had taken of his hand. “Easy,” he added, any more pressure and he was sure he would break a bone or two.
“Sorry,” Blake murmured, relaxing his hold, while Severus gave a small sound of relief. The door at the back of the court opened and the wizengamot remerged, as the Weasley’s took their seats. Then Granger was brought in at long last, and took a seat, anxious to know what was going to happen.

“Has there been a verdict reached?” the Minister demanded, staring at the chief warlock of the wizengamot.

“There has,” he stated firmly. Turning to Miss Granger, he began, “Miss Granger, we have taken what you said and your age into account, and we have reached a decision, for the next two years you will be without your magic and cuffed, with a suspended sentence of three years, and if during that time you break the law...the penalty will be most severe. You will also be forced to compensate Mr. and Mrs Granger twenty-seven thousand pounds.” How she got it was up to her.

“They decided against a prison sentence then,” Blake stated, “I am surprised.” truly he was.

“Indeed,” Severus said, “At least this might give her hope for the future.” Slim, but nonetheless there, much greater than if she’d received an actual sentence in Azkaban. That’s if there would have been anything left of the girl, Azkaban was no cakewalk, and Granger definitely wouldn’t have fared well there.

“Oh, Thank goodness!” Molly said, hand over her heart, relieved for Hermione.

“Is that it?” Harry asked, he’d been taken from the Ministry straight after by Blake so he didn’t know what was to happen next.

“They’re taking her away to put the cuffs on and explain them and everything now,” Fred explained gesturing towards her, “She’ll be free to go, but where she goes…”

“Is anyone’s guess, her parents might not be happy to see her…”

“Then she comes home to the burrow!” Molly declared strongly. “She can stay with us,”

Fred, George and Harry glanced at each other, relief shining through the twins faces, at least they wouldn’t need to put up with her there. Since they were officially moving into their new flat, it was small but perfect for them.

“Do you think she has no idea she won’t be taking her exams and not able to take them for two years?” Blake pointed out wryly, “That girl is going to have a breakdown when she figures it out.” Which was probably an accurate representation of what would occur.

“She’s not even allowed to take her exams?” Harry asked in incredulity.

“No point, she can’t access her magic, there’s just no point to taking theory exams and leaving the practical, it would mean a fail.” And that was probably worse in Hermione’s mind.

“She will need to take them at the Ministry in a few years, considering what she’s going to have to pay back to her parents…it’s going to take at least an additional year to accumulate the funds to pay for her education…the years are not going to be kind to her at all.” Severus added his own thoughts to the conversation.

“She’s a smart girl, she’ll think of something,” Molly said, “Come, let’s go before she leaves.” Gesturing for her brood to go with her, she’d drop them off at Hogwarts before the end of tonight, Hermione was going to need them all.
“We’re just going to head back to Hogwarts,” the twins proclaimed, and Harry didn’t hesitate to leave with them, giving a wave to Molly and the others as they departed.

“Students, come, it’s time to return to the school,” Severus stated, and as one the students stood, eager to get back to the school and gossip with their friends about the entire experience. With Severus’ and Blake’s long strides, it took less than three minutes to get to the Atrium and Portkey the students back to the school.

Severus and Blake were just about to leave when Lucius Malfoy spoke.

“Of all the people you could have associate with upon returning…Severus was nowhere on the list.” Lucius confessed, staring shrewdly at Blake. “He’s a good pick, you couldn’t have chosen anyone more loyal.”

Severus’ eyes widened, he couldn’t be implying what he thought he was? Could he?

“Congratulations on your win, Mr…Slytherin,” Lucius stated, “It’s been a very long time in coming.”

Blake just stared.

“It was a two pronged spell, it needed more than one person,” Lucius said with a smirk, “The Games we play, don’t you agree?”

“The games they play,” Blake muttered, completely stunned as he watched Malfoy walk away.

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Little bit on the shorter side than usual but the ending was perfect!!! LMAOOOO :D :D R&R please
“Holy fucking shit,” Blake blurted out, the moment they returned to Severus’ quarters. His temporarily speechlessness fading as reality hit him like a tonne of bricks. He could scarcely believe what had just happened moments prior. “What the ever loving fuck…” what…why…how…it was utterly unbelievable. There was no way Lucius had guessed, no, nobody would guess such an unbelievable thing.

Severus passed over a glass of alcohol, already sipping from his, lips pursed worry lingering in his black eyes. “First things first…that is not an older Lucius,” he informed Blake seriously, “Why is it you returned older but he did not? Unless, the older Lucius merely informed the younger one before leaving?”

“You’re right, it’s not,” Blake confessed, “But remember he said it was a two pronged spell? I’ve read about it, but I dismissed the possibility. It was only I who had returned, or I had assumed as much. For the life of me I cannot remember which book from the Black library it was.” it had to have been from the Black library, he remembered reading it while at Hogwarts.”

“Then you have your way of getting an answer,” Severus replied, with deceptive mildness, it’s something that had constantly worried Blake, not knowing how he’d returned. “Get the books, we can look through them and find out for definite.” He didn’t mind wasting an entire afternoon looking through books if it gave Blake closure on another part of his life.

“Kreacher? Dobby?” Blake called out to them, once they both appeared in front of him, “I need you to gather up all the Black books – that have been de-cursed – and bring them to me, you can put them in boxes if it helps.”

“We be doing that right away, Master!” Dobby agreed with a chirpy voice, ignoring the look of disgust on Kreacher’s face at his tone of voice.

“Go on then,” Blake urged them, slumping down on his chair, closing his eyes, he drank the remainder of his drink. He probably should have savoured it, he shouldn’t be drinking at all. After the shock he’d just received, nobody could blame him.

“What do you intend to do with Lucius?” Severus asked cautiously, no doubt the wizard would be ready for any and all assaults. Lucius would know Blake…better than him, and all his moves. It would make the fight all the more worrisome than even the Dark Lord’s.

“If he was responsible for bringing us back here…then he has as much to lose as myself…if he wanted me dead…he would have done so already. He wouldn’t have shown his hand. I can’t say I’m surprised he’d risk it all for family…he’s always ultimately been a family man, doing what he has to in order for them to survive.” Blake confessed, sighing softly, as he rubbed his face tiredly.

“So no retaliation planned?” Severus queried, slightly grateful for that.

“As of yet, no, but if he tries anything…then yes,” Blake stated firmly, eyes gleaming darkly, he was not about to let anyone ruin his new life here. Especially not someone like Lucius Malfoy.

Boxes of books then began popping into the room, as Dobby and Kreacher began to offload them
here. They probably would have been better going to Blake’s quarters to find the book, but neither liked the idea overly much. It meant moving, and Blake had already done as much moving as his body could handle today. Especially using the Floo network to return home, which had jarred him. He really should have used Dobby to get there and back, but he hadn’t.

Severus and Blake immediately grabbed a box each, leaving the others for the moment as they began to browse through the thick tombs.

“Wait, the book I was dark blue, I think,” Blake commented, his mind continuing to mull over what he remembered about the book to try and ease the burden of looking through the entire Black library. He just couldn’t remember even a bit of the title, which would have enabled him to summon it.

“Accio blue books,” Severus intoned, and a dozen or so books zoomed on out of the books, Severus deftly divided them into two. Placing Blake’s on the sofa next to him, so that he didn’t need to bend over to reach them like he did.

For the next half hour, Severus repeated the process five minutes, as more boxes arrived through the House-elves diligent work. All the while working there way through the books, and still not finding what they were looking for.

An hour into their process, Severus finally found the spell that had enabled Blake’s miraculous return to the past. “I have it,” he told Blake, who then promptly banished all the books back into the boxes, and gestured for Severus to sit next to him so they could read it together.

Severus stood and moved over, sitting swiftly, but not too closely, aware of the pain Blake was in. The book was already open at the page necessary for them to read it. The chapter was five pages only, which enabled them to read it in ten minutes, both being diligent.

“Well,” Severus cleared his throat, “That explains why you remained the same here,” and didn’t have his consciousness merging with that of his younger self. Something he was beyond grateful for, he wasn’t the slightest bit interested in adolescent children, even if they had a remarkable and aged mind. He knew without a doubt that he wouldn’t have been able to see ‘Blake’ as anything other than a teenager regardless of what he’d been through.

Harry Potter’s mind was too young for the mind meld to work. His magic too young to cope with the influx that would have seen Blake and Harry becoming utterly insane. Lucius’ age hadn’t been quite as significant as Blake/Harry’s so he’d easily melded with his other self. It confirmed that there was no other Lucius running around out there. Lucius had known while doing the spell that there would be two Harry Potter’s running around back in time.

“He could have killed us both,” Blake sighed, shaking his head at the enormity of what Lucius had been desperate enough to attempt. “My core isn’t exactly light anymore,” Lucius probably didn’t have a speck of light in his core, thus he needed someone like him to anchor to the spell.

Severus shook his head, “No, your core will always have a little light in it, Lucius will have known that. Anyone with a speck of knowledge about you would know as much. Your ability to produce a fully-fledged Patronus at thirteen will have made it so. Especially the amount of times you cast it that year.” And he knew how many times, Lupin had been extremely proud of the teen. He could perform all the dark arts he wished, but casting the Patronus so many times so young will have permanent marked his magic.

Blake arched a brow, “Even after all this time?”
“Always,” Severus confirmed.

“Huh,” Blake muttered, he might know a great deal about magic…but he didn’t know everything and didn’t claim to. “Good to know I’m not suddenly going to fade out of existence.” Apparently, this was for good, at least until he died anyway.

“The pathetic idiot, meddling with time to make money,” Severus sneered, “He could have destroyed the timeline, faded out of existence…instead he thought going back in time was the answer to everything!” Of all the reasons, the selfish, selfish wizard. Admittedly he did one good deed, the person he chose to go back with, had lost his wife and unborn child, he hadn’t been in the country when it happened apparently…and going back he’d simply induced his wife’s labour and made sure she and his son survived.

Orion Black’s father, Arcturus Black, he’d saved his wife Melania Black and Orion, preventing Lucretia from losing her mother and brother in a single day. “Does it irk you that if things hadn’t been changed there would have been no Sirius Black?” he asked him wryly. The book wasn’t a published book, it was personally bound together by Arcturus Black when time changed. It made sense how the Black and Lestrange’s were so immensely wealthy. Not that it had helped them in the long run, the Lestrange name was all but destroyed…and as for Sirius…well, he wasn’t going to like his latest news let’s put it that way. Corvus Lestrange and Arcturus Black had gone back in time, created that spell, that inevitably enabled Lucius Malfoy to do the same with him. Corvus’ and Lucius’ both selfish in their desire and greed to go back, but Arcturus had at least known, him not so much. “I wonder if my not knowing should have screwed up the spell…”

“I wouldn’t be surprised,” Severus stated, “Magic must have sensed your desire to change things, and acted appropriately, a lot of people often forget that magic is sentient to a degree, and is capable of wonderous things.” like Hogwarts herself.

“I agree, it’s the only way I could see it working,” Blake agreed, who hadn’t been wishing they could go back and change things before they got worse? Merlin, every Witch and Wizard would have been thinking the same thing, during that battle it was a damn miracle Lucius had managed to hit him with the spell. Relief that he finally knew what was happening…was immense.

A glance at Severus told him that he wasn’t the only one relieved to finally have the mystery solved and the knowledge that Blake was safe in this timeline and nothing would happen to him.

“The question is…what do we do with this?” Blake asked, it couldn’t be published…do they hide it away or do they burn it? “It’s a beautiful piece of magic, I must admit…” destroying it was awful and wrong on so many levels.

“Lucius must have gotten his hands on this in future…either that or there is more than one copy.” Severus admitted, which was a concern.

Blake nodded, “Exactly,” Corvus Lestrange may well have had a copy of it too, which Rabastan and Rodolphus could potentially get their hands on.

“If that were true…the first thing Lucius would have done was collect the copies, he wouldn’t have risked anything interfering with his plans. There’s no guarantee he even knew about this one’s existence, but if he did, he may have assumed it was safe behind the wards and out of everyone’s reach. Orion was extremely paranoid and warded the townhouse to capacity. If Bellatrix and Rodolphus had passed away in your time…then the entire estate will have gone to Narcissa and Lucius.” If she had even been alive, and quite frankly he didn’t want to think on it, for the only way Lucius would have been this desperate…was if something had happened to Narcissa or Draco, or both.
“I am not asking him,” Blake grimaced at the thought, he was an impossible wizard to deal with, so smug and satisfied, sure that he knew best. The worst was knowing he actually in a weird way owed the wizard. Thankfully not officially, since Lucius had actually needed him not the other way around. Thus he didn’t owe him a life debt. “I’d be more likely to end up killing him.” which was nothing but the truth.

Severus himself grimaced, he tolerated Lucius, as much as he tolerated anyone really. He was an introvert, he wanted friends but couldn’t really tolerate many people and preferred being on his own for the most part. He would say that Lucius had been as close to a friend as he’d allowed himself in life. An internal ping brought him out of his thoughts about Lucius, “Someone’s in my office, I’ll need to go see who it is and deal with it.” Severus stated grudgingly, he was the Headmaster now, it was his duty.

“Go ahead, I’m just going to have a rest, Black’s coming by in a few hours,” Blake murmured, already moving to lie down and rest, Severus stood to allow Blake the room.

Severus arched a brow wondering why Blake was interacting with Black at all, shrugging his shoulders he used the Floo quietly to get to his office, his Headmaster’s office. Blake would be out of it now for a good few hours, he needed the rest, it was the best way for his body to heal from the injuries he’d sustained in the fight.

When he got there, nobody was around, frowning probing at Hogwarts herself, to find out what happened.

An image of the table flashed before his mind eye then Minerva.

Ambling over, Severus sat down and right enough, there was a letter, plucking it off the table, wondering at Minerva’s cowardice. He knew she wasn’t exactly happy that he was the Headmaster, but it wasn’t as if he had been actively seeking the position in any way.

His jaw dropped when the contents written within were revealed.

She was stepping down, entirely. Both as Deputy Headmistress, Head of House and the Transfiguration teacher. This was his notice, she was remaining until the end of the year but that was it, she was going to retire. Inhaling sharply, well, he most certainly hadn’t expected this. He had a shrewd idea what had brought it on though. Hermione Granger’s actions.

Damn it, now he had to find three different positions to fill, Gryffindor Head of House, a Deputy and a Transfiguration professor. Thankfully two of those three positions could be filled internally, within the faculty he already had. That wasn’t all really, he was already making plans to remove Binn’s and have a proper history professor. He also wanted to give Filch a severance package, his position had been one of pity, he was not needed, there was nothing the House-elves couldn’t do for the school.

Sighing softly, well, nothing to be done about that. Truthfully, he did feel better that he wouldn’t inevitably have to fire her. Her actions and reactions since the whole thing came to light indicated that she would have continued to be a problem. This way she got to leave with her head held high and without the students thinking he was forcing her out and rebelling.

Seeing the massive stack of opened and unopened mail, he shrugged and began to plough through it. anything redundant or personally for Dumbledore was put in the bin, anything that would require an answer set on the table and anything such as complaints were set into a folder until the ‘complaints’ were dealt with or investigated.
As he continued to go through it all he begun to realize he was also going to have to have Hagrid removed as a professor as well. Too many complaints about the creatures he was showing the students, too many injuries, more than even he’d been aware of, he had assumed wrongfully that Draco had been the only one injured by Hagrid’s beasts. Instead he had dozens upon dozens of complaints from the Head boy and girl, prefects, parents and some students as well. inhaling sharply, just what else had Dumbledore just swept under the rug? His own incident primarily in mind, with Lupin. How much damage it had done, he didn’t want that for the students here, and admittedly it wouldn’t be as terrifying as a damn werewolf, but trauma was still trauma at the end of the day.

Yes, he had a feeling he wasn’t going to be many people’s favourite headmaster. Fortunately, for his own sake, he didn’t care about being liked. He always put the safety and wellbeing of the students under his care first, whether they knew this or not. Which of course, they didn’t, they just believed he was a hateful old bat. That was one of the nicer words used with him in mind.

The hours passed before he knew it, and he wasn’t even a fraction of the way through the mail that had piled up. What on earth had Minerva been doing? certainly not her duty or her job! Merlin’s sake, correspondence was made to be read not just left there to rot. It was going to take him weeks to get through the mail, never mind how long it would take to reply to them all and this was only a small part of his job. He had a feeling this went right back to before Dumbledore lost his magic.

He was only roused from his tiresome and loathsome job when the wards alerted him to someone entering his school. The image that flashed through him, identified him as Sirius Black. Blake had said that Black would be coming.

He grumbled silently, before flicking his wand, and allowing the Patronus message to send a voice message to Blake, letting him know that Black was indeed on the premises. As curious as he was about the reason for the visit, he decided to continue his work, the quicker he got it done the better.------0

“How’s Harry…how are…er…you?” Sirius asked, sitting down, his reluctance to be in Severus’ private quarters obvious…either that or just reluctant to be anywhere near Blake might be possible.

“Harry’s doing well, haven’t you heard from him?” Blake asked, eyeing Black blankly.

“Not often,” Sirius admitted, although between the mirror communication and the letters…he supposed it could be coined frequently enough, Harry was a teenager after all. He had other things on his mind, certainly not going to spend all his time reassuring his godfather.

Blake’s lips twitched, “Better get used to it,” he said wryly, he was going to find himself particularly…busy with his new relationship. Hell, he would probably be forgotten in the novelty, but it was a good thing. Not just a new relationship but a new business arrangement too.

Sirius frowned, “What’s that supposed to mean?” he asked suspiciously.

“I’m sure he’ll tell you in his own time,” Blake grinned in genuine amusement.

Sirius’ eyes widened, surely he wasn’t implying what he thought he was…no way, Harry would have told him…but would he have? Why would he need to? Had he even thought to ask? No, was the answer to all those questions, he calmed down, he would ask him later, and if he didn’t want to talk about it yet…well that was just fine. Using the techniques his therapist had taught him were helping him a great deal. He felt more in control, less likely to alienate everyone around him.
“Oh, er…the rumours about Dumbledore…is there any truth to them?” Sirius then asked.

“Depends on what rumours you’ve heard?” Blake asked, amused at Sirius’ attempt at small talk.

“That he’s retired?” Sirius replied, brow furrowed at Blake’s amusement.

“Dumbledore interfered with the duel,” Blake informed him wryly, watching Sirius wince, yes, at least he was aware of the consequences. “This hasn’t been made official yet, but he used someone who owed him a favour to try and poison me. The punishment was his death and Dumbledore…lost his magic.”

Sirius’ jaw dropped, before a malicious sneer appeared on his face, “Good,” finally Dumbledore was paying for his interference.

“Snape save you?” Sirius asked after a few moments of silence.

“No, attempted, he tried to poison me, in other words he didn’t succeed, I wasn’t born yesterday, Black, I’ve been around long enough to realize I do have my enemies.” Blake sighed whether he went by Blake Slytherin or Harry Potter the same held true.

“Oh, right,” Sirius nodded, he pondered on saying he was glad Blake was alright, but he knew it would sound insincere whether he actually meant it or not. Surprisingly he did mean it, he knew Harry would be devastated if anything happened to Blake. Perhaps if he’d had half the spine Blake did…it would have been the relationship he had with his godson. Instead he’d acted like a ‘good dog’ and stayed where he was told by the very wizard who held vital information about his innocence from the world.

“Do you know what you intend to do with your life?” Blake asked.

“What?” Sirius blurted out, staring at Blake as if he’d lost his mind. “Why the hell are you asking that?” very uncomfortable with the way that statement was stated. It vividly reminded him of his father, Orion, trying to start dictating his life.

“You are the last of the Black’s, Sirius,” Blake pointed out, “A long prestigious line, surely you’re not going to cut your own nose off to spite your face just because your family wasn’t what you wanted it to be?”

“What and yours was perfect?” Sirius snapped going on the defensive.

“No,” Blake answered slowly, “Harry and I…we are more alike than you can fathom, had a very, very similar upbringing. With relatives that shouldn’t have had a child let alone nieces and nephews.” Managing to keep a straight face.

Sirius shifted, well, that defensive hadn’t gone the way he desired, at all.

“Do you want a family, Sirius?” Blake asked, sitting forward, what had his godfather wanted out of life other than his freedom? It wasn’t something he knew, Sirius had died before he got a chance to know him. “Honestly…do you want a child to raise? Someone to love? More than one someone? I mean you don’t even need to get married, blood adopting a child will prevent the extinction of the Black line…”

“Who’d want to marry me?” Sirius asked bitterly, “I’m marred from my time in Azkaban…I don’t even know if I could have a kid…” over a decade of starvation could have done who knows what to him, let’s not to forget every single illness that had gone untreated.
“You haven’t had a full health test?” Blake asked aghast, wincing a little. He should have made sure his therapist suggested it.

Sirius stared at the floor, gritting his teeth before shaking his head, no.

“My question stands, Siri, would you like a wife? A child?” Blake asked, his voice unusually soft.

Sirius swallowed thickly, flashing back to Harry as a child, he’d wanted it even then, despite the fact he wasn’t ready to settle down. “I’ve always wanted a child…since the first time I held Harry in my arms…”

“Just a baby?” Blake asked, eyes gleaming with soft happiness.

“Yeah, I’ve never really cared about a relationship,” he shrugged helplessly, after watching his mother and father…it was the last thing ever on his mind. Plus, the constant nagging and expectations, it just wasn’t for him, he hadn’t been Regulus.

“So, a surrogate?” Blake suggested, “It would need to be someone not related to the Black’s, someone who doesn’t mind giving up a child at the end of it. Money is always a good motivator but you will need to pick someone. I’ll write a list, interview them, and give you the altered one at the end…unless you’d rather just adopt? But it sounds like you actually want a baby of your own, and it won’t be easy to find a new born to adopt.” Not in the wizarding world anyway, they didn’t have that sort of thing up and running they were quite backwards still.

“Why?” Sirius asked, baffled, why the hell would Blake care.

“I told you I’m a Black, as is Harry, which you know obviously, but he already has the Potter name to continue without the added stress of the Black name.” Blake explained. “And honestly? I think you need someone Sirius, Azkaban may have marred you as you say…but family changes a wizard, and that’s exactly what you need.” Wasn’t that true? He’d taken on Harry and he felt a staggering obligation that he hadn’t previously felt…and coming from someone who had the entire weight of the wizarding world on his shoulders, twice over, it spoke volumes.

Sirius grunted in reply.

“But if its not something you want, I get it,” Blake added quietly, he certainly didn’t want the Black or Potter name to fade into obscurity. One day Harry would probably blood adopt someone into the family, he always wanted kids, they’d always wanted kids…him not so much anymore, he was too old, too jaded, too damaged to raise a kid. The Slytherin, Snape and Prince name might die with him and Severus…who really knew?

Sirius was silent for a few minutes, before slumping, “I want,” he confessed, oh, how he wanted a family of his very own. Months ago he wouldn’t have been in the right headspace for it, but now? With help from his therapist…he was finally growing up, getting better, becoming the wizard he always had the capacity to be.

“Okay, well, I’ll deal with it all so you don’t have to,” Blake promised, he needed something to do while he recovered. He wasn’t spending all his time trying to change all the laws and regulations around the Muggle world, he couldn’t. Otherwise it would drive him insane, plus he knew Lucius was also trying to accomplish the same means.

“I’d like to help, and see Harry more…” Sirius told him.

“I’m sure Harry will like that…” Blake told him, just as the door opened, Severus entered.
“Dumbledore’s awake and coherent,” Severus informed Blake seriously.

“Huh, then I guess we should pay him a visit shouldn’t we?” Blake stated, “Prevent him from leaving Hogwarts…we wouldn’t want him to miss the Aurors visit now would we?”

“Already done,” Severus said with a vindictive smirk.

“I’ll be in touch in a few days,” Blake promised Sirius.

“I’d rather be there…if you don’t mind,” Sirius stated standing up, feeling as vindictive as Severus was showing.

“As long as you don’t mind a long walk,” Blake told him, giving Severus a grateful look when the wizard eased him up off the sofa, so he didn’t need to strain himself. Not too proud to deny himself the aid when he needed it, the potions had long since worn off, and he’d soon be able to take another but until then, he was left in quite uncomfortable amounts of pain.

“I don’t,” Sirius murmured, realizing for the first time that Blake had come off quite badly in the duel with Voldemort. Still, he’d won that had to count for something…many others had tried and failed to best Voldemort after all.

It was why he had been considered the darkest wizard of the age, darker still than Grindelwald.

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Not as long as usual I know but it's the perfect place to stop :D next chapter will be entirely dedicated to Dumbledore ;) so will he get away before the Aurors appear and just disappear live out the rest of his days in hiding? Or will Dumbledore be arrested for his part in the crimes against Blake Slytherin? The new hero of the magical world? Will Sirius and Dumbledore find out that Blake is Harry or will they forever be ignorant? R&R please

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