Horror Of Our Love

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Summary

AU! In a world where Neville Longbottom was declared the Boy Who Lived, Harry Potter grew up in a happy, loving family, but all of that changed when he was twelve; the year he met Tom Riddle. TMR/HP slash. Dark!Harry.

Notes

As a fan of AU's where Harry isn't the Boy Who Lived with James and Lily alive, and the TomxHarry pairing, I've decided to combine the two. Only I'm doing things a bit differently to the typical AU!stories, and by that I mean James and Lily won't be abusive and Harry won't be a perfect, super being. Also, this story will be very dark. Not light bashing, but still, very dark, though it will start as a gray!Harry. The title of this story is from the song 'The Horrors of Our Love' by Ludo, which was the inspiration for this story.
31st October, 1981

Lily and James Potter looked up at the old wizard in shock, not quite believing what they had just heard.

"You mean Harry's safe now?" Lily asked, heart leaping when Albus Dumbledore nodded; her baby boy was safe.

The Hogwarts Headmaster had flooed into their home and told them that the Longbottoms had been attacked by Lord Voldemort. Frank and Alice had been killed, but their young son Neville had somehow survived the Killing Curse, the curse itself rebounding on the caster and vanquishing him.

Albus offered the young couple a reassuring smile, though his eyes weren't twinkling as they normally did.

"Poor Alice and Frank" James uttered, resting his hands against his forehead. "What will happen to their boy?"

"His grandmother will take care of him. Voldemort is not fully dead, and one day he will find a way to return. Her blood will protect him from harm, and I believe Augusta will make sure Neville does not grow up spoiled. His name will be famous in our world from this day, for reasons he won't understand until he is much older, but that can't go to his head."

Lily and James nodded solemnly, a tear rolling down the red-haired woman's face. James clasped her hand, and she laid her own protectively over her stomach.

1st September, 1991

Harry Potter stood in the Great Hall of Witchcraft and Wizardry, looking nervously at the hat which was currently sorting the other first years into their houses. He had to get into Gryffindor, he just had to. He couldn't imagine what his dad would say if he ended up in Slytherin, although he probably wouldn't get a chance to find out; Snivellus, or rather Severus, as his mother insisted he called him, would likely kill him first. Snape was the Godfather of Harry's nine year old sister Heather. He adored the girl who looked much like Lily, only with her father's hazel eyes, but the greasy haired man and Harry did not get on at all.

He winced as the strict looking woman at the front called his name and he stepped forward nervously, sitting on the wooden stool. His world went dark as the hat dropped over his eyes.

He bit down on his lip as the hat's voice filled his head.

" Hmm, interesting. A difficult choice I have with you. I can see you have plenty of courage, but you also aren't afraid to do what you must to get to where you want to be. I can see at the same time you feel you belong in one house, though you could truly be of both. You will be a snake in lion's clothing, as I believe that the best choice for you is...Gryffindor!"

20th June, 1992

A bright smile crossed Harry's face when he spotted his family waiting for him at the platform, having just arrived back in London from Hogwarts. His sister saw him first, and she dashed
forward, wrapping her arms around him tightly.

"I've missed you, Harry" Heather said, pulling him over to their parents, who were stood with Sirius Black, Harry's Godfather, and Remus Lupin, another man Harry was close to.

They all took their turns to embrace Harry tightly, especially Lily who was acting as if she never wanted to let Harry out of her sight again.

They all went together to the Potter's home where Harry told them all about his first year. He told them about his classes and his professors, and how Snape picked on him in Potions just because he knew him already. He told them about Neville Longbottom, and how he managed to stop You-Know-Who, and he told them about his dorm mates, and the girls as well, and how nice they all were. What he didn't tell them was that Snape was horrible to him in Potions class because he couldn't get the potions right. He didn't tell them that when he offered to help Neville, Ron and Hermione save the Philosopher's Stone that he was told he didn't have to worry because they didn't need him. He didn't tell them that as much as he liked the other Gryffindors, and as much as they liked him, none of them were really friends with him. He was always the one who was left out and so often he felt alone. But he wouldn't tell his family any of that; he wanted them to be happy, and they wouldn't be if he told them about his worries, so for now he decided to keep it all inside.

17th August, 1992

Harry was hiding away in a corner of Flourish and Blotts, balancing several heavy books in his arms while his mother was busy pretending not to swoon over Gilderoy Lockhart. His dad and sister had stopped for ice cream, much to Harry's displeasure, and now he was stuck waiting for his mum to get her autobiography of Lockhart signed. On top of the books he needed for school, he also picked up a few others for general reading. He was by no means a bookworm like Hermione, but Lily had taught him the importance of reading from a young age. All the books he had piled up blocked his vision slightly, and so when he turned around he didn't see the blond haired figure. He crashed into the form, dropping everything onto the floor.

"Sorry miss" he muttered, crouching down to pick up his items.

The person cleared their throat in a very manly way, and Harry looked up nervously. The figure had indeed been a man, though from the back the long hair certainly had seemed feminine. Harry presumed this man must be Draco Malfoy's father, for they looked very similar.

"Sorry" Harry muttered again. "I didn't mean to say miss." He looked back down nervously and started to gather his books up when the man dropped down opposite him and started to help him gather them up. They stood together and the blond conjured up a bag for Harry's books.

Harry smiled at him gratefully. "Thank you Sir. I'm sorry for walking into you."

The man simply smirked, reminding Harry even more of Draco. "That is quite alright. At least you have manners. Potter isn't it?"

Harry nodded slowly as the blond's eyes seemed to examine him. His eyes flickered over to his mother and he smirked further, walking off without saying a word. Lily hadn't noticed anything had happened with Harry, only asking later where he had gotten the bag from. Harry just told her a nice man gave it to him to help him carry everything and they said no more on the subject.

When Harry got home later that afternoon, he emptied out all of the books onto his bed. He shifted through them, when one in particular caught his eye. It was an old, battered thing, with a faded date from fifty years previous just legible on the front cover. It seemed to be a diary of some sort, but
when he opened it the pages were blank, with only a smudged 'T M. Riddle' on the first page. It must have gotten mixed up with his books by accident, but he wasn't going to pass up a free book. His mother wrote in her diary all the time, and she told Harry it was a good thing to do if he ever needed to get anything off his chest.

Harry felt he had a lot to get off his chest so he pulled out a quill and set it against the page, nibbling on his lip as a feeling of dread filled him for a moment, disappearing almost instantly.

'My name is Harry Potter' he wrote 'and I can't tell my worries and secrets to anyone else.'

He was going to write more, but as he finished his sentence, the ink began to fade into the page, being replaced with new words.

'Hello Harry, I would be happy to listen. My name is Tom Riddle.'
Two

17th August, 1992

Harry stared in shock as the words appeared on the page, vanishing after a moment. He wasn't quite sure how to respond, when another sentence formed.

'How did you come by my diary?'

Harry supposed that was a way to start a conversation.

'I found it amongst my new books' he wrote. 'Did you lose it or something?'

He had never seen or heard of anything like this before, and he waited with bated breath as his words vanished, fresh ink then showing Tom's answer.

'Yes, this is my diary, but I didn't lose it; rather it has been untouched for a very long time. I was simply surprised that you have found it.'

'But how exactly are you writing to me?' he asked. When the answer took slightly longer to come, Harry panicked a bit, worried he had maybe offended Tom in some way. He smiled when he saw a response come through.

'I wrote in this diary during my time at Hogwarts, and it had been a great source of comfort to me during those years. As I got older, I decided that I wanted to make sure that others had somebody to confide in when they could turn to no other, so I preserved a memory of myself inside the diary, as to help any who came by it, only it seems in all this time you are the only one I've come across.'

Harry hummed in response, although he didn't think Tom could hear him. What Tom said made sense, though he had probably used a seventh year spell which Harry wouldn't understand yet. The way Tom spoke to him though; it seemed like he was lonely, and Harry knew that feeling all too well.

'So are you like a diary that can talk back?' he wrote, just checking for clarification. He smiled when the word 'yes' appeared.

Harry was going to write something else, but more writing appeared before Harry could ask any more.

'So Harry, why don't you tell me about yourself?'

Harry thought for a moment. 'Err, I'm twelve, in Gryffindor, and I'll be starting my second year of Hogwarts in a couple of weeks.'

'What about your family? What are your friends like?'

'I live with my parents and my younger sister; we're all quite close. As for friends...I don't really have many; well none at all to be honest. I get on with my dormmates but not that well. There's five of us, and Seamus and Dean are best friends, and so are Ron and Neville, so I get left out. I met Ron on the train in my first year and we got on really well, but then he met Neville, and Neville's famous, so he ditched me for him.'

Harry felt a smidgen of anger run through him at the thought of Neville stealing Ron from him.
Maybe with Ron he wouldn’t have felt so alone.

'What is Neville famous for?' Tom asked. It seemed strange to Harry that someone would not know who Neville Longbottom was, but then again, Tom was over fifty years old.

'There was an evil wizard a few years ago and it seemed that nobody could stop him. One day he tried to kill Neville when he was a baby, but Neville somehow survived and destroyed the evil wizard. They call him the 'Boy Who Lived' now, and people treat him like he's the next Merlin, but he's not really anything that special.'

Harry supposed he may just be feeling bitter, but being able to rant about Neville freely felt good. The Gryffindors worshiped the boy, while the Slytherins wouldn't let Harry talk to them about him, so he enjoyed having the chance to be open.

'What was the name of this wizard?'

Harry hesitated; he had been told saying the name aloud was bad, but then again, he was only writing it, and he didn't want to get Tom mad; he couldn't lose a potential friend.

'Voldemort. We call him 'You Know Who' most of the time though.'

'He must have been after my time' Tom replied. 'That seems an odd reason for a boy to reject your friendship. This Neville doesn't seem like he deserves the fame for something he did as a small child, back when he wouldn't even have known what was happening.'

Harry outright grinned at Tom's words; he hadn't been won over by Neville's story, so he hoped that meant Tom wouldn't reject him now. He grinned further as Tom wrote to him again.

'You don't have to worry anymore Harry. I'll be your friend.'

24th October, 1992

Harry had spent the rest of the summer and all of his free time out of lessons writing to Tom. He told Tom all of his problems, and sometimes just spoke as if Tom was really there, and the older boy would listen, and tell Harry everything he needed to hear. He was now even more distanced from his housemates than he had been last year, but as long as he had Tom he was happy.

He was rushing to get back to his dorm room from dinner so he could talk to Tom in private. Distracted by the thought of the diary, he wasn't really paying any attention to where he was going until he ran directly into another person.

The person dropped their armful of stuff onto the floor, and feeling guilty, Harry stopped to help them pick the stuff up, much like the elder Malfoy had done for him in the summer.

There were a lot of things on the floor, and as they stood, Harry realised the girl didn't have a bag. She was small, a first year, with scruffy blonde hair and big silver eyes. He didn't remember seeing her around before, but he had spent most of his time focused on a certain book rather than anything else this term.

"Sorry for making you drop everything" he apologised.

"That's quite alright. I could see that you had your mind on more important things" the girl responded. She sounded sincere in her words, and didn't seem bothered by the incident in the slightest.
“Why don’t you have a bag?” he couldn’t stop himself from asking.

“It’s gone missing. I believe that nargles are to blame” she told him. Harry had no idea what a nargle was, but he believed it was more likely to be other students taking her things than some fantasy creature.

“Would you like me to help you look for it?” he offered. She seemed to be an outcast, much like him, and he thought it would be better if they stuck together.

“Oh, no thank you. I don’t mind carrying everything around; that way I can keep an eye on it better.”

Harry nodded slowly, offering the girl a smile. "Well if you need any help let me know. I'm Harry, by the way."

"Luna" she supplied, smiling back at him before she started to walk off, humming happily to herself as she went.

Harry laughed gently to himself before breaking into a run to get back to his bed. He drew the curtains around him and flipped the diary open.

'Tom…guess what? I think I’ve made a real friend today’ he wrote excitedly, frowning when Tom didn't respond right away. Normally the boy would write back instantly.

'That's nice' Tom finally wrote back, and Harry got the feeling it was said rather coldly. He thought maybe he was just being paranoid, so he decided to tell Tom more about her.

'She's a first year called Luna. I think people are bullying her but she doesn't seem to let it get her down, and she seems really nice. She's a bit weird but I guess I am too.'

Once again Tom didn't reply straight away.

'Is everything okay Tom?' he asked.

'I thought I was your real friend' came the response, and Harry realised how Tom had taken his previous statement.

'I meant real as in physically real' Harry answered truthfully. He didn't want Tom to be mad at him. 'I wish you were real’ he added as an attempt to soften the older boy.

'If I found a way to become real, would you help me?' Tom asked, and Harry's heart soared with the possibility.

'Of course Tom; I'd do anything.'

'Well then, I need you to not talk to that Luna girl again' the diary told him.

'Why?'

'Because Harry, excuse me if this sounds silly, and perhaps I am just being worried over nothing, but I fear that if you go making new friends with others, then you won't write to me as much as you do now, perhaps even going as far as forgetting me altogether. I was so lonely before you found me, and I don't think I could ever offer my friendship to anyone else now I know you; but no, I believe I am just being foolish. You should do as you wish.’

Harry smiled as he read Tom's words; he couldn't believe his friendship meant that much to Tom;
he had thought it was just one-sided. Tom had a point as well; if he and Luna became good friends,
then he wouldn't be able to talk to Tom as much. Luna could make friends with anyone in the
castle, but all Tom had was Harry.
'Don't worry Tom, you're all I need. I won't let anyone else ruin that.'
31st October, 1992
Harry looked around his dormitory with a start; he swore he had just been in the library. Another
thing he noticed was the window showed the sky outside to be pitch black, whereas it had been
daylight before. He frowned; he had no idea what had happened, almost like he had missed many
hours from the day.
He checked and found that the diary was still safe. He was going to ask Tom if he had any idea of
what could have happened when he saw that he had red paint splashed over the front of his robes.
He had certainly not touched any paint for the last few years, so how he had some on him now he
couldn't explain. He decided not to tell Tom anything after all; he didn't want him to think he was
crazy.
He shakily changed clothes, afterwards placing a trembling hand on the window as he stared out
into the sky that he never saw change.
8th November, 1992
He didn't know why, but Harry found that he seemed to be feeling weaker as the days went by.
This was now the second time where he found himself with no clue where he had been or what he
had been doing. He thought it would make sense to go and see Madame Pomfrey, but he found he
was too scared to go.
He shifted his weight from foot to foot, unsure where he should go.
"Hey you! What are you doing out of bed at this hour?" a voice called out from the darkness.
He spun around to see Percy Weasley glaring at him. He opened his mouth to say something but
found no sound would come out.
"Five points from Gryffindor. Let me escort you back to the common room Harry; it's not safe to
be out this late" the redhead scolded, and Harry followed him silently back to the portrait of The
Fat Lady.
Percy left him with a scowl, and Harry found he couldn't avoid telling Tom any longer; the older
boy seemed to know Harry was hiding something from him.
'Tom, I don't know what to do. I'm scared' he wrote, trying his best to control the quill in his shaky
hands.
'What's wrong Harry?' the book answered, and the very quick reply gave Harry a source of
comfort.
'I feel weak all of the time, and twice now it feels like I've lost my memories. Remember when I told
you about that night when someone painted threatening messages on the wall as well as petrifying
a cat? Well that same night I ended up in my room with paint down my robes and with no idea
how, and I have a horrible feeling something bad has happened tonight, when I was suddenly in
the corridors…I can't be to blame for the paint and the cat can I? What if I'm doing something to
the people in the school?'


He sobbed and a tear splashed onto the pages.

'Harry, please don't cry; I don't believe you have anything to do with what is going on. It sounds far too advanced for a twelve year old boy; even I wouldn't know the magic involved in petrifying something. It sounds like very dark magic to me. Please don't be upset by this; you're probably having side effects from your magic growing as you do. It's very common and nothing to worry about. Just ignore it and it will work itself out.'

'Really? I'm just frightened I guess…'

'Don't hurt yourself over this Harry. I wish I could be there with you, to reassure you that everything will be okay, but for now you'll have to take my word for it.'

Harry wished Tom could be there with him too.

18th December, 1992

Harry had had another bout of memory loss. He had been inside one moment, the next he was out on the grounds, rooster feathers covering the front of his robes. He brushed them off him in shock and sprinted to his room, ignoring the shouts of prefects as he went.

'Tom…I think I've just killed some roosters. I was covered in feathers, and some were killed before, so that must have happened again. What if Neville is making me do it? Remember yesterday I told you he spoke Parseltongue? People are saying now he's the Heir of Slytherin. He could be framing me.'

'You think Neville possesses the skills that would come with being Heir of Slytherin?' Harry could almost sense Tom's repulsion in the idea, though that did little to comfort Harry.

'He can talk to snakes, but I guess he isn't really good at much else apart from Herbology. That and getting himself into bad situations, but if he isn't the heir, then who is? They say last time the Chamber of Secrets opened, a monster killed a girl. What if it's the same one that hurt that boy Colin before? What if-?'

Harry didn't get chance to finish what he was writing as the dorm room door banged open, and Seamus Finnigan and Dean Thomas walked in, sombre expressions on their faces. He shut the diary and hastily shoved it under his bed covers, having forgotten to draw his curtains in his haste to talk to Tom.

"Don't you know how to knock?" he snapped. The two boys just looked at him oddly and Seamus winked. Harry just scowled further, and Dean seemed to catch onto his mood.

"There was another attack" the boy explained to him. "Nearly-Headless Nick and Justin Finch-Fletchley have both been petrified. Ernie Macmillan said Neville was found at the scene, the day after he spoke to that snake and Justin freaked out when it nearly bit him. Weird, don't you think?"

Harry nodded and drew his curtains shut, shutting out the two boys. The only times they really spoke to him was when it involved gossip, and half the time they would innocently enough repeat the conversation to Lavender Brown and Parvati Patil, not knowing the girls would twist it to use for spreading rumours.

'Two more have been petrified' Harry wrote, lip trembling. If Neville had been found at the scene, then surely he had been the perpetrator, not Harry, but Tom didn't seem to think Neville had it in him.
'Where did you go, Harry?' Tom asked, ignoring what Harry had said.

'My dorm mates came in. They said two more were attacked and Neville was found at the scene, but you don't think Neville could do it, and I don't remember some of what I did today…'

'You're blaming yourself again Harry; you shouldn't do that or else you'll give yourself more worries, and stress can have a negative effect on your health; perhaps that is another reason why you feel so weak at times. There is something bad going on, but you've got nothing to do with it. Let's try and keep your mind of it shall we? Tell me about your least favourite professor.'

'My least favourite…that's probably Snape; I know I've mentioned him before. He's my sister's godfather, and you'd think the way he treats her that he's lovely, but he's always so mean to me, no matter how hard I try. I really do try in Potions because I know it's my worst class, but nothing I do is ever good enough. And then there's Lockhart, our new Defence Against The Dark Arts teacher. Our one last year was evil, but at least he was a good teacher. Lockhart is so up himself.'

'You don't seem to have the best of professors. When I was at Hogwarts I was rather fortunate. My head of house was a very good man. Do you feel any better now Harry? I'll talk to you as long as you need me to, even if we're up all night.'

'Thank you Tom. You always know just what to say.'

28th January, 1993

Harry felt slightly better now that he had been at home for the Christmas holidays. It gave him a break from the fearful atmosphere at Hogwarts. He could still feel himself weakening every day, but he hadn't heard of any more attacks, and nor had he lost any memories.

Despite that, he was still happy to be back at Hogwarts away from his parents, more specifically his mother. She never seemed to give him any time alone, when all he wanted was to talk to Tom freely, but with Lily on his back, he might as well have been at lessons with all the time she took up, so in the end he spent most of his time refusing to leave his room. His father and Sirius thought he was going through a phase and laughed it off, but his mother came up with a range of ideas, ranging from him being seriously bullied, to having an eating disorder, and to being heavily involved with the Dark Arts. Tom found this all very funny.

He was still worried the attacks would start up again, and he was just waiting for something to happen.

He sighed, drawing his knees to his chest. He was sat by the lake, coat wrapped heavily around himself for warmth, lost in thoughts until a dreamy voice caught his attention.

"Hello again Harry" the voice said, and Harry could instantly tell it was Luna, despite only ever speaking to her once; he made sure to avoid her after what Tom had said. "It's awfully cold to be sat out here."

"You're out here too" Harry reminded her.

"I'm going to look for Gulping Plimpies. You're welcome to join me if you like?"

Harry seriously considered it, before remembering his pledge to Tom.

"I'm sorry Luna, not today" he replied, offering her a sad smile. He felt bad rejecting her, but Tom was more important. She didn't seem bothered though.
"Well if you get tired of your thoughts I'm sure you'll be able to find me." With that said she skipped off, and Harry smiled inwardly.

After a while he walked back to the castle, stopping at the library along the way. It was only when he got back to his room later that he realised the diary was missing.

14th February, 1993

It had only been just over a fortnight without the diary, but Harry honestly felt like his life was falling apart without it. Without Tom to talk to, he was once again completely alone, with nobody but himself for company. He searched high and low for the book, but nowhere left any hint of it.

He shut the rest of his classmates off fully; seeing how happy they were with their friends made him miss Tom even more.

He had ended up breaking down a couple of days ago, right in the middle of Potion's class. Snape had been particularly horrible to him, only this time he wouldn't have someone there to tell him why Snape was wrong, and why Harry was so much better than the insults the professor threw at him.

He moped around the corridors as he made his way to Charms class, when a commotion made him stop. Neville Longbottom was sprawled across the floor, a dwarf singing a Valentine to him. The creature had ripped the boy's bag open, and lying clearly amongst the quills and parchments was the diary. He couldn't believe that Neville had had it all along; first of all he had stopped Ron being friends with him, and now he was trying to take Tom too.

It took all the strength he could muster not to grab the diary there and then. If he did that, Neville would certainly know something was up; he was sure the Boy Who Lived would have figured how to use the diary by now.

Harry sent Neville a false smile as they locked eyes. Neville grinned back, a blush still staining his cheeks, and he seemed unaware Harry held any resentment against him, but Harry would stop at nothing to get Tom back.

20th February, 1993

Harry finally had the dormitory alone, with no chance of being interrupted. The other boy's had gone for some chess tournament of Ron's, meaning Harry had the opportunity to search for the diary.

He set to work, pulling everything from Neville's trunk, pulling the sheets from the duvet and pillows and flipping over his mattress. That was where he found it. He grinned as closed his hand over the worn cover, not being able to bare another minute without Tom.

'Tom, I'm so sorry Tom. I didn't mean for you to get lost. I wanted to find you so much' he wrote desperately, almost sobbing in relief.

'Don't worry Harry; we're back together again now. Just promise you'll be more careful from now on; Neville was such a bore to talk to. I missed you.'

'I'm never going to let you out of my sight again Tom. You're my best friend in the whole world. I'll never let you go.'

Harry never noticed that he had been regaining strength until the diary was back in his possession.
Hermione Granger and Penelope Clearwater were the latest petrified victims, their attacks being the last straw which meant that Dumbledore was removed as Headmaster, and once again Harry found himself with a period missing from his memory.

He had played stupid when Neville asked him before why his bed had been torn apart, and the boy believed him, but lately Hermione had been giving him strangely sympathetic looks, and although he didn't want to admit it, he felt a bit glad she had been attacked. More worrying, he now found he didn't care how many more students were attacked, as long as he got to stay with Tom.

27th May, 1993

'Tom, I think I'm going to collapse one of these days. I have no energy to do anything, all I want to do is stay in my bed and talk to you' Harry wrote, ignoring the pains in his hands and arms from his quill usage. The fact it hurt to write should have screamed danger to Harry, but he didn't want to be told to take a break from writing.

'I might be able to help you Harry. Do you remember when I said about getting a body for myself and becoming real?'

'Yes' Harry responded, excitement rushing through him at the prospect.

'I think I've found a way to do that. I need a day or two to finalise everything, but with any luck I'll be able to return, and then I can help you physically. Everything I'm doing, I'm doing for you Harry. Remember that."

'Do anything you need Tom. I just want to be with you forever.'

'It will be forever Harry. It will be.'

29th May, 1993

'Harry, we're ready' Tom wrote. Harry grinned widely.

'Really? You can become real now?'

'Yes, but I need you to do something for me first' Tom replied.

'Anything.'

'I need you to come to the Chamber of Secrets.'

Harry didn't know quite what had happened. One second he was on his bed, staring incredulously at the comment, the next he was in a large chamber with wet stone flooring and many statues of snake heads along it's sides.

"Harry; it is nice to finally meet you in person" a male voice said behind him, and he span around, coming face to face with a misty, almost transparent figure. Harry knew that it was Tom Riddle.
Harry's eyes widened as he took in the tall form of Tom Riddle. He looked exactly as Harry had imagined him, with his handsome features and thick dark hair.

"Tom? Is that really you?" Harry whispered, heart beating heavily in his chest.

"Almost" the other boy hissed back gently. Harry looked at him questionably, and Tom raised his hand and placed it against Harry's cheek. The fingers did not go through the skin like a ghost, but Harry could not feel them either; a rather odd sensation.

It was then that Harry remembered where they were.

"Why are we down here? I don't even remember getting here" Harry muttered, looking fearfully around the room. It was dark and dreary, almost like a stone dungeon.

"You wouldn't have been able to get here yourself, so I guided you here" Tom answered, looking at Harry thoughtfully, as if measuring his reaction.

"But I don't remember-" Harry started, suddenly realising what Tom had just said. "You brought me here and I don't have any memories of it, and I've lost my memories other times this year…” He trailed off, trying to grasp the situation, which was difficult as he could literally feel energy draining from him with every second.

"You said you would do anything for me Harry" Tom said casually, standing by as Harry collapsed to his knees. "I apologise for lying to you; I feared you would back out, but I simply had to make you do all those things so we could be together."

"Nobody died" Harry uttered, wrapping his arms around his shaking form. "Nobody died, and I still got to bring you to life." He froze as a dark thought struck him. "Why am I so weak Tom? Do I have to die for you?"

Tom crouched down in front of him, wiping a tear from Harry's eye with a finger which was starting to feel more human.

"You said anything, Harry" the older boy reminded him, and Harry nodded sombrely, falling forward onto the floor. He turned his head to face Tom.

"I will die for you" he whispered, too weak to raise his voice anymore. Tom looked at him with a strange expression, his eyes flickering with something Harry couldn't understand. "You're my best friend; but please wait with me" he sobbed.

As his eyes fell shut, he felt Tom gently take hold of his hand.

Harry groaned as he blearily opened his eyes, the sound of footsteps echoing outside the Chamber gaining his focus.

He sat up, feeling much stronger than he had in over a year. He shivered; the Chamber was empty, the diary lying on the ground beside him with a large hole ripped through the middle of it.
'Something's gone wrong' Harry thought horrified, trying to find any sign of Tom. 'I failed him; he's supposed to be here now, not me'. He sobbed, drawing his knees to his chest. Tom had been the only important thing to him for the last year. He had been prepared to die for him; Tom had more to live for, but now he had let down his only friend.

"He's in here!" he heard someone yell. "Harry! Harry!"

He looked up, seeing the red-haired form of Ron Weasley rushing to him, followed closely by Neville Longbottom and Albus Dumbledore. He wished that they hadn't found him; if Tom had died down here then he thought it would have been a suitable way to follow.

Dumbledore crouched by Harry, looking him over carefully. Harry ignored him as the old man frowned, looking at him with sympathetic eyes.

The Headmaster's eyes were then drawn to the destroyed diary. He waved his wand over it and smiled, a twinkle coming back to his eyes.

"It has been destroyed" he stated to the group. "He won't be able to hurt you anymore Harry. I'm sorry that I was not able to see what was happening to you before. I hope you can forgive me."

Harry nodded; glad Dumbledore hadn't stolen the diary beforehand.

"How'd you destroy it?" Ron asked suddenly. Harry had thought one of them had done it earlier somehow.

"I don't remember" he said quietly, tears falling heavier from his eyes.

"What is important is that it is destroyed and it shan't be hurting anyone else again" Albus affirmed, helping Harry to his feet and holding out his arm. Within seconds a phoenix appeared. Someone grabbed hold of his hand, and then the phoenix was pulling them away and out of the Chamber, and back into Hogwarts.

They landed in a girl's bathroom, where Moaning Myrtle was sat watching the scene with mild interest. She giggled and waved at them as they walked past, but Harry couldn't smile back. He allowed himself to be taken to McGonagall's office, flinching as he was roughly embraced by his mother.

"Harry! Thank goodness!" she screamed, crying as heavily as Harry was. His dad hugged him tightly once his mum had finished; he wasn't crying, but the stress was evident on his face. He found he couldn't reassure his parents that he was okay, or even listen to what they were saying. He felt so numb, like a part of him had been ripped out. He couldn't bear the thought of never talking to Tom again, and he hated that he had no idea what had happened.

He finally turned his attention back to reality when he felt someone shaking his shoulders.

"Are you alright sweetheart?" his mother asked gently, but fortunately Dumbledore answered for him.

"I believe Harry is suffering from great shock. Lily and James, if you could escort him down to Madame Pomfrey?"

After a number of tests, the nurse declared that he was perfectly healthy considering everything, and said his magic seemed to be different somehow but it had most likely been caused by trauma and that would be the reason for his memory loss. She insisted on keeping him in overnight to monitor him, and that was why he now found himself sat wide awake and alone on a hospital bed.
at midnight. He had refused to speak to anyone so his parents had reluctantly left him, promising to return in the morning with Sirius and Remus.

He jumped as something tapped on the window; it was a large raven, and in it’s beak was a letter. Harry had never seen anything other than an owl carrying post before, so intrigued, he got out of bed and opened the window. He gasped when he saw the raven had blood red eyes, but it dropped the note and flew off before he could get a better look.

He gingerly picked the parchment up, heart hammering as he read the familiar writing.

Harry –

I apologise for leaving you with no explanation. All I can say now is wait for me. When the time is right, I will come back for you.

TMR

9th September, 1993

Harry had thought his third year would have been slightly easier. He thought the promise of Tom coming back to him would keep him sane, but he found that not being able to talk to the boy was incredibly painful. The note Tom had sent him had disintegrated as soon as he had read it, but he was sure he hadn't imagined it.

He had spent his summer thinking about the Chamber of Secrets, and though he couldn't be sure, he believed that Tom may have been testing his loyalty all along and had never planned to kill him. He further deduced that Dumbledore hated the older boy, and that was why he had to leave in such a hurry. Harry didn't know how true his theories were as he had no way of knowing, but they gave him comfort. He didn't know when Tom would return for him, but he would wait forever if he had to.

From his first proper day of Hogwarts, Harry had started to use his free time to sit in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, staring at the sink which led to the Chamber of Secrets. No matter how much he willed it, it wouldn't open, but it made him feel closer to Tom. No girls would use the bathroom now, so he was always left alone.

At first Myrtle had complained about his presence, before she decided to try and make conversation with him. After she got the hint that Harry wasn't going to talk to her, she seemed to talk to the room generally about the hurtful effects of bullies, almost like she understood Harry's pain. If he was truthful to himself, he didn't mind the ghost, but he had no interest in her either.

The other supposed upsides to third year were the facts that his Godfather's partner, Remus Lupin, was now the professor of Defence Against the Dark Arts, and he and Sirius would both be staying in the castle, while his sister Heather had just started her first year of Hogwarts, sorted into Gryffindor as well. Heather, it seemed, was everything that Harry was not. She had accumulated in just a few days a large gang of friends from Gryffindor, Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw. He knew Snape would favour her in Potions class, and she always seem to be full of happy energy.

He hadn't known what to expect in Remus' lessons, but the first one had definitely dashed his hopes that it could be positive. They had been made to face a Boggart, a creature which would shift into one's worst fear. Harry knew that his worst fear would be Tom never returning to him, and not knowing how the Boggart would show that or how he could fight the Boggart over it, he refused to take part, which was now why he was sat in front of both Remus and Sirius, both of whom looked rather concerned.
"Would you like anything Harry? Tea? Chocolate?" Remus offered, but Harry shook his head. Remus pushed some chocolate towards him nonetheless; Harry swore Remus thought chocolate was the cure for everything.

"Why didn't you want to take part in class today Harry?" Remus asked gently. Harry refused to answer and looked down at his hands.

"Remus, leave it" Sirius stated warningly, but Remus argued back.

"We need to hear it from Harry" the werewolf said as though Harry wasn't even in the room with them.

"Why don't you tell me what you think my problem is then and I'll tell you yes or no?" Harry suggested. Remus sighed while Sirius scoffed. Harry didn't like to admit it, as it was rather mean, but he liked Sirius a lot more than Remus. He still liked the werewolf a lot, and he was as good as family, but he was too much like his mother with his worrying attitude. Sirius was more laid back like his father, only James was encouraged by Lily to punish Harry when he deserved it. Sirius never did or said anything negative towards him. Indeed, he always seemed to look out for Harry, even going as far as punching Snape once when he had said something particularly cruel in front of him.

"Well, your mum and I were talking just last night, and we're both worried about the effect the incident last year has had on you. You were so quiet over the summer, and there's something you didn't want the class to see regarding the Boggart, so I'm wondering if it has anything to do with that."

Remus was basically right with what he said, though he wasn't going to tell them about his friendship with Tom and how it had been the only thing that kept him going the last year.

"Harry…if you need to talk to anyone-" Remus continued, but Harry shook his head violently. He'd never be able to open up to anyone ever again.

"I'm fine" he insisted, standing up to signal that he was leaving. "Remember as well that you're my professor now, so you can't go telling Mum and Dad anything I say." The last thing he needed was Lily running to Hogwarts to force Harry into therapy.

Remus nodded, and Sirius stood as well, wrapping Harry in a hug. He smiled appreciatively at his godfather and left the men alone to think.

6th November, 1993

Harry leaned his head against the only glass window of the bathroom, revelling in the noise of the heavy rain and thunder outside. He had loved thunderstorms ever since being a child, an interest he inherited from Lily. They had spent many afternoons together drinking tea, or in Harry's case milk, in their conservatory, listening to the rain batter the glass roof and walls.

There was a Quidditch match on; Gryffindor versus Hufflepuff. James and Sirius had been quite enthusiastic about teaching Harry how to fly when he was a child. He had quite enjoyed it at the time, but he preferred talking to Tom rather than trying out for the team last year, and he didn't fancy trying to join this year either. Having to talk to all new people and be watched by the whole school was a horrifying thought for him.

He looked up with a start when the door opened and Luna Lovegood walked in. She came over to him, and Harry expected her to tell him to leave but instead she just sat down next to him without
saying a word.

"Do you want me to go?" Harry asked, unsure of what she wanted.

"Oh no. I came here to see you" she replied, and Harry looked at her to expand. "I've noticed you come in here quite a lot, and I thought you could maybe do with some company."

Harry decided he would be brutally honest with her. "Luna, I appreciate that, but I promised someone very important I wouldn't be friends with you." He did like Luna, but it seemed like he was already giving up on Tom if he took back that promise.

"We don't have to be friends" Luna answered dreamily, looking at him with a slightly excited look. "We can just sit together here. I know it can get terribly lonely waiting for something on your own."

11th April, 1994

It hadn't been the same as talking to Tom, but Luna's company had really benefited Harry. He still refused to call her his friend, but he missed it when she wasn't next to him. She would talk to him about many fantastic creatures that he had never heard of before, and Harry would vaguely talk to her about Tom and how much he missed him. Luna would reach out sometimes and hold his hand for comfort.

Despite not calling her his friend, that hadn't stopped him storming up to his sister in the middle of the Great Hall at lunch.

People picked on Luna a lot from what he had seen; generally behind her back, but Heather had insulted her right to her face. The blonde had dismissed it without a second thought, but Harry didn't like what Hogwarts had done to his sister.

"Why do you think you can be so rude to Luna?" he hissed at her, ignoring the giggles of her friend.

"She's weird" Heather answered as if that made it okay.

"Leave her alone from now on" he warned, making the girls laugh harder.

Heather pulled him away from the crowd and moved so she could whisper in his ear.

"I'm sorry Harry, but the girls think she's loony so I do too. You're my brother, so I won't let them say anything to you, but they talk about you behind your back all the time, and if you keep sticking up for Luna they won't bother being quiet anymore."

"Learn to grow up Heather and make proper friends" Harry hissed back, not bothering to lower his voice.

That was the day that people started to bully him.

17th June, 1994

People had never really picked on him before; sure, they had never really spoken to him either, but having insults thrown his way by people he had never spoken to before was new to him. It had started with Heather's gang, but then other people started to pick up on it, and the students who were predisposed for bullying had joined in. They would call him weird and disturbed. They called him a loser and a friendless freak, while the older students had started to call him queer, though
where they had got that from he didn't know; he hadn't even considered that himself at his age.

Remus had resigned after his werewolf secret came out, so he and Sirius had left the castle and Harry felt no other teachers would really stick up for him.

He had never been so grateful for Luna, or more desperate for Tom.

"Do you know what might cheer you up Harry?" Myrtle asked him while he sat trembling with Luna's hand closed over his. The ghost had been very sympathetic with Harry lately; she had been bullied heavily herself. "Check the tap."

Harry didn't have to ask her which tap she meant, and he curiously went to the sink, reaching into the faucet where a small piece of parchment had been placed.

He opened it to see a scrawl he hadn't seen for over a year now.

Stay patient Harry. I haven't forgotten you.

1st November, 1994

Nothing overly eventful had happened to Neville Longbottom in his third year, so it seemed with the announcement of the Triwizard Tournament this year, the Boy Who Lived had to find a way past the age limit to take part.

Dumbledore had announced the competition at the start of the year, and soon after a number of students from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang had arrived. All the visiting students were, of course, seventeen, however despite Dumbledore's wards to keep underage students from entering, Neville had been able to put his name forward and somehow get it to come out as a separately from the other Hogwarts Champion. Neville had insisted that he had never entered his name, but Harry didn't believe him, and for once he wasn't the only one who thought badly of the boy. The majority of Hogwarts students didn't seem to be falling for Neville's lies, and even Ron Weasley himself had started to refuse to speak to Neville.

Cedric Diggory was the one who most believed to be the true Hogwarts Champion, and this was the boy Harry was now stood before trying to speak to. He wasn't keen on speaking to people when they were in a group, but Neville was within earshot of the Hufflepuff gang and he wanted the light haired boy to hear what Harry thought of him, but the number of sixth and seventh years was rather intimidating. Just as he made his mind up to leave, Cedric locked eyes with him and smiled.

"Can I help you?" he asked gently, drawing everyone's eyes to the nervous Gryffindor.

Harry kept his eyes on the floor as he shook his head. "No…I mean, yeah, I…" he trailed off, trying to ignore the sniggering he could hear. Cedric hushed the group and allowed Harry to continue. "I just, er, wanted to say Cedric, that even as a um, Gryffindor, that I'll be-I'll be supporting you."

Harry immediately turned and started to walk away, feeling slight satisfaction from seeing the hurt look on Neville's face, but someone touching his arm startled him and made him forget all about Neville.

Cedric was stood looking slightly apologetic but with a friendly expression on his face.

"Thank you for your support…I'm afraid I don't know your name though" the older boy said.

"Harry" he answered softly, wanting nothing more than to leave the room.
"Well Harry, Professor Sprout is throwing a celebration party in the Hufflepuff common room tonight if you would like to come?" Cedric offered. Harry shuddered at the thought; the mere idea of being around so many people seemed to horrify him, especially considering he had been picked on by a number of students wearing the yellow trimmed robes.

"I'm not really a party person" Harry answered awkwardly. "Have fun and good luck with the contest."

With that said, Harry intended to forget about Cedric Diggory, but it appeared the Cedric was not so keen as to forget about him.

23rd November, 1994

Harry sighed when Cedric finally caught up with him. The Hufflepuff had been chasing him all day and so far Harry had managed to successfully avoid him. He had finally been cornered though, and he forced himself to smile at the Champion.

"Harry…you're friends with that Luna Lovegood girl aren't you?" Cedric asked and Harry eyed him wearily.

"We aren't friends" he decided to affirm.

"Oh, is she your girlfriend?" the older boy asked, something almost like jealously flashing quickly through his eyes.

"No, it's complicated. We just like talking to each other" Harry mumbled. "Why do you want to know?"

"Well, I'm sure you know that the First Task is tomorrow, and I wondered if Luna might be able to help me; I hear she's good with creature information" Cedric looked around before lowering his voice so much so that Harry had to lean in to hear. "We have to fight dragons."

Harry raised his eyebrows; fighting dragons seemed a pretty risky task to set for teenagers.

"It isn't debated that dragons exist" Harry responded, "so Luna won't have much interest or knowledge on them. There are plenty of books in the library."

"Perhaps you could join me in searching?" Cedric asked rather hopefully but Harry shook his head.

"That would be cheating. You're meant to be the honourable Champion, remember?" He squeezed Cedric's hand gently as Luna often did to him for support. "You'll be fine; good luck."

23rd February, 1995

Harry had never thought he would have said it, but he was starting to feel grateful to Cedric. The Hufflepuff had managed to track him down in Myrtle's bathroom. When asked why he was sitting there, Harry told him it was to avoid the bullies in the school, and since then Cedric would punish any students he found making rude comments about Harry or Luna, and his prefect status, as well as being an admired Champion, meant people would leave Harry alone as long as Cedric was around.

The Hufflepuff had also started to sit with him and Luna in the bathroom, claiming he appreciated it's quiet and calm atmosphere. Cedric would talk to them about the Tournament and his worries over it.
Right now Cedric was studying for the Second Task in the library. He was pretty confident with his plan, but he wanted to double check, so when the door opened Harry and Luna hadn't expected one of the Weasley Twins to come walking in.

"Harry, McGonagall wants to see you. What are you doing in here?" the redhead said grinning. Harry just shrugged and followed the Weasley to the Transfiguration teacher's office, where McGonagall was sat with Dumbledore, Ron, Hermione and a little girl who looked much like Fleur Delacour.

"Hello Harry" the headmaster greeted happily, indicating for Harry to take a seat. He complied, watching Albus carefully. "Now that you're all here I will explain what is going to happen. The Second Task involves our Champions going through the lake to find something that has been stolen from them which they will dearly miss."

"We're those something's, aren't we Professor Dumbledore?" Hermione enquired, sharp as ever.

Dumbledore nodded, smiling, but Harry started to panic slightly in his head. He couldn't be the thing that Cedric would miss most, he just couldn't. He felt as if he would be stabbing Tom through the heart if he allowed this to happen.

"We shall be placing Sleeping Charms upon you and you will be in absolutely no danger. You will awake as soon as you are rescued from the lake, and of course, should your Champion fail, someone else shall retrieve you."

By now Harry was shaking his head determinedly. "No" he muttered, wrapping his arms around himself. "I won't do it. No."

"You'll be perfectly safe Potter" McGonagall tried, but that wound Harry up even more.

"No! I can't...please" he begged, berating himself for being so weak. Hermione placed a hand on his arm in an attempt to ease his discomfort but he shrugged the girl off him.

"Alright; there is no oath forcing you to agree to this, so if any of the rest of you feel any discomfort, please let us know" Dumbledore said, eyeing the room. Nobody else said a word and the headmaster smiled gently at Harry. "You are free to go Harry; please could you send Miss Chang up here?"

Harry nodded and left, telling some Ravenclaw girl he saw on the way to get Cho. He then ran to the now empty bathroom and cried himself to sleep.

24th February, 1995

Harry hadn't gone to watch the Second Task. He sat in Myrtle's bathroom until he heard people returning to the castle and then he went outside, knowing Cedric would likely be looking for him. It wasn't the fact that Cedric was another guy that put him off; he had been raised not to think any differently of it thanks to Sirius and Remus, while if he forced himself to really think about it he didn't think he could control what gender he could fall in love with, but trying not to be friends with Luna was hard enough, and if Cedric wanted more than friendship with him then he could get really wrapped up in the Hufflepuff and then Tom might never return for him.

The older boy managed to track him down eventually, much to Harry's displeasure.

"You weren't at the Task" Cedric stated, looking at Harry for an explanation. He looked rather hurt, but Harry tried to ignore that.

"Why was I meant to be your most missed person?" Harry said instead, cutting right to the point.
"I wondered when I saw Cho…" Cedric mused. "Why did you say no?"

"Just because!" Harry exclaimed, resting his forehead in his hands.

"Is it because I'm a boy?" Cedric asked gently, dropping down and pulling Harry's arms away to look at him. "Or is there someone else? Luna?"

"No and no, not Luna" Harry answered, looking away. "I thought you liked Cho anyway."

"I love her as a sister but nothing more" Cedric told him. "Can I just…?" Cedric trailed off, looking at Harry deeply. He quickly pressed his lips over Harry's, just for a second, but in that moment vivid memories of Tom came rushing into Harry's mind, almost like it had been Tom over him and not Cedric.

Cedric was rambling on about not knowing what had gotten into him and how sorry he was, but Harry needed that feeling again; he needed to see Tom vivid in his mind, so he leant forward and crushed their mouths together, shutting his eyes and imagining the pale skin and handsome features of Tom more brightly than he had for a long time. He imagined it was Tom next to him, not Cedric, and he pretended with all his might that he was really back with his friend. Only when they pulled apart and Harry opened his eyes that he felt the disappointment crushing him.

Cedric beamed happily at him and they started to head back to the castle together.

Both of them missed the eyes watching them from the forest which had started glowing dangerously red.

24th June, 1995

Harry was ashamed to say that since the end of February he had been using Cedric in order to see Tom. He had never previously thought of Tom in that sense, but he supposed it wasn't a surprise that his longing had turned out that way. Luna told him it was perfectly normal, and anyone who thought differently must have been affected by a large swarm of Wrackspurts.

They had never got any further than kissing, and Harry still didn't like to do that too often because he was wracked with awful guilt for both Tom and Cedric every time he opened his eyes, but he was addicted to seeing Tom's flawless skin and dark eyes. He wondered if he was perhaps going crazy, because he swore a couple of times he had seen those eyes watching him from afar, only with a red gleam in them.

To make his life more difficult, one of Cedric's friends had called Harry a dirty poof in front of the Hufflepuff Champion, making Cedric tell most of the school that he and Harry were boyfriends. Harry despised that thought; he and Luna weren't friends, they just enjoyed talking, and likewise, he and Cedric weren't boyfriends, Harry just enjoyed talking to him and using him physically to see his missing friend. He couldn't say that of course, and now Harry was stuck with people acting friendly to him when he was around Cedric, which he hated because he didn't enjoy talking to people, but as soon as Cedric was out of sight, he was abused more heavily than before, mostly from jealous girls and older boys who were friends with Cedric and accused Harry of getting Luna to 'twist' the Champion using some weird magic. Of course Cedric never got any abuse thrown his way.

Despite never having really spoken to him in a proper conversation, the majority of the Gryffindors in his year were sticking up for him, especially Hermione, and though he disliked their hypocrisy, he did appreciate the gesture.
It was with Hermione, Luna and Ron that he was stood waiting to go into the stands to watch the Third Task. He didn't think the other two liked Luna much, but he wasn't going anywhere without her.

"Wish me luck" a voice came from behind them, and Cedric appeared with nervous excitement on his face. He kissed Harry gently on the lips before he got called over to where he needed to go.

It was only once they were in the stands that Harry realised he had kissed Cedric without thinking of Tom.

24th June, 1995

Harry was glad he hadn't watched any of the other tasks. This one had certainly been boring; they couldn't really see what was going on. All they knew was that the Durmstrang and Beauxbaton Champions had come out of the maze, and so the winner would either be Cedric or Neville.

It was then that two figures appeared by the front of the maze. Immediately people started to cheer and celebratory music began to play, but all Harry could focus on were the cold, lifeless eyes of Cedric Diggory which seemed to be staring at him.

He heard the words 'Voldemort's back' and 'Cedric's dead', and that was when chaos erupted in the crowds. Harry just clung onto Luna like his life depended on it, not bothering to fight the heavy flow of tears falling from his eyes. Neville had killed Cedric; maybe he hadn't lifted his wand and said the words, but he had taken Cedric to Voldemort.

Harry looked away from the scene, out towards the Forbidden Forest, and though his tears all he could see were mocking red eyes.

20th September, 1995

Harry would never have said that he loved Cedric, but that still didn't stop him feeling sad over his death. He hated that Neville could have such little regard for others. He had heard Neville's tale of events, and he blamed him even more now. If he hadn't made Cedric grab the cup with him, Cedric would still be alive.

He didn't know what to think about Voldemort being back. He certainly believed it; his parent's obsessive actions over the summer let Harry know for definite they were at risk, although the Dark Lord hadn't come out in the open yet, so a lot of people didn't believe Neville or Dumbledore, and they were getting quite a lot of abuse for it, including a number of newspaper articles calling them liars.

It meant people were focused on Neville though, and Harry hadn't had nearly as much bullying so far than before. He didn't know if the students felt sorry for him with what happened to Cedric, but he much preferred being ignored.

His mum had refused to leave him alone all summer, both from fretting over what had happened after Heather gave her all the gossipy details, and seemingly convinced that if she let her children out of sight for one moment then they would be attacked by Voldemort, so he appreciated the quiet he was getting at school.

Luna had become rather talkative with Neville, Ron and Hermione, having been formally introduced to them all by Ginny, Ron's sister. Harry told Luna that he didn't mind, because he wasn't her friend so he couldn't stop her doing anything. Luna just smiled when he said that.

Even though he insisted to himself that Luna wasn't his friend, he still cared about her deeply and
didn't want Neville to hurt her. He didn't trust the Boy Who Lived, and he wasn't going to let him take someone else away from him.

28th December, 1995

Harry tapped on his Godfather's door, hoping for an answer. It was rather late, but his mind was running wild and he needed someone to talk to. Remus was out on a task for Dumbledore, though they refused to tell Harry what it involved.

Sirius answered the door looking rather dishevelled, like Harry had just woke him up, but he smiled brightly when he saw Harry and invited the boy into his room.

"Are you alright Harry?" the man asked, looking at him with concern.

"I've just got a few things on my mind" Harry muttered, trying to give Sirius a reassuring smile, which failed horribly. "When you and Remus got together how did people react?"

Sirius studied him curiously for a moment before he laughed softly.

"Not everyone accepted us of course, and well, they still don't, but we've never let it bother us. We have each other, which is the most important thing. Why'd you ask?"

"People make comments to me at school" Harry admitted, unsure why he wanted to get this off his chest. He hadn't asked for advice from anyone since Tom, but he really couldn't hold it in anymore. "It was bad last year, and then it stopped at the start of this year because I think people felt bad about Cedric, but it's gone back to how it was, and it's just hard to deal with sometimes."

Sirius said nothing, and instead wrapped Harry into a tight hug. "You ignore those people Harry. It doesn't matter whether you love a man or a woman; you're still an amazing person."

Harry snuggled into Sirius; he didn't quite believe what his godfather had said, but it still felt comforting to hear him say it.

"I don't mean to sound like my lovely family" Sirius said with a bitter tone to his voice, "but I've found pure-bloods are more accepting. Muggles can be very prejudiced and this can be carried through into the mixed families. There are exceptions obviously, and it's better now than it was when I was your age. One day soon we'll be accepted with no problems."

Harry hummed, just as a clap of thunder echoed outside. He fell asleep that night happy.

18th June, 1996

"No Luna! Don't go with them" Harry begged the blonde girl, who was insisting that she would accompany Neville, Ron, Hermione and Ginny to the Ministry of Magic where Neville had claimed to have a vision of something bad happening.

"Don't worry about me Harry; I'm in good hands" Luna tried to reassure Harry, but he shook his head. Neville's hands were definitely not good ones to be in.

"I'm coming too then. I can't leave you alone with them" he declared, ignoring the dirty looks the others gave him at his comment. Still, they didn't say no, so they climbed aboard the Thestrals, an odd experience for Harry considering he couldn't see it, and they were flown to London and the Ministry of Magic.

Harry didn't really care what Neville wanted to do; he just didn't want Luna to get hurt, so he kept
an eye on her while following Neville to where he wanted to be.

They eventually ended up in a room with shiny black marble flooring and walls, with high shelves filled with crystal balls throughout the room. Whatever Neville was looking for he hadn't found, but he had discovered something else.

Harry watched with mild interest as Neville cautiously grabbed one of the crystals with his name on it. The swirling cloud inside seemed to have them all transfixed, but footsteps to the side of them made them turn their heads.

Walking slowly towards them was a tall figure, cloaked in a black robe with a silver mask covering their face. Harry recognised it as a Death Eater. The teenagers raised their wands, ready to fight whoever was coming towards them should they try anything. The mask was removed from the face with a flick of a wand, and then Lucius Malfoy was smirking at them.

The atmosphere was as tense as it was calm; the fact Lucius hadn't tried to attack them was a relief, but there was a high risk he could change his mind at any moment. Harry felt a chill run through him however when a female laugh came from another direction in the room.

A woman Harry recognised as Bellatrix Lestrange was now strolling up to them; Sirius had told Harry plenty about her. He instinctively moved to stand in front of Luna.

A swishing noise surrounded them, and then there were Death Eaters circling them, preventing them from escape. The crystal Neville was holding was clearly important to them, and Harry reckoned knowing Neville the Death Eaters would have it within minutes.

The group of students seemed to know what to do, as they all sent a Stupefy spell to the ones surrounding them. The Death Eaters vanished so they took that as their cue to run.

Harry grabbed hold of Luna's hand so he wouldn't lose her, and they took at a sprint, trying to block any spells the Death Eaters were throwing their way. Something hit one of the shelves, and then crystals were falling all amongst them, so they ran desperately trying to avoid being hit by glass and falling debris.

Harry threw another Stupefy spell at someone who had their wand pointed to Luna. Then they were running through a door and falling, stopping right before they hit the ground. A sigh of relief ran through them all as they dropped gently the rest of the way.

Harry couldn't believe they had ended up in one of Neville's situations. He just really hoped it wasn't for nothing and he could at least keep that crystal safe.

They had landed in a large room. The only thing in it was an archway with a veil covering it. Harry could hear soft, murmuring voices coming from within.

Before anyone could examine it, a noise alerted them to the Death Eater's presence. They seemed to be appearing in clouds of black smoke, and then they were all over the teenagers, blinding their vision.

Harry felt his hand ripped from Luna's, and then he was at the side of the room, a masked Death Eater holding onto him. He glanced around at the others; all but Neville had been caught, with arms around their necks and wands pointed at their faces by unmasked men, besides Ginny who had been caught by Bellatrix. Harry wondered why his captor was still masked, or why he had grabbed Harry by the waist.

Malfoy was demanding Neville to give him the crystal, but Harry was more focused on the man
holding him who was almost trying to dig through his skin; he was holding on so tight. He closed his eyes, waiting for something to happen, when all of a sudden he wasn't been held anymore. He snapped his eyes open to see white smoke filling the room; the effect used by the society Dumbledore had set up to fight Voldemort and the Death Eaters; the Order of the Phoenix. His parents were members but he couldn't see them there. The only ones he recognised properly were Sirius and Remus.

Harry and the others huddled together at the back of the room, allowing the adults to fight it out. Neville had become involved and was currently fighting Bellatrix. The masked Death Eater seemed to be knocking out his opponents with ease and thus was being left alone by the Order members.

Neville had given up on Bellatrix and was now attacking Lucius. Harry noticed the crystal was smashed at their feet.

He had lost Remus in the chaos, but he watched as Sirius fought Bellatrix. He seemed to be doing well, but as the pair got closer to the veil, he felt fear run through him. He got up, desperate to help his godfather, but Ron tried to hold him back. He spun around to tell the redhead to get off him, but when he looked back, the fight seemed to have turned around.

He could only watch horrified as a red beam struck Sirius’ chest, and he stumbled back, falling into the veil.

Harry, not caring anymore, ran desperately towards it, hoping to see Sirius simply land on the other side, but it never happened. He almost jumped through the veil himself; anything to save Sirius, but the masked Death Eater threw a curse his way, creating a barrier in front of the archway.

He screamed in frustration, hot tears splashing onto his cheeks. He tried desperately to claw through the shield, fighting whoever it was pulling him back.

He collapsed onto the floor after he was back at the side, grabbing hold of Luna and sobbing heavily into her shoulder. The blonde wrapped her arms around and whispered soothing things to him. It didn't stop the pain though, and it didn't fill the hole that had just been ripped in him.

But through all the chaos and the pain, Harry clearly heard the words he had been waiting to hear for so long.

"Harry, it is almost time."

4th August, 1996

Life hadn't been the same after Sirius had died.

Remus had stayed for a while to attend the memorial service, but then he had vanished almost without a trace, just a note saying he was sorry.

Heather had moved in with Snape, saying she was unable to cope with their home life. Severus had offered Lily a room too, and reluctantly Harry as well, but Harry refused to go, and thus Lily wouldn't either. She trusted Snape with Heather, but it seemed she didn't trust James with Harry.

His father had started drinking heavily to cope with the pain and guilt he was feeling. He was by no means a violent drunk, and he didn't do too much damage, but Lily hated it nonetheless, and so most of the time his parents spent together now involved arguing. Some nights were worse than others, and tonight happened to be a bad night.
He wasn't surprised that his sister had left; listening to his parents screaming at each other was difficult; no matter how strained their relationship was he still loved them.

He decided that he couldn't stay in the house anymore. It was dark and rainy, but he needed air. He had been forbidden from leaving without his parents, especially now that Voldemort's return had been confirmed and he was openly attacking people, but the wards only stopped people from entering, not from leaving, and they wouldn't notice if he was gone anyway.

He did indeed leave with no problems. The air and rain felt good on his skin, and it helped clear his head. He pulled his hood up and shoved his wand up his sleeve before setting off on a walk. He decided to stick to the countryside around his house where the wider wards were still in effect.

The Potter home was in a small village, and their house was right on the end. The village and the neighbour's houses were to the front and one side, while on the other side there was a forest, meeting a field at the back.

He loved the forest; the trees gave him a sense of security, almost like they were protecting him from the outside world.

He wandered through the trees, trying to keep his mind free of thought. He had dwelt far too much on Sirius and Tom lately. Tom's promise at the Department of Mysteries had given him slight joy, and he was just waiting for the man to reappear.

He froze when he heard a twig snap, but he shook it off, thinking it must have been a wild animal of some sort. When he heard it again, almost like somebody was running, did he really start to panic. He was sure he hadn't left the ward limits, and if they had been broken he would have known about it.

He pulled his wand out, spinning around to look in every direction. When he saw nobody or heard another sound, he made his move back to the house, too spooked to stay out.

He got back in with ease, glad to hear his parents talking quietly with each other now. He headed upstairs to his room, shutting the door behind him softly and collapsing onto his bed. He rolled onto his side, hugging tightly onto a toy dog Sirius had given him when he was a little boy. He was happy when he found he had kept it after all these years.

He stilled when an arm wrapped around his middle, resting a cold hand on his stomach, while another clamped down over his mouth. He felt hot breath by his ear as the intruder leant in to speak.

"I've come for you Harry."
Harry let the stuffed animal slip from his fingers as the grip around him loosened.

He jumped up and span around so fast that he almost tumbled over, saved by a strong hand holding him up.

"You finally came back to me, Tom," Harry whispered, heart beating heavily as Tom guided him off the bed fully, making them stand just inches apart.

"Of course I've returned for you; I don't make promises I can't keep," Tom muttered, the corners of his mouth twitching upwards slightly.

Tom didn't look much different to how Harry had seen him in the Chamber of Secrets. He looked older, which was to be expected after three years, but he still had the same handsome, chiseled features, thick brown, fluffy hair and dark eyes, though they seemed to have a red tint to them. Harry had grown a lot since he was twelve, but Tom still had about four inches on him.

"What took you so long?" Harry asked, keeping his voice low in case his parents overheard him. Tom seemed to know what he was thinking.

"I've placed undetectable Silencing Charms around your room," Tom told him. "We have much to discuss and it is preferable we aren't overheard, though judging from the state of your father, I don't suppose he would notice without the charm."

Harry frowned; he knew Tom wasn't exaggerating with the comment about his dad, but hearing somebody say it aloud seemed to make the situation more real.

Tom pushed Harry down onto his bed, before taking a seat beside him.

"We're both ready now," Tom said, answering his question at last. "I have completed what I needed to do, and you're sixteen now; the age I was when we first met. You're too old to be considered a child, yet too young to be considered an adult by the world, but I know what you are capable of."

"I didn't think you aged," Harry stated, looking intently at Tom. He was overjoyed that he was finally back with him, but he had so many questions to ask.

"My diary form did not age, but the magic I used to leave enables me to live as a normal wizard," Tom explained, and Harry nodded.

"Why didn't I die?" the Gryffindor asked, trying to get as much out as he could. "You said I had to, but then I didn't."

"I'm afraid I can't tell you Harry; purely because I do not understand the magic fully myself and I don't wish to mislead you in any way. I can tell you, however, that the magic has brought us closer together in ways which you cannot imagine. You are rather important to me now, Harry."

The answer was rather vague, but any questions he had on the topic seemed to disappear as he filled with happiness at Tom's words. In a flash he flung his arms around the older boy's neck, burying his face into Tom's shoulder. Tom gently placed a hand on the upper part of Harry's back in a comforting manner.

"I'm just glad to have you back," Harry mumbled into Tom's shirt.
"Harry, I'm sure you remember what you promised me from the beginning; when you said you
would do anything for me?" Tom said clearly, tipping Harry's chin upwards so they could make
eye contact. Harry nodded slowly. "Now, I believe it is only fair to give you a choice, much like
everyone else. Does it bother you to know that I am effectively the one you know as Lord
Voldemort?"

Harry felt a chill run through him at those words, and he was sure Tom must be joking.

"You don't look anything like him though" he stated dumbly; he had seen images of the evil wizard
in the Daily Prophet, and he could see no resemblance. Tom simply fixed him with a warning look.

"I said effectively. When the Dark Lord was sixteen, he created the diary and preserved a memory
of himself inside it. Now that I have been freed from the confines of the diary, I am able to work
alongside the man who is simply an older version of me."

Harry removed his hold of Tom, his mind racing. It certainly explained the red gleam in Tom's
eyes, which seemed to be more prominent than ever now. He wasn't quite sure what to think;
Voldemort may be evil, but Tom had never really harmed Harry. Besides, Tom was put inside the
diary at the age of sixteen, surely too young to have done anything bad, and he couldn't presume he
had done anything since he was freed either. Tom and Voldemort may be the same man deep
down, yet they were both their own person.

"I shan't kill you if you tell me you have changed your mind," Tom added, likely as an incentive to
get a quicker answer. "I shall simply erase every memory you have of me."

Harry shuddered at the thought of forgetting Tom, and that told him his decision.

"I'll accept you, no matter who you are," he affirmed, wrapping his arms back around Tom, though
he could still feel fear racing through him.

"So you'll do what I ask of you?" the older boy asked, his smirk filtering through to his words.

Harry hesitated for just a moment before answering. "I-I don't know. I don't want to be a Death
Eater. I don't want to torture or kill anybody; I can't do that." He looked at Tom, hoping to show
seriousness in his eyes

"Of course not," Tom said, another smirk forming on his face. "I believe it will be beneficial for
everyone, including yourself, if you offer your assistance regarding Neville Longbottom."

"Neville Longbottom?" Harry repeated slowly. Sure he hated the boy, but he didn't know if he
could bring himself to cause him pain. As that doubt crept through his mind, he had a sudden flash
of himself standing above a screaming Neville, and the pleasure he got from the image scared him.

"I know you hate him, Harry; you have every right to. I was there on the night The Dark Lord
returned; I watched as Longbottom cowardly allowed the other boy to die. I saw how he fearfully
fled fighting Bellatrix Lestrange at the Ministry of Magic, leading to the death of your Godfather.
He is weak and doesn't stand a chance, and thus when the Dark Lord wins, you shall be treated
with great respect for your assistance, if that is what you choose to do," Tom expanded, speaking
with complete confidence.

Harry had known Neville was too scared to face Bellatrix, but he wasn't aware the same thing had
happened regarding Cedric's death. Longbottom was no Gryffindor; Harry hadn't had much
opportunity to show his courage, but he knew he certainly had more than the Boy Who Lived. The
Sorting Hat had told him that he had Slytherin traits as well, and Harry guessed that he'd need to
get in touch with that side of him of he wanted to help Tom. In fact, he did want to help Tom; he had never been anything but nice to him, no matter how evil his other self was, while Neville had only ever caused him misery and grief. Plus, seeing as the probability was that Neville would ultimately be killed by Voldemort, he figured it would be better in order to keep his remaining family safe.

"What do you need me to do?" Harry asked, happiness coursing through him as Tom smiled.

"You'll find out in time, Harry. For now, you need rest," the dark wizard answered.

"I'm not tired though," Harry lied. In truth, he wanted to stay awake and talk to Tom, and he was slightly concerned that he was going to wake up tomorrow and not see Tom for another three years.

"I shall return tomorrow," Tom stated. Harry wondered if that comment was a coincidence or not.

"You can't read my mind, can you?" Harry asked, laughing awkwardly. Tom simply smirked but didn't respond, so Harry made a mental note to keep his thoughts clean around Tom, just in case.

Tom pushed Harry gently backwards until his head reached the pillow, and a strong sense of tiredness washed over Harry. He was asleep before he knew it.

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Harry awoke the next morning to what sounded like somebody trying to bash down his bedroom door.

"Is everything okay, Harry?" he heard his mother shout, worry lacing her voice.

Harry glanced around the room and noticed Tom wasn't there. He sighed and called out to allow his mother in.

"Is anything wrong?" Lily asked as she stepped through the door, watching Harry wearily from where he was sat in bed, still blinking sleep from his eyes.

"I was just sleeping," he told her.

"It's not like you to sleep so late," the redhead mused, giving Harry a suspicious look. In the end she sighed and decided to drop the topic. "Well, I want you to get out of bed now; your Dad and I are going out, so you need to be ready. We can either leave you with the Weasley's or Severus; it's up to you but can you make a decision quickly so--"

"No!" Harry protested. "Can't I just stay here on my own? All the wards are still up. "He clambered out of bed, realising he was still wearing the clothes he had been in yesterday.

Lily looked at him as if he was stupid. "Of course you can't. What if someone got in? Stop being petty, get changed and make a decision."

"But I don't want to see Snape or Heather, and isn't there like nine of the Weasley's? I don't want to be around that many people I don't know."

"Harry, you need to get over your issues of talking to people," Lily sighed.

"I don't have issues; I'm just shy," he hissed, and his mother shook her head.

"You're not just shy, Harry. You're bordering on social anxiety. Perhaps being with Molly and her family will be good for you."
"No. I don't want to go. Where are you and Dad going anyway? Are you really going to be that long?" He huffed and folded his arms.

Lily looked unsure for a moment, like she was debating whether to tell Harry or not, but then James popped his head round the door, hair messier than usual and eyes bloodshot.

"We're going to get me some help, son," James announced, ignoring Lily's glare. Harry smiled at the thought of his father finally trying to get his problem sorted. "Lily, I think we can leave Harry here alone while we're gone."

Lily turned to her husband with blazing eyes. "What? Anything could happen. How would we feel then?"

"He's sixteen; he can be trusted," James argued back, making Lily scowl.

"It's not that I don't trust Harry; it's them who I don't trust. Don't make me out to be the horrible parent here, James."

"We have so many precautions on this house; Harry will be fine. You let Heather go live with Snape; that's hardly different, considering who he spends his time with."

"Severus can be trusted," Lily spat, defensive of her friend. "I trust him, as does Dumbledore."

"Remember a guy named Peter who we all used to trust? Look what happened with him."

"Who's Peter? What happened with him?" Harry interrupted. His parents had mentioned the man a few times over the years, and each time they would refuse to answer him and change the subject.

"Fine; stay here then" Lily exclaimed, throwing her hands into the air in defeat. She gave Harry a look which clearly stated 'I'm giving you this, so don't ask about Peter again'. "You are to keep the emergency Portkey on you at all times; you twist the top and it will instantly transport you to The Weasley's. You use it if the wards alert you that there's an intruder and you use it if you hear a noise in the house. You will use it even if you feel uneasy for no reason and you will not go to investigate anything strange. You are only permitted to use magic if somebody finds you first. You will not answer the door to anybody and you will not leave this house. When your father and I return, we will use the words 'red scarf' to let you know that it's us. If I find out you've broken any of these rules and somehow come out unscathed, then so help me, you will spend the rest of your summer wishing you were locked in Azkaban."

Harry nodded to each of his mother's rules, with no doubt in his mind that she wouldn't hold true to her threat if she caught him out on something.

The woman frowned at Harry's reaction and pulled him into an uncomfortable embrace. "Oh sweetheart, I'm only being like this because I love you. I don't think I could cope if anything happened to you. It's hard enough Heather just being out of the house, but if." Lily started before pausing to compose herself, wiping at her eyes violently. "Just be careful, alright?"

Harry nodded and gave Lily the big eyes and bright smile look he knew always melted her heart. "I'll be fine, Mum. I hope everything goes okay with you today, Dad."

His parents nodded, Lily giving him one last hug, before they flooed out, leaving Harry in the house alone.
Harry had been by himself for an hour. He had showered and changed into fresh clothes, glanced at his homework and decided to do it another time, tried to read a bit of a muggle book, played some random tunes on Lily's piano, and was now just sat mindlessly on his bed, bouncing a ball off the wall. He was too focused on whether Tom would return or not to do much else. A small part of him wondered if he had imagined their meeting.

He jumped out of his skin as Tom seemed to appear out of nowhere, catching the ball in his fist as Harry threw it.

"I'm surprised you didn't try out for the Quidditch team. I'd expect you'd have been good as either a Seeker or a Keeper," the dark wizard stated.

"I don't want to play Quidditch. Too many people watch, and I'd be no good" Harry murmured, instinctively catching the ball Tom threw his way before it could hit him in the face.

"Hmm, I see. You doubt your abilities too much, Harry. It is a wise skill to learn to embrace your abilities; not so much in sports, but in all aspects of your life. There is something deep inside of you which is so much better than those around you. You need to open yourself to it."

"You really think so?" Harry asked, beaming at Tom.

"I know so," the older boy replied. "Would you care to join me for a walk outside?"

"I don't know; my mum was pretty clear that I wasn't allowed out, and knowing her she's put some charm up to know if I obeyed her or not," Harry said with a frown; he didn't like the feeling of saying no to Tom.

The other boy simply smirked however. "You are quite right; she did have a charm up, a rather impressive one at that. Unfortunately for her, I know the counter curse. You shall be indoors and the charm in place before she is back, and she will never know a thing."

He opened the door and motioned for Harry to leave. The Gryffindor thought about whether or not he should for just a second before he jumped up and left his room. He trusted Tom not to get him in trouble.

"Is that how you've been getting in the house then? Knowing the counter curses?" Harry asked intrigued. He wondered whether or not he ought to point out to his parents that they had flaws in their system.

"Oh no; your home's protection is some of the best I've seen. It appears your mother is a dab hand at Charms work; surprising considering her blood."

Harry frowned but didn't comment on what Tom had said; he wanted the man to know he would stick by him, even if they did differ in some beliefs and values.

"How do you get in then?" he asked instead.

"That is due to you, Harry. You see, when you opened yourself to me in the Chamber, it created a magical connection between us; as the wards on your home allow you in, they also allow me in," Tom told him.

"So, that's sort of like having to invite a vampire into your home before they can enter," Harry muttered thoughtfully, almost walking into the other boy when he froze suddenly and turned around with a dark expression on his face. Harry was half expecting to be cursed.
"That is nonsense muggle mythology. You need to learn better than to speak of such things," came his warning instead.

They walked outside and into the wooded area by Harry's home. The teenager wondered if it was stupid to go to a secluded area with a man whose other half was a mass murdering sociopath.

"What are you thinking?" Tom asked Harry once they were shaded by the large trees.

"Just that it concerns me a little bit, that the older version of you went on to become one of the Darkest Wizard's in history, yet I'm not all that worried being alone with you in the woods."

"Have I ever given you reason not to trust me?" Tom pointed out, and Harry shook his head. "Good. If I had wanted to kill you, I could have done so at any point. As it stands, I wish that no harm comes to you, by my hand or others. Thus why I wanted to talk to you in the calming atmosphere of the trees; I often wondered how you were getting on without my support at Hogwarts. I know that when I left you were having difficulties with the other students."

Harry nodded sombrely. "It never really got any better. I felt so lost without having you to talk to, especially at first, and each year the other students got nastier," Harry admitted, taking a couple of steps until he was right by Tom's side.

"How so?" the boy enquired, a hint of anger in his voice.

"My sister joined school in my third year, and she's really popular. I had an argument with her one day, and since then, instead of ignoring me, people would call me names; saying things like I was worthless and weird. I guess I should be grateful that it never got physical," Harry said quietly, staring into the ground. "I had Luna to talk to though; she was a big help, er, not that we're friends or anything," Harry added, hastily trying to laugh his way through his mistake; it had been Tom who told him to stay away from her.

"When you say you aren't friends, does that mean you're romantically involved with this girl?" Tom asked almost bitterly.

Harry laughed nervously again. "Oh, no. I mean, not that Luna's not worthy of me or anything, it's more that, well, some of the names the older students called me ended up being true."

"What word was that?"

Harry hesitated before remembering he used to be able to tell Tom anything, and that shouldn't have changed. "Queer, gayboy, faggot; all rather derogatory and said with utter disgust, but I've accepted that that's who I am now, for the most part at least."

"There's nothing wrong with being homosexual, especially not by Pureblood society standards," Tom muttered. Harry turned to look at him, shocked when he saw that his eyes were almost fully red. The other boy shook his head and they began fading back into their normal dark brown colour.

"Have you ever dated?" Tom continued, and Harry shrugged.

"I guess; maybe. I didn't love him or anything, and I think he was more into it than I was. I just liked…something about it," Harry mumbled, refusing to make eye contact with Tom. He wasn't going to tell him that he used Cedric in order to see him, as the chances were he would sound obsessive. Truth be told, he did feel like he had been a bit obsessive, which was probably was he cared so deeply about Tom now. "Have you ever been in love?"

He slammed his hand over his mouth with the look Tom gave him. Even angry, he thought Tom
was the most handsome man he had ever seen. He was better in flesh than he had been in any of
Harry's memories and fantasies.

"I'm sorry; I didn't mean to pry," Harry apologised, wringing his hands together in a nervous
fashion.

Tom smirked, blowing a piece of hair away from his eye. "No, I haven't," he answered finally. "I
don't tend to like the company of people, and I have only ever found one person who I would deem
attractive, though I personally do not understand why they are not in a relationship, when they are
clearly the most beautiful person on the planet."

Harry tried to pretend that those words hadn't hurt him. "Does that person know that?"

"Perhaps," Tom said with another smirk. He brushed a stand of Harry's hair away from his face and
tucked it behind his ear. "It is doubtful however. I believe we should be heading back to your home
now; we don't want you to get into trouble with your mother."

They walked back to the house in a comfortable silence, the only noises being that of nature.

"I always loved this village," Harry said as they came out of the trees. "I was told it was the
birthplace of Godric Gryffindor."

"I have much more interest in Salazar Slytherin. I am descended from him," Tom said proudly.

"So, are you a Parselmouth?" Harry asked. His response was a string of hisses, which answered his
question. "What did that mean?"

"You will never know. I must go now, though, if you like I can come back this evening?"

Harry nodded and opened the front door of his house. When he turned around, Tom was gone.

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His parents had returned not much later. Despite their code word, they still both insisted that Harry
questioned them and then questioned him in turn.

In the end he got so bored that he decided to start on his homework, and as he dropped his quill to
announce the end of his Charms homework, there was a knock at his door.

He opened it, revealing his mother and a woman with purple hair wearing Auror robes.

"Wotcher, Harry" the woman greeted. "My name's Tonks. Do you mind if I ask you some
questions?"

Harry slowly nodded and allowed them to step into his room.

"No need to look nervous. I'm just here to ask a couple of routine questions," Tonks said, settling
herself onto a chair she had conjured up.

"What's happened?" Harry asked anxiously, fearing something may have happened to James.

"Do you remember Matthew Johnson and Stephanie Parker?" Lily asked, her voice shaking
slightly. Harry nodded; he had gone to muggle Primary school with them when he was little,
though he hadn't spoken to them for years, only seen them around the village. "Well they were
found dead earlier. The-the Dark Mark was in the sky above them."
"Did you see or hear anything suspicious this afternoon Harry?" Tonks asked, leaning forwards.

Harry shook his head. "I've been inside all day; nothing seemed out of the ordinary." He didn't know if it was against the law to lie to Aurors, but even so, he was sure Tom had nothing to do with the killings anyway; there were plenty of other Death Eaters about. "Sorry I can't be of more help," he added.

"It's fine. Whole thing never made sense to me anyway; the person responsible isn't going to stick around, or let witnesses get away, but still, we gotta do what the boss tells us. Thanks anyway Harry," Tonks smiled, leaving Harry's room with Lily close behind her. He could hear them speaking in hushed tones as they headed downstairs.

He didn't know whether he should be frightened or not that two people the same age as him had just been murdered by Death Eaters, but he remembered Tom had said the wards on his home were some of the best around, so he wasn't feeling overly nervous. Lily seemed to be shaken by it though and he hoped she didn't try and force him to stay inside for the whole of summer.

He started on some more of his homework, his attention being drawn away from his work when he heard a scratching noise on his floor by his bed.

Despite being too old to believe in monsters under the bed, he nonetheless switched the large, central light on and grabbed the heaviest book he could find with one hand, and held his wand in the other.

He crouched down, peering under the frame. He shot straight back up again and immediately shouted for his parents.

He crouched back down and slammed the book down hard, making the rat scramble out from under his bed. He bounded over the furniture, trying to bash the book as hard as he could over the creature. He called for his parents again; so much for being alert in the middle of a war, and eventually managed to trap the rat in a corner.

He was about to bash the book over the creature's body, but where the rat had been was suddenly a man.

He was short and round with thinning hair, and was wearing tattered robes. His hands were raised in the air, one of which Harry noticed was metallic.

"Don't do it," he said in a squeaky voice, looking up at Harry with watery eyes. Harry grimaced at the man's looks.

"Give me one good reason I shouldn't bash your head in for hiding in my room, you creep," he hissed, raising the book higher.

"No! Please!" the man protested, "my name's Peter, Peter Pettigrew. I was a-a friend of your Dad's. You look so much like him; I'm guessing you're little Harry. I've n-not seen you since you were a baby."

Harry guessed this Peter must be the one his parents refused to mention.

"Well my parents hate you now, so I don't take that as a good reason not to hit you," he warned.

Peter leapt up, reaching at Harry with a silver, metal hand.

"You can't let them know-"he urged, but Harry had yelped at the cold feeling of the metal and
bashed Peter about the head with the book. It didn't do much damage, but the man let go off him and collapsed on the floor in fear.

He was about to have another swing, when his bedroom door was opened and his parents and Tonks came barging in.

"What the hell are you doing near my son, you traitorous little piece of vermin?" James growled, Stupefying the short man before he could respond.

"You're supposed to leave that to me, James," Tonks said jokingly, moving to where Pettigrew was and prodding him with her wand.

"He was under my bed, disguised as a rat," Harry told the room. "I guess he's an Animagus."

"No doubt running errands for his master," James spat.

"I'll take him to the Ministry. Good work Harry," Tonks said, taking hold of Peter and disapparating.

"He didn't hurt you, did he darling?" Lily asked, taking hold of Harry by the shoulders and looking him up and down for any signs of injury.

"No, he just freaked me out a bit. I hate the thought he might have been here for days," Harry answered truthfully.

Lily opened her mouth to speak, but James had bashed his fists onto the wall heavily, before hurrying out of the room, muttering something that sounded like 'beer'.

"I'm sorry, honey. You're alright now; I need to take care of your Dad," his mother said, wincing visibly as the sound of glasses clinking could be heard downstairs. Harry supposed James wouldn't have been able to give up alcohol in one night.

He turned his light off and lay down in his bed on top of the covers. It was far too early to sleep, but he was content just watching the ceiling.

"Do you actually have any hobbies or interests?" he heard Tom's voice say after a while. He turned to see the man stood watching him with a smirk. "I hear you got a Death Eater arrested."

"Sorry," Harry muttered, sitting up. "He seemed like a loser anyway; I beat him with a book."

"I'm not complaining. Pettigrew was a pathetic excuse of a man, and we'll be glad to see the end of him."

Tom sat down next to Harry, placing a number of books to his side.

"I've decided to teach you a valuable skill, Harry. It shall take some time to get right, but the end result will be most beneficial to you. Once you master this, you shall prove once and for all that you are better than those filth you attend school with."

"What is it?" Harry asked, looking at Tom with intrigue.

"Have you ever heard of Occlumency, Harry?"
"Occlumency? What's that?" Harry questioned, the word sounding strange on his tongue.

"Occlumency is, in simple terms, the act of defence against Legilimency, a skill which allows one to gain access to another's thoughts and memories at will. You will need to protect your mind from the likes of Dumbledore and a number of other teachers if you wish to keep your secret safe. Of course, Dumbledore is so highly trained it shall not be possible for you to stop him entirely; however I see no reason for him to distrust you as long as you keep to yourself and act as natural as possible. I don't imagine Dumbledore will be a threat much longer however," Tom answered, his eyes blazing in anger at the mention of the Headmaster's name. "Allow me to demonstrate Legilimency."

Tom raised his wand, and before Harry could react, flashes of his past were whirring past his eyes, happy memories of his childhood; the time he and his family went to Disneyland Paris when he was six, when he was nine and he flew on an adult broom for the first time on his own while James and Sirius stood beneath him with huge grins on their faces. Then came the newer memories, the bad ones; the one with him sat alone in the Great Hall with everyone acting as if he was invisible, when he broke down after Tom had left him, and then Sirius falling into the veil, into nothingness.

The images stopped and Harry realised he was on the floor, his hands pressed against the sides of his head. He blinked away the tears that had formed in his eyes after watching his Godfather's death again.

"Hogwarts has not been good to you," Tom murmured softly from above him. His eyes were not full of sympathy or concern; instead they seemed to hold simply interest.

"Did you see all of that?" Harry asked, climbing back onto the bed to sit beside Tom. The other man nodded.

"I saw most of it. A skilled Legilimens won't use the incantation to access a flurry of memories; rather they will wordlessly enter your mind and be able to access the memories and thoughts they desire in an instant, however using the direct spell is the easiest way to train you against an attack. I have brought with me a number of books on the subject of Occlumency; I would like you to read the introductory chapters, and in three days' time I shall cast the spell again."

"So those times I thought you were reading my mind, you actually were?" Harry enquired, inwardly cringing at the thought; who knew what Tom had seen in his mind.

"Oh no, I have had no wish to look inside your head, Harry. I've found that you are rather fascinating to read," Tom muttered, placing such an intense look on Harry that the Gryffindor found himself unable to hold the gaze and he looked away blushing.

"What exactly am I meant to be hiding though?" Harry asked instead, staring at the floor which he suddenly found very interesting.

"Our allegiance for one thing; although there are a number of students willing to go as far as being the Dark Lord's servants, so you shan't be alone on that front, however there will be one other student with whom you will share a darker secret; one which can help bring down Neville Longbottom," Tom told him, using his fingers to pull Harry's chin up so he could look into his eyes. "I believe you're familiar with Draco Malfoy?"
Harry nodded; he knew perfectly well who Draco Malfoy was. He wasn't overly keen on the Slytherin, but he wasn't too much of a problem compared to other students. He had never called Harry any of the names that most other students called him; if he was going to insult Harry then it was the usual 'Mudblood-lover' type phrases that he used on most of the Gryffindors in their year. Most of the time though, Draco loved to pick fights with Neville, Ron and Hermione. At first, the younger Malfoy had wanted to befriend Neville, likely to be in cahoots with somebody 'famous', but Neville had turned him down for being mean to Hermione, and Draco had ever since been filled with resentment. He hated Hermione purely because of her blood status, and the Weasley's and the Malfoy's had been enemies for years.

"Well Draco has been issued with a very important task," Tom continued, the red in his eyes almost glowing. "Completing this mission would cause Longbottom's support system to come falling down, and he won't last long without it. It is of the upmost importance that the task is fulfilled, and it is down to Draco to be sure of that, but it's a difficult mission for a mere boy with no particular talent. Harry, you need to offer Draco your support and assistance in this; you won't need to do anything else, but you will be able to better Draco."

Harry nodded mutely, mind racing. He couldn't imagine what sort of task this was, and he couldn't understand why a sixteen year old was being asked to carry out something which seemed so important. He then remembered the newspaper article saying Lucius Malfoy had been sent to Azkaban. This was after he had been caught as a Death Eater in the Department of Mysteries, where he had been desperately trying to regain a crystal, but then it had smashed. Everything suddenly seemed to click into place.

"What happens to Draco if he fails?" Harry asked, and for not even a second Tom looked pleasantly surprised before an unreadable mask fell back into place. "I mean, this is Lucius Malfoy's punishment isn't it? Making his only child attempt to do something difficult without the needed skill? I know that He doesn't go lightly on people when they fail either."

"Well tell me what you believe will happen to the Malfoy boy if he fails," Tom answered vaguely, and the look in his eyes was enough to scare Harry slightly. They didn't hold any particular emotion, but something dark seemed to be lurking behind.

"He'll be killed, won't he?" Harry questioned, feeling horror run through him as Tom nodded.

"Eventually," Tom expanded. "If I had my way he would simply be killed for failing his task, however, and as strange as this will sound because in a way I am simply saying this about myself, but my other half," here Tom paused, his face suggesting he found some amusement in the choice of words, "can be rather maniacal at times. Death would be simply too easy. He is well known for his torture techniques, so I suppose it will be up to you if you want to give Draco a chance."

Harry knew then he wouldn't be able to say no, no matter what the task was; he couldn't have the death of somebody on his conscience, otherwise he'd be just as bad as Neville. "So what is it he has to do then?" Harry enquired instead, not surprised when Tom shook his head.

"When I deem you acceptable at Occlumency I'll tell you; for now it could potentially be a risk."

With that said, Tom bid Harry a goodnight and left him alone. Harry spent most of the night awake, wondering what Draco could possibly have to do.

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The next morning Harry was woken by his mother shaking him gently awake.
"You need to get ready, sweetheart. We're going to Diagon Alley soon," she said softly, but he could feel her temper rising as he didn't get up straight away. He had only managed a few hours of sleep and couldn't muster the energy to get out of bed, let alone walk around Diagon Alley.

"Why do we have to go today?" he moaned as he stumbled out of bed, tripping over his covers as he dragged them across the floor with him.

"The Weasleys are going today; Neville and Hermione will be there too," Lily explained, making Harry grimace. That was even less of an incentive.

"Why do we have to go with them?" he asked, looking at his mum pointedly. A guilty look crossed her face for a moment.

"Neville gets extra protection for obvious reasons. It's safer to go with them."

"Or make us more of a target," Harry muttered under his breath, but Lily still heard him and rolled her eyes before she left the room to allow him privacy to get ready.

He yawned widely as he crossed over to the bathroom. He dropped the bed cover and left it in a heap by the door; he'd pick it up later.

He cringed as he looked in the bathroom mirror. All he could see was his hair; it was messy enough anyway, he didn't think he had ever seen it lay straight, but with the tossing and turning he had been doing last night it made him look like he'd shoved his hand in an electric socket.

He didn't particularly like much about his appearance, apart from his eyes. He had grown up the spitting image of his dad, but as he grew more into adulthood his features seem to have sharpened, only not in a masculine way; it was just another thing for people to mock him for. He hated that he looked girly; he wanted to have handsome features like Tom had, and heck, even Draco Malfoy wasn't too far below Tom in terms of masculine attractiveness. He'd be very happy if he looked like the blond.

It took him almost an hour to get ready, and when he arrived downstairs his mother was tapping her foot impatiently. His sister Heather was sat on the sofa, not even bothering to say hello to him. He presumed his dad was in bed with a hangover but he didn't want to ask. Instead he just reluctantly Flooed to the Weasley's home.

He had never been to the house before, the Burrow he believed they called it. It was cosy. It was cramped but not in an overbearing way, and seemed to be filled with bits and bobs of all sorts. He could tell it was an entirely magical household. It was a strange site to see; Lily wanted them to be proud of their blood so in his house there was a mixture of magical and muggle appliances. It looked a lot easier to wash up pots and pans by magic than doing it by hand.

Before he could finish looking around the house, a woman appeared in front of him and grasped both of his hands gently and pulled him into a semi-hug.

"Hello dear. You must be Harry?" she asked, and Harry knew it was the mother Weasley. He had seen her at Platform 9 ¾ but he had never actually spoken to her, despite the fact Molly and Lily had become very good friends since the Order of the Phoenix reformed.

He nodded as a form of reply, and she beamed at him before greeting Heather just as enthusiastically. He glanced at the other occupants in the room; Ron, Neville, Hermione, Ginny, a man Harry presumed was Molly's husband, an older red-haired boy who was likely Ron and Ginny's brother, and Fleur Delacour, who looked just as beautiful as she had done at the Triwizard
Tournament. She was holding hands with the red-haired boy, and Harry thought they looked good together.

After mumbled greetings to everyone, the whole group besides Fleur and the man he now knew was her fiancé Bill, clambered into some Ministry of Magic issued cars which took them straight to Diagon Alley.

The Alley was almost deserted when they got there; half the shops had closed down or been broken into, and only a few people wandered the street, most of them walking in a hurried fashion with cloaks drawn up.

After getting what they needed for school, they headed to Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes, the shop that Fred and George Weasley owned. Being inside the joke shop was like a very different world; it was colourful and lively, packed with people who didn't seem to have a care in the world.

Harry had planned to find a corner to stand in until everyone was ready to leave, but Ginny ended up grabbing his wrist and pulling him into the main shop.

"We can't have you standing around looking miserable," she told him with a grin on her face.

Harry tugged his wrist from her grip but walked alongside her regardless.

"So are you going to buy anything, Harry?" Ginny asked, her own arms full of items.

"Oh, er, I don't think so. It's not really my thing, which is strange in a way because my dad loves this sort of thing," he murmured in answer.

"He should meet Fred and George then; they'd probably idolise him. Oh, what's that?" Ginny said excitedly, running over to a bright pink display.

Harry followed her, not caring he seemed to be the only male in the vicinity.

"What do you need a love potion for Ginny? Bored of Dean already?" This question came from Heather, and the younger girl had a hopeful look on her face. It was no secret that Heather and her friends seemed to crush on the other boys in Harry's dorm, although Neville's fame made him the favourite.

"Don't you think you're a bit young for him?" Ginny retorted, and Heather pulled a face.

"I'm only a year younger than you," she spat back, but she seemed to give up and sulked off with a friend.

Ginny rolled her eyes. "I'm sorry you have to put up with that," she grimaced, and Harry couldn't help but smile. He decided he liked Ginny.

"Can't be worse than six older brothers," he pointed out, causing Ginny to laugh, before she got distracted by a cage of creatures that were basically balls of pink and purple fluff.

Harry noticed a flash of blond hair go by the window outside, recognising it as Draco Malfoy. He paid no more attention to it until a few moments later when Ron, Neville and Hermione walked by quickly too.

"Ginny, I'm just going to pop to another shop. I'll be back in a few minutes," Harry whispered to Ginny, who only nodded; too busy cooing over the Pygmy Puffs.
He ran through the shop and back to the Alley. The trio were already part way down it, clearly following Draco. If they already suspected him of something, they could hold Draco back and make him more likely to fail, so he decided he had to stop them.

He tried to run as quietly as he could in order to catch up to them. He ended up trailing just behind them, and as they turned after Draco into Knockturn Alley, Harry sprinted to meet them directly, not wanting to shout to them to get their attention.

"Why are you going down there?" he asked. Ron jumped and he had Hermione and Neville pointing wands at him in an instant. They lowered them as they realised who he was.

"We..." Neville started, looking at his friends for help.

"We just saw-" Hermione began, but Ron interrupted.

"Hermione wanted another book from Flourish and Blotts," the redhead stated. The other three could only stare at him.

"You mean the shop the other end of Diagon Alley?" Harry asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I told you this wasn't a shortcut, Ron," Neville piped up. "Do you want to let the others know we'll be back in a bit, Harry?"

"Oh no, I needed Flourish and Blotts myself; we can go together now," he replied, inwardly laughing at the disappointment on Ron and Neville's faces. Hermione seemed almost relieved and she marched forwards with Harry, the other boys trailing behind miserably.

Harry ended up buying a book in the end so that he wouldn't look too suspicious, and likewise, when they went back to the joke shop and Molly and Lily asked where they had been, Harry lied and told them they had been in the bookstore the whole time. He didn't know if this was what Tom meant when he said to help Draco, but he found he rather enjoyed what he was doing.

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They hadn't spent much longer in Diagon Alley after that.

When they returned home, Lily tried to convince Heather to stay the night, but she refused and ended up shouting at James before she Flooed back to Snape's. Seeing the hurt look on his father's face was heart-breaking. He missed his old dad, the one who was care-free and happy, but was still fiercely devoted and protective of his family.

He didn't know what he could say to help, however, so he went to hide himself in his room, only having enough time to put his school stuff down before Tom appeared in the room.

"Do you not know how to tidy?" he scowled, waving his wand and organising everything Harry had left on the floor in the morning.

"I helped Draco today already," Harry said, ignoring Tom's comment about his room. "Neville and his friends were stalking him, so I stopped them."

The older boy looked impressed. "That's good; Draco was doing something rather important today. I can't stay for long tonight. I'm going to be away for two days, but I expect you to keep up with your reading. Oh, I've got something for you," Tom said, reaching into his pocket and bringing out a small vial with a clear liquid inside it. "It's not Veritaserum, if that's what you're thinking. This is my own concoction; you need to put one drop in your father's drink, and then tell him everything
you think about him."

"What is it? Is it dangerous?" Harry asked, eyeing the bottle warily.

Tom smirked and leaned forwards, until their faces were only inches apart. Harry suddenly felt overwhelmed and he hoped his face didn't look as flushed as it felt.

"Don't you trust me, Harry?" Tom asked, the look in his eyes so intense that Harry couldn't find his voice and he just nodded, not even sure if that was the right response. Tom smirked again and he pushed the vial into one of Harry's hands, using both his hands to close Harry's fingers over it and holding the pose.

"Good," Tom hissed in his ear, "I shall see you in two days." With that, he spoke something in Parseltongue before disappearing from his room.

Harry waited a moment to make sure Tom had really gone before deciding to go for a shower; a cold one.

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After Harry had finished off in his rather intense shower, he crept to where James kept his drinks and grabbed the one nearest to him. He poured in a drop of the potion, and sat down, waiting for his dad to appear, and hoping everything went to plan.

It wasn't too much later that James appeared, blinking as he took in the form of Harry pretending to drink from the bottle.

"What do you think you're doing?" he demanded, grabbing the drink from his hands and taking a swig of it. "I don't need your mother on at me for letting you drink underage." He took another gulp of the drink, and Harry trusted that the mysterious potion had already taken effect.

"It would be your fault; you're setting a bad example," Harry said quietly, waiting for a denial or to be yelled at, but it never came. Instead his father sat back in his seat, with his eyes glazed over. He just nodded while not really focusing on anything. Harry wasn't quite sure what the point of this potion was, but Tom told him to tell his dad everything, so that's what he was going to do. "I don't understand why you drink so much; I don't understand why you feel this guilt. You weren't there so you had nothing to do with it. Me on the other hand, I was there; I watched as he battled and I watched him die. I still feel the pain, but I get on with things because I know I have to. You though, you're just being weak. There's a war on and you've selfishly abandoned your family. We need you and you've become useless. I can't hate you, but it's no wonder Heather does, and I'm surprised Mum is still with you. You fought to get her, but you can't fight to keep her, can you? If you carry on drinking you're going to destroy our family, and then you'll have nobody." He finished ranting, his anger boiling as he stared at James. He regretted his words almost immediately after he had said them; he didn't really feel that way, it had been his anger taking over, and he felt horribly guilty about what he had said, but his father didn't show any sign of listening to him; he was still sat staring into space with the vacant look in his eyes.

Harry shook his head and made to leave the room, but before he could shut the door behind him, James was at his feet, grabbing hold of his legs and looking at him with watery eyes. "I'm sorry," he croaked, but Harry shook him off him.

"Dad, you aren't you anymore," was all Harry said before he ran to his room. He slammed the door behind him and found himself unable to hold the tears in any longer. His father was broken, not even a shadow of his former self, and it was tearing apart his family. His hatred for Neville
Longbottom was now at its peak, and he couldn't wait to make the boy pay.

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The next two days seemed to pass in a blur. James made no acknowledge that Harry had spoken to him about his drinking, but he seemed to have a newfound determination to beat his problem.

Harry meanwhile had thrown himself into studying Occlumency. The more he read, the more fascinating he found it. He had no wish to become a Legilimens himself, but he found it disturbing that others enjoyed breaking into other's minds, so he thought learning to protect himself was important.

He had devoured the books, reading from cover to cover instead of focusing on the introductory chapters, and he had found that there were three main ways to stop a Legilimens; the easiest was to block out the attacker by concentrating on just one emotion or thought. There was also the option to split emotions or thoughts from each other and hide the ones that needed protecting in the back of the mind. The most difficult form of Occlumency involved creating false images to trick the Legilimens, but Harry thought he would wait until he was perfect at the other two methods before attempting that one.

It involved a lot of focus, so Harry had paid attention to the advice the books gave and had started meditating, trying to clear out all thoughts. After a while he got the hang of it, so he moved on to trying to focus on purely one thing. That proved to be a lot harder, but the more he worked, the closer he was getting. Unfortunately for him, this could be futile when up against a skilled Legilimens, but it was the only choice he had.

Tom was supposed to arrive at some point today, but Harry had no idea when. Being as nervous as he was, he decided to meditate to prepare himself. He wanted Tom to be proud of him, so the more he practiced the better.

He lost track of time, as he normally did when he meditated properly, but when he heard somebody say his name his mind immediately came to life and he jumped and swore loudly, causing a chuckle to come from the man in the room.

Harry hadn't heard Tom utter any sign of amusement before, and he thought it sounded wonderful.

"I'm glad to see you've done as I asked," the dark wizard said, lips still twitching upwards slightly as Harry tried to calm his racing heart down. "Your shock is a good sign; it shows you were entirely focused."

"Great," Harry muttered, attempting to recollect himself. "So, er, was your thing you were doing successful?"

"Very," Tom replied. "Are you ready to see how you've improved?"

Harry nodded, but he wasn't ready really. He tried to set his mind into motion, focusing on just one memory.

Tom said the spell, and for a moment Harry thought he had perfected it, but he could feel something forcing it's way into his mind, and eventually his defence broke, memories and emotions running through his head, although when he saw the door to his bathroom door in his mind, he panicked and immediately thought of Diagon Alley, the shopping area being the first thing that came to his mind.

Tom pulled out of his mind, and everything came back into focus. He wasn't sure when he ended
up on the floor, but he felt proud of himself, and it appeared Tom agreed.

"Very good for a first attempt," he complimented. "There must have been something in that bathroom you didn't want me to see."

Harry blushed and refused to make eye contact; he knew Legilmens needed eye contact if they wanted to access deeper memories, and he didn't want Tom to have any idea of what Harry had done with Tom in mind.

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The next four weeks were very much the same. Tom was with him every day, practicing Occlumency almost constantly. It was hard work, but the results were showing. Harry had practically perfected the blocking technique now, at least when Tom dropped his own skill level down to the average Legilmens. He was nowhere close to stopping Tom from getting to his mind, but he could block him out enough to make Tom happy. He wasn't as close to perfecting the separating technique, but Tom was happy with where he was at, and believed Harry would be adept enough to protect his mind as long as he didn't act suspiciously.

"I want you to get involved with Longbottom and his friends," Tom had told him one evening. "Get close to them, learn their secrets and give them reason to trust you."

Being in with the 'Golden Trio', as they were dubbed by other students, would certainly give Dumbledore no reason to suspect him of working alongside Dark wizards.

Tonight was Harry's last night before he went back to Hogwarts. His parents had called Heather round and they had had a nice family meal. James' progress was going almost as well as Harry's; he wasn't officially recovered, but he had managed to gain some control over himself again, and he was starting to turn back into his old self.

Despite some normality returning to his family life, he still insisted on locking himself in his room for the evening and spending the rest of the time with Tom. He wasn't sure how often he'd be able to see the older wizard once he was at Hogwarts, so he was going to make the most of their time now.

Harry was happy when Tom told him he wouldn't be having Occlumency, and instead they sat together on Harry's bed, while Tom told him about how pleased he was with Harry's progress, and how he'd fit perfectly into the new world.

The way Tom described this new world made it sound beautiful. He knew Tom was leaving out the torture and destruction of Muggles and Muggle-borns, but Tom told him of how he would be in Tom's league after they'd won the War, and that everyone who was ever horrible to him would be put in their proper place, while those who deserved better would be treated as such, even those who were prejudiced against by the current Ministry, such as werewolves.

"I knew a werewolf once," Harry muttered softly. He could feel tiredness washing over him but he wanted to stay awake. "He's disappeared now; we don't know if he killed himself or just ran away."

"Remus Lupin is very much alive," Tom answered, and Harry didn't know whether to feel happy or betrayed that Remus had left them. "I cannot tell you too much, but he is in good hands. He was saved from sure death of his own hand by his Sire."

"Greyback?" Harry asked, though he already knew the answer. He hoped that Greyback was taking care of Remus; the older werewolf was incredibly sadistic and cruel, but a Sire wouldn't turn away
one of their own if they needed help. It was in the werewolf code, Lupin had told him, but most people would rather never see Greyback again and preferred to suffer on their own.

"You're tired, Harry. Sleep," Tom said gently as Harry dropped against him, but the Gryffindor shook his head.

"I'm not going to see you as much anymore; I want this to last," Harry argued sleepily.

"You'll be seeing me more than you think. Draco will need to stay in touch with me, so you can come along with him."

"What is it Draco has to do?" Harry asked, now trying to blink away the heaviness of his eyes. He wondered if Tom had put a Sleeping Curse on him.

"Just sleep, Harry. I shall stay with you all night," Tom told him instead, and the urge to sleep came over Harry so strong he knew it was a spell, but he couldn't find it in him to care; he just wanted to close his eyes.

He felt Tom push him down, and as he drifted off, he felt a gentle hand against his cheek, and he heard a distant voice say, "murder Albus Dumbledore."
When Harry awoke the next morning, Tom was gone, but a letter rested on his bedside table with the words 'Draco Malfoy' written on it in Tom's elegant handwriting. Harry presumed he was to give it to the Slytherin student.

Harry got ready slowly, not sure how he was feeling about returning to Hogwarts. He found that, for once, he was dreading leaving his parents, not sure what could happen to them while he was away. He wondered how the war would affect Hogwarts, if it would at all.

He trusted that Dumbledore would keep Voldemort and his Death Eaters out of Hogwarts, but as he thought of the elderly headmaster, Tom's final words last night came back to him; Draco was going to murder Dumbledore, and he had to help.

He had promised Tom he would help Draco, and, in Harry's mind, either Dumbledore or Malfoy was going to be killed, and Dumbledore had lived a long time while Draco still had so much ahead of him. He would of course, prefer if they could both somehow stay alive, but Harry didn't see that happening.

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The Potter family made it to Platform 9 ¾ with not too long to go before eleven o'clock. Surprisingly the platform was still bustling with people; apparently most parents had decided Hogwarts was more likely to be safer than their own homes. Harry found it kind of sad that everything in their lives seemed to revolve around Voldemort nowadays.

Lily was alternating between Harry and Heather; hugging them and fussing over their hair and outfits, much to her children's displeasure. Heather seemed to constantly be checking that her friends weren't around, unable to bear the thought of being embarrassed in front of them.

"Hello, Harry," a gentle voice said from behind them, and Harry spun around to smile at Luna. Her hair had grown even longer over the holidays, and she had a large number of bracelets on both her wrists. He reckoned she had collected them while travelling with her father in the summer. The man was standing next to Luna, dressed in an eccentric outfit with clashing colours. Harry noticed a necklace dangling from the man's neck; it was a triangle with a circle inside, and a straight line running down the middle. Luna's father didn't say anything; he simply nodded in greeting, which suited Harry just fine.

"You must be Harry's parents; it's nice to meet you, I'm Luna," Luna said, moving over to shake hands with Lily and James. "Would you like a copy of The Quibbler?"

Lily nodded and accepted a copy of the magazine, flicking through it with what Harry knew was false interest. Luna and her father didn't make any acknowledgment that they recognised it as pretence, although there was a chance they were used to it.

"What are these?" Lily asked, pulling out a pair of pink and silver glasses from the magazine. They had five whisker type shapes coming off the side, and one of the lenses was a brighter shade of pink, while the other was blue.

"They're Spectrespecs," Luna's dad spoke up for the first time. "They enable the wearer to see Wrackspurts; they're little invisible creatures which can create a fuzzy effect on the brain. The platform will be swarming with them; they love teenage minds you see. I'm Xenophilius by the
way."

Lily raised her eyebrow and forced out a laugh before introducing herself. She then handed the glasses to Harry and turned away to focus on Heather. His mother had never been one for fantasy 'nonsense', as she called it. She had point blank refused to allow Harry to take Divination.

James stepped forwards to shake hands with Xenophilius, and then he began to make polite conversation with the odd man. Harry thought it would be good for his dad to make some new friends, although it would obviously never live up to what he had before.

To shake those thoughts from his mind, he slipped the Spectrespecs on. The world immediately took on a pink and blue colour, and a pattern was just visible before his eyes. It reminded him of a Kaleidoscope; he had had one as a child and it was always his favourite toy. As he looked around, he was slightly surprised to see little specs flying around some people's heads.

He rather liked the way the world looked with Spectrespecs on. Heather apparently didn't like the look of Harry and Luna wearing the glasses however, and she hugged James and Lily goodbye before running off, muttering something about her having a freak of a brother.

Harry couldn't find it in him to care, and he pushed the Spectrespecs to the top of his head as he said goodbye to his parents, and walked with Luna to find a compartment on the Hogwarts Express.

They managed to find themselves an empty one, and they settled in as the train began to pick up speed.

"How have you been doing after Sirius passing?" Luna asked, looking at Harry sympathetically. "I know you don't want to talk about him, but I'd just like to know if you're okay."

"I'm okay now-sort of. I don't like to think about it too much," Harry answered, and Luna nodded, taking hold of his hand and running her thumb soothingly over the back of it.

"You seem happy though; I don't get the feeling you're waiting for your friend to return anymore," the Ravenclaw said with a knowing smile, and though Harry didn't know too much about Legilimency, he thought Luna would make a fine Legilimens.

"Yeah, he came back," Harry replied with a grin. He felt a blush creeping onto his cheeks, so he dropped the Spectrespecs back over his eyes and looked as the countryside rushed past with a new look.

For the first couple of hours, Harry asked Luna about the travelling she had been doing over the summer. Her and her father had gone to Sweden to search for a Crumple-Horned Snorkack, but unfortunately hadn't been able to find any, though they had seen many other creatures.

A knock on their compartment window made Luna stop mid-sentence, and they looked up to see Ginny Weasley smiling at them. She opened the door and stepped inside, a roll of parchment in her hands.

"Cool glasses," she said as greeting. "Mind if I try them on?"

Harry tossed her the Spectrespecs and Ginny looked genuinely amazed as she peeked through them before throwing them back to Harry, along with the parchment.

He tugged off the velvet ribbon and unravelled the scroll.
'Harry Potter,

I would be delighted if you could join me for some lunch in Compartment C.

Sincerely, Professor Horace Slughorn.'

"Who's Slughorn?" Harry questioned, looking at both girls for an answer.

"New teacher; guessing Defence Against the Dark Arts. Neville said Dumbledore was very keen on getting him to come to Hogwarts," Ginny answered, a crooked smile crossing her face. "I guess that means if we don't like him it won't matter; he'll be gone in a year." Ginny was of course, referring to the fact they had never had a Defence Against the Dark Arts professor last more than a year. There was a rumour the job was literally cursed.

"Are you going, Ginny?" Harry asked, and the redhead nodded.

"I hexed Zacharias Smith and Slughorn saw. I was expecting a detention but he told me to meet him for lunch as soon as I'd given you your invitation."

"Oh, I don't think I'll go. Thank him for me though," Harry muttered, sliding the glasses back down and staring determinedly out the window.

He barely had time to move his head when Luna stood up and pulled Harry from his seat.

"You should go, Harry. I'll be okay on my own; you must be important to get an invitation," the blonde said, practically pushing Harry out of the compartment and into a grinning Ginny.

Harry sighed and begrudgingly followed the younger Gryffindor down the train.

Compartment C was near the front end of the train, by the Prefect Carriages. There weren't too many people in there; an old man Harry guessed was Horace Slughorn, his sister Heather, Neville Longbottom, a Slytherin in his year named Blaise Zabini, a seventh year Ravenclaw Harry vaguely recalled as being Marcus Belby, and a seventh year Gryffindor named Cormac McLaggen.

Professor Slughorn, a slightly overweight balding man, beamed as Harry and Ginny walked through the door and he shook Harry's hand enthusiastically.

"Hello m'boy! You must be Harry?" the older man said as greeting, and Harry just nodded, moving to take a seat in-between Ginny and Heather.

Slughorn went about each of the members of the group to interview them briefly. It turned out most of them were connected in some way to somebody famous or important. McLaggen so far seemed to be the Professor's favourite, but Harry had a feeling the man was saving Neville until last, and he seemed to skip over Ginny completely.

"And now, Harry and Heather Potter," Horace announced, turning his attention on the siblings. "I can see some of your mother in both of you, but you, Harry, I knew who you were the second I saw you; you have your mother's eyes you see, a beautiful shade of green recognisable anywhere."

Harry looked away awkwardly as Heather stared at him with a jealous expression. Harry hadn't heard his mother mention Slughorn before, but he had learnt the man had taught at Hogwarts before, so it was likely she was in the club he formed during his first teaching post.

"Lily was immensely talented; I suspect she's passed something down to you two. How is she doing lately? Last year I spoke to her and she told me she was working part time at St Mungo's and
part time at a muggle hospital as well," Horace continued, and Harry noticed the way he said 'muggle' wasn't entirely natural.

"She's at St Mungo's full time now," Heather answered, batting her eyelashes at the Professor. "They've had an increase in casualties lately and they insisted she worked more hours. I'm planning on becoming a Healer when I'm older too."

Professor Slughorn just smiled and nodded, turning his focus entirely on Harry. "How about you, m'boy? Are you planning on following in your mother's footsteps or do you have other plans in mind?"

"Err, I'm not sure yet," he answered quietly, "I like Arithmancy and Ancient Runes, so I want to see if I can combine them somehow. I did want to be a Curse-Breaker but I'm not taking N.E.W.T Potions," he finished with a shrug; truthfully, at the moment all that appealed was living in a war-free zone with Tom-perhaps in a villa in the South of France. He laughed to himself as he imagined the younger Dark Lord retiring to live a life in the sun.

Slughorn laughed along with him heartily, though Harry had no idea why. "Why ever aren't you taking Potions?" the professor asked, suddenly more serious.

"Oh, I only got an E; we needed an O to take it at a higher level," Harry replied, not bothered in the slightest that he'd miss out on seeing Snape.

"Well I suppose I can tell you-you'll be finding out in a few hours anyway, but I'm teaching Potions this year!" Horace announced with a big smile, the reaction from the students not nearly as happy. "I'm perfectly happy to accept you into my class with an Exceeds Expectations. I'll hope to you see you there; you as well Mr. Longbottom..."

Horace began trailing off to talk to Neville, talking over the many stories Neville had to tell. The Boy Who Lived turned bright red as he spoke, and Heather seemed to be staring daggers at Harry rather than listening.

Slughorn took a fair amount of time talking to Neville, and when he finally finished the sun was starting to set, and Harry hadn't even managed to give Draco Malfoy his letter yet. It was still tucked into his pocket, so as Blaise stood and left the compartment without saying goodbye, only nodding his head towards Slughorn, Harry excused himself afterwards, figuring it would be easier to get to Draco using Zabini.

He tapped on Luna's compartment as he walked by; she was sat by herself, contently reading The Quibbler. He used his fingers to indicate for her to follow him, and as she stood he began trailing Blaise again.

Luna caught up to him, humming a tune. She seemed to know what Harry was doing without him telling her.

As Zabini turned to open a compartment door at the bottom of the train, Harry ran to catch him before he could go in, though combined with the speed of the train he ended up colliding with the boy. Blaise glared at him and Harry laughed nervously; Zabini was thin but also incredibly tall and his height was all he needed to be intimidating.

"Sorry," he muttered, rubbing the back of his neck. "I need to give Draco Malfoy a letter."

He could feel the other Slytherin students watching their interaction, so Harry waved the letter about to try and prove himself. Zabini eyed the parchment warily for a second before he nodded
and gestured for Harry and Luna to go inside.

"Oh no, Lovegood, it looks like some made up creature has flown into your hair and made it into a nest," Pansy Parkinson said nastily, her sniggering stopping when Luna smiled and shook her head.

"Only Capilmons attack people's hair, but they don't make nests. Avisals do make nests, though I don't imagine they would live in someone's hair; they prefer to live away from humans on the mountain tops you see," the Ravenclaw stated. Crabbe and Goyle looked completely lost.

"Potter says he has a letter for you, Malfoy," Zabini told the blond, and Draco looked at Harry sneering.

Harry waved the letter in front of his face, and Malfoy seemed to instantly freeze. He looked in horror from the letter to Harry; the others were watching him with intrigue.

"Get out," he all but whispered, still staring transfixed at the writing.

"You heard him, freaks, leave," Pansy cried, standing and waving her arms wildly.

"Not Potter," Draco hissed. "The rest of you, get out. I need to talk to Potter in private."

Pansy looked scandalised as she followed Luna out of the compartment alongside a smirking Blaise. Crabbe and Goyle seemed happy to leave once they had filled their pockets with snacks.

Draco pulled the blinds down on the compartment door forcibly and waved his wand, muttering a silencing charm.

"Where did you get this?" he asked darkly, eyeing Harry with suspicion.

"I got given it," Harry told Draco truthfully. The young Malfoy narrowed his eyes. "Read it before you ask me anything else."

Draco scowled but obeyed, his reaction going from angered to almost relieved as he read through Tom's words.

"So, tell me, Potter; why does a boy from a disgustingly Light family get into business with the son of the Dark Lord?" Malfoy asked finally.

Harry guessed that Voldemort had told his followers Tom was his son for some reason; probably to ensure they believed Tom wouldn't be as powerful, and so they would put all their devotion into Voldemort rather than his younger, saner self.

"He's the person who's always been there for me; I wanted to help him," Harry answered, trying to bat away the nagging thought that Luna may not have been there for him in second year, but she had been every year since, and it was his fault she wasn't there in the first place.

Draco raised an eyebrow. "And to help him you offered to act as an assistant to me?"

"I didn't offer," Harry interjected.

"So you decided to help with the idea to steal my glory?" Draco muttered angrily, and Harry rolled his eyes.

"I don't want to kill Dumbledore at all you prat," Harry said, dropping his voice low; he noticed Draco pale as the boy realised there was no doubt Harry was telling the truth. "But you must know what will happen to you if you fail; I can't let that happen."
"So you—you really are a Death Eater then?" Draco stuttered, and seeing the normally perfectly poised aristocrat come undone slightly seemed like a sign of what was to come.

"I'm not a Death Eater; I don't want to torture and kill people, and I don't hate Muggles and Muggleborns; I just want to help break down Neville Longbottom."

"Longbottom? I thought you were the best of friends; why do you want him to lose?" Draco asked, looking genuinely curious.

"He ruined my life; he stole friends from me as well as making me the outcast of Gryffindor, and then he cowered as my boyfriend died. He couldn't stop Bellatrix Lestrange from killing my Godfather, which has resulted in my unofficial Godfather running away with the werewolves, turned my father into an alcoholic and ripped my family apart," Harry hissed, anger bubbling inside him.

"Longbottom's good at ruining other people's families," Malfoy said almost gently. "It's thanks to him my father is in Azkaban and my mother has been forced to try and uphold our family name, even when she's falling apart. That is why Dumbledore has to die; it's the only way I can help my family become what it was. I know I can do it and I don't need your help."

Harry smiled slightly; Draco had almost succeeded at being sympathetic, if only his brattish attitude hadn't been woven in.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Draco continued. "Seeing as you don't want to get your hands dirty, we'll make a plan. You never come to me; I'll always come to you if I need something, even if it's something small like covering for me. I'll get us partnered up in Ancient Runes so we can discuss my progress once a week without arousing suspicion. Riddle is demanding that I bring you with me to our meetings, so every Saturday you'll come to the dungeons to meet me. He also said if you ever want to see him at any time then you come to me to get access, but I'd rather you didn't bother me unless it's absolutely necessary."

Harry nodded; that situation suited him fine, only he'd visit Malfoy as much as he wanted to in order to see Tom.

"You can go now," Malfoy said as a way to tell Harry to leave. The Gryffindor rolled his eyes again and yanked the door open, where Luna was stood amongst the Slytherins, chatting happily to the group who seemed to be trying to drown her out unsuccessfully.

Luna smiled when she saw him and immediately shut up and began her walk back up the train. Blaise inclined his head at Harry when he walked by, almost like he had passed a Slytherin rite of passage.

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They had arrived at Hogwarts not much later. Harry and Luna ended up in a carriage with Ginny, Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnigan. They rode to the castle in relative silence; Luna showed Harry her favourite pages in The Quibbler while Ginny and Dean seemed to be trying to make out as much as they could without Ron around to interfere. Harry didn't bother to try and make Seamus feel included; he had never done it for him.

Lavender Brown and Parvati Patil joined the group as they walked to the Great Hall. Harry and Luna were walking at the back, not joining in the conversation, but Harry could still hear everything that was being said.
"So Ginny, any news on Ron and Hermione Granger?" Lavender asked, looking at Parvati. Both girls broke into giggles.

"News?" Ginny questioned with amusement evident in her voice.

"You know...are they dating?" Lavender expanded, and when Ginny said they weren't, the other two girls proceeded to giggle even more. It didn't take an idiot to work out that Lavender fancied Ron, he just wondered if it would break up the trio if Lavender and Ron were to get together. Harry knew that Hermione was into Ron, but not enough to act on it, but if Ron was taken, Harry expected to see a jealous side of Hermione.

After the Sorting Feast had finished and they had returned to the Gryffindor dorms, Harry took Lavender to one side and told her he thought Ron had been looking at her all night.
By his second day back at Hogwarts, Harry was already beginning to feel the stress of N.E.W.T level work. His first class had been Ancient Runes. There were only four of them in the class; Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy, Justin Finch-Fletchley and himself. Malfoy all but grabbed him when they entered the classroom, announcing loudly that he refused to work with Mudbloods. He enjoyed the class, but the huge amount of coursework they got at the end of it seemed to be the start of the stress.

Then came Defence Against the Dark Arts. Snape made more of an effort than usual to bring Harry down from the moment class began, and then he announced they were to practice nonverbal spells. This involved immense concentration, so Harry tried to think back to his Occlumency lessons with Tom, but Snape refused to leave him alone, breaking his concentration at every opportunity and then blaming him for it. Harry was sure the professor had gained more hatred for him over the summer and the lesson ended with him getting even more coursework.

Potions followed Defence Against the Dark Arts, and because Harry hadn't bought a textbook, he had to borrow a used one. Ron and Neville grabbed the presentable looking one for them to share, leaving Harry with an old tattered one covered in notes. The name on the back simply read 'The Half-Blood Prince', but following the notes led Harry to make the best potion of the class, which resulted in him being given a bottle of Felix Felicis, a luck potion, by a beaming Professor Slughorn.

His other electives of Arithmancy, Charms and Transfiguration gave a large amount of homework as well, although on a plus Harry was starting to get the hang of nonverbal spells without Snape breathing down his neck continuously.

The procrastinating side of him couldn't face going to the library straight away to start on the workload, so he began an aimless walk around the castle, lost in thoughts until he almost crashed into Albus Dumbledore; he really needed to work on looking where he was walking.

"Sorry," he muttered, keeping his eyes downcast. Dumbledore simply chuckled, and when Harry brought his eyes back up to meet the Headmaster's, it occurred to him that this man would not be around for much longer if Draco succeeded.

He felt himself pale, and all thoughts of school work left his mind; he wouldn't need to worry about his education when he was locked away in Azkaban for being a murder accomplice.

Not able to stand being in Dumbledore's vicinity any longer, he excused himself hurriedly and broke into a run, not stopping until he reached the dungeons. He needed to see Tom, and for that he needed Draco.

He had to admit his plan wasn't very well thought out; he didn't know where the Slytherin living quarters were, or even if Malfoy would be there.

He managed to follow a couple of first year Slytherins to the entrance of their common room, but he had more honour than to eavesdrop in order to gain knowledge of the password. Fortunately it wasn't long before he heard the familiar voices of Blaise Zabini and Pansy Parkinson. Pansy gave him a dirty look when she saw him.

"If Gryffindor doesn't want you, we certainly won't," she said, looking at him with contempt.
Harry ignored her, trying to pretend he hadn't felt hurt by the comment which was basically the truth. He turned his focus onto Blaise instead.

"Have you seen Draco anywhere?" he asked desperately. Panic was still bubbling inside of him, so when Blaise nodded and left, returning moments later with the blond boy, Harry felt some of the pressure leave him.

"I need to see him now," Harry said the second Draco had angrily pulled him into an alcove.

"Who? Riddle?" Draco spat, narrowing his eyes. "We've only been here two days; why do you need to see him so urgently?"

"I just do," Harry retorted. "He said I could go to him whenever I wanted, and I don't think he'll like you undermining him."

"Is that some sort of roundabout way of threatening me, Potter?" Draco asked with a raised eyebrow, but he pulled some parchment out from his robe and began to trace on it with his finger. "I'm seeing if he's available," Malfoy explained, pulling his wand, a blade and a quill from his pocket.

The Slytherin grabbed hold of Harry's hand and yanked it towards him, slashing at it with the blade and causing a splash of blood to fall onto the quill.

"What are you doing?" Harry hissed, jerking away from Malfoy who simply rolled his eyes, putting the blade back into his robes.

"Just hold on," Draco muttered, holding the bloodied quill towards him.

"You're making a Portkey? I didn't think we could use them at Hogwarts," Harry mused. Draco just looked at him like he was stupid.

"Of course we can use them. The wards have already allowed us into Hogwarts. We could Floo out too, but we can't be detected this way," Draco told him, his tone one that would be used on a small child. "Portus."

Instantly Harry felt the tug of the Portkey, and everything started to spin in a blur of colours. The experience stopped just as suddenly, and Harry held his arm in front of his face before he collided with the floor.

"What are you; ten? I've been sticking Portkey landings for years," Draco said boastfully, not offering to help Harry up.

Harry scowled as he pushed himself onto his feet; he had been raised using the Floo system.

Malfoy rolled his eyes and tapped on the wooden door in front of them. It swung open, revealing Tom with a large green snake at his feet.

"Leave now, and return in exactly two hours," Tom commanded, staring at the young Malfoy, who gulped and Portkeyed back to Hogwarts in a flash. Harry had to admit it was nice to see the stuck-up boy afraid.

Tom pressed himself against the door and gestured for Harry to enter the room. The Gryffindor eyed the large snake wearily as he complied. The creature seemed to be fixated with him; it's beady eyes following each movement he made.
The room was large and rather beautiful. The walls were painted a dark green colour, and the floor was covered in a plush black carpet that felt soft beneath Harry's feet. The furniture of the room was coloured similarly, and all made from a dark wood which looked smooth and flawless. There were two large chairs with a small table in between, placed in front of a large fireplace. There was also a wardrobe and a bed lifted onto a slight platform. It seemed to cry aristocratic Pureblood.

"She won't hurt you," Tom said, addressing Harry for the first time and indicating to the snake. "She merely finds you fascinating."

"Lovely," Harry muttered, feeling his legs buckle as he backed into a chair. He shakily sank into it, inwardly wincing as the snake slithered over to him and wrapped herself around Harry and the chair, resting her head on his shoulder.

Tom was watching with a look of sadistic amusement on his face, and a string of hisses fell from his mouth. The snake answered with her own hisses. Harry sat tense as he waited for their conversation to finish, but then he heard a distinctly female voice say "his scent."

"What?" Harry whispered, whipping his head around to stare at the snake, but she simply stared into his eyes until he could no longer hold the gaze.

"Is everything okay, Harry?" Tom asked, scraping a chair across the floor to sit in front of the boy.

"Yeah, I thought I just heard…but it doesn't matter," he answered with a shrug.

"Leave us, Nagini," Tom said, pointing towards the door.

"Nagini? Is that her name?" Harry asked, relieved as the snake slithered off him.

Tom nodded. "I do not believe you came here simply to discuss reptilian creatures with me, Harry."

"I don't know if I can do this," Harry responded, cursing himself for being so blunt.

"Do what?" Tom enquired, though it was obvious to Harry that Tom already knew the answer.

'Everything', Harry found himself wanting to stay, but in the end he settled with, "this whole Dumbledore thing. I ran into him today and all I could think was that it wouldn't be much longer before he'd be nothing more than a memory in Hogwarts. He can't come back from death, and I'm supposed to help take him to that state, but I don't want Draco to die either. Why can't both of them just live?"

"I'm sure you know very well why Dumbledore cannot stay alive. He has been tainting the magical world for far too long now; his time is up," Tom stated, eyes flashing a deep red.

"But couldn't you just split the country in half or something? We could send Dumbledore and the muggles and that side to one half, and you and the Death Eaters get the other," Harry tried, and to his surprise Tom actually chuckled darkly.

"You are too innocent, Harry. You do not understand how our world works or what you need to succeed. The basic concept of murder and death scares you because you have a pure soul."

"Well how does it work then? Why is my understanding wrong?" Harry asked, staring at Tom with questioning eyes.

"Your understanding is wrong because you're still splitting the world into good and bad. You don't
want a man to die because you think murder is bad, yet did you ever consider how it could benefit others and be good for them? Nothing is one sided, or even two sided; everything in life is complex. An example; perhaps you see a man stealing food because he cannot afford to feed his family. Some would say this man is wrong, because stealing is illegal, while others would state his family comes first and so his thieving could be excused, but it goes deeper than that; could it be the man is unemployed through his own fault and so is using thievery to support his laziness? You see, to split things into good and bad only causes this confliction which you yourself are feeling," Tom said, power lacing his voice. His eyes looked distant, almost as if recalling a fond memory.

"How do you look at things then?" Harry questioned, and a cruel smile found it's way onto Tom's face.

"The world is a game of power. The people with the most power are the ones who are strong, and those who refuse are weak. The weak are the ones who say something is bad because they are afraid of it; afraid of using it. Committing murder is not wrong; it is simply a tool for self-benefit. I can sense your power, Harry. You need to lose your purity and embrace the power lurking beneath."

Tom spoke such cold words so passionately it made Harry shiver, but he wondered if the reason for that was because Tom was stating a truth that nobody wanted to hear.

"Will you do that for me, Harry?" Tom hissed, leaning forward so his face was mere inches from Harry's own. The younger boy nodded, and Tom smirked and moved even closer, his mouth hovering just over Harry's ear. "Good, because I haven't even begun to defile you yet. How is your schoolwork going?"

"Wait, what?" Harry asked alarmed; had Tom just mentioned something about defiling him? He had no idea what that could even mean.

"Your schoolwork," Tom stated, settling back into his own seat and looking as innocent as an angel. "In my days the difference between O.W.L and N.E.W.T work was rather substantial."

"Oh, err, yeah. I've got a lot of homework," he answered lamely, still thrown by Tom's strange comment.

"Your O.W.L results suggest you shall manage fine," Tom commended. Harry wasn't quite sure when Tom had seen his results, but he wasn't ashamed of them in any way; he had passed everything, mostly with Exceeds Expectations, but he had received a couple of Outstandings.

"What do you wish to do once you leave school?" Tom asked. Harry thought for a second about whether this was some sort of trick question, but in the end he concluded that Tom was simply curious.

"I want to be a Curse-Breaker," Harry told him, and Tom nodded.

"You have an interest in Ancient Egypt?"

"Yeah. We don't learn about it much though, and I've read the few books there are in the library," Harry replied, staring down at the chair's arm to avoid blushing at the gaze Tom had fixed on him.

"Of course; they shan't want you finding out too much," Tom muttered, more to himself than Harry. "When you arrive here with Draco Malfoy for our next meeting, I shall bring you some in-depth books. In fact, if I can steal you away from your parents in the holidays I will take you to Egypt with me; I have business I need to attend to there. Now, would you like a tour of Malfoy
"Manor?"

Well that explained to Harry where they were, but he felt unease at walking about the house.

"I don't know; each time I've been in a house belonging to Dark wizards something has gone wrong," Harry said, laughing awkwardly at how stupid he must have sounded.

"Do you make it a habit to go into homes belonging to Dark wizards?" Tom asked with a smirk. He stood and grabbed Harry's wrist to pull him up as well.

"Sirius inherited his parent's house, and my parents tried to keep me out of there as much as they could, but there were a few times they had to take me with them while they sorted stuff out. The first time I nearly got my hand sliced off, the second time I don't really remember but I was unconscious in hospital for a week and the third time I ended up cursing and killing our cat by mistake," the Gryffindor explained, trying to ignore Tom's amusement.

"How did you kill your cat?" he asked eventually and Harry cringed at the memory; he had been stupid as an eight year old.

"Well they locked me in Sirius' old room because they thought it was the safest place, but I found this old puzzle book of his and some were still unfinished so I completed them, and the last page said to draw somebody in your family as if they were old, and I thought it would be funny to draw the cat with a beard, but when we got home we found him all shrivelled up. My mum wouldn't let us have any pets after that," Harry said with a shrug.

"How tragic," Tom replied, lip curling. "Fortunately I am very knowledgeable about Dark artefacts so you should not be at risk; however I recommend you stay close to me."

Harry followed the older boy out of the room. He wasn't sure if Tom was being serious or simply mocking him when he told him to stay close, but he decided to take it seriously and stood as close as he could behind him, holding gently onto Tom's sleeve. Nagini had reappeared and seemed content to slither about Harry's feet, meaning he had to take extra care not to trip over the twelve foot snake.

The manor was just as beautiful as Tom's room had been. Slytherin colours and serpent motifs were the theme of the whole place, and it was carried effortlessly through each room they visited.

Malfour Manor had a lot of rooms, some of which Harry felt were unnecessary. The dungeons would be the first thing he would get rid of; he felt a slight jolt of panic when Tom had taken him down there. But Harry could really see no point for some rooms such as the art gallery, although Harry could be biased considering each picture involved muggles being tortured to death in some way. Likewise, the room dedicated to practicing techniques for something called Muggle-Hunting made Harry feel rather ill.

He almost managed to jinx himself in the library. A small crystal figurine on a shelf seemed to be calling out for Harry to touch it; he had never seen Tom move so fast.

"I wouldn't touch that unless you want to spend the rest of your life suffering severe hallucinations involving real and unbearable pain," Tom told him warningly, tightening his grip on Harry's arm where he had reached out to stop him touching the object.

Tom kept an even closer eye on him after that, and soon there were only a few rooms left unseen.

"You have a choice now, Harry," Tom said, stopping and hissing to Nagini who went on ahead of them. "I'm sure you can understand that the Dark Lord wishes to meet you. Would you like to go
Harry felt his mouth go dry. Tom and Voldemort may technically be the same man, but Tom was nothing like the media and Neville Longbottom made Voldemort out to be. From what Neville had said, Voldemort looked monstrous.

"Of course you don't have to," Tom continued, "but if not you shall have to be introduced this weekend, although there shall be a vast number of Death Eaters here then too."

He knew Tom was referencing to his dislike of groups, so he sighed and sullenly agreed, trailing after Tom as he led him towards Voldemort.

The manor began to lose its warmth as the colour scheme faded and the walls and the floors turned into cold stone and marble, almost like being in a castle.

"Nagini shall take you and bring you back to me; he wishes to see you alone," Tom stated, and then he was gone, leaving Harry alone in the dark corridor. He was a Gryffindor though, he wouldn't let fear control him so he stalked forward with all the confidence he could muster and allowed Nagini to take him to the very depth of the manor, stopping outside a simple faded wooden door.

"Enter," came a cold voice from the other side, and telling himself Tom wouldn't allow his other half to kill him, he pushed the door open and stepped inside.

This room was incredibly cold, and also very dull. The walls and floor were grey stone tiles and the only decoration on the wall was covered in a black drape. There were no windows, and all the room contained was a large desk with a single, high backed, uncomfortable looking chair behind it.

The room seemed to suit Voldemort though, for Harry now understood why Neville had compared him to a monster. He was almost like a cross between a snake and a man; he had a hairless, strikingly white face, with red eyes which were the same shape as a snakes, and he was missing a nose; in it's place were slits. He was wearing floor length black robes, revealing only his face and hands which were long and spindly. He began to pace around Harry, like a predator stalking it's prey.

"Harry Potter…so long I have waited, to meet Tom's obsession." Voldemort's voice was just as terrifying as his looks. It was menacing and sinister, and his 's' sounds came out as hisses. "A little Half-Blood boy turning his back on his blood-traitor family; how very curious."

Harry opened his mouth, not knowing what to say, but Voldemort stopped him before he could even attempt an answer.

"I do not need to know your reasons, child!" the man hissed, and Harry flinched at his tone. "I can see your usefulness, and I expect you to report to me any information Neville Longbottom gives you as soon as you are able to do so."

"Okay," Harry said quietly, keeping his eyes trained on the floor.

"While you are talking to me, you address me properly. Is that clear, boy?" Voldemort shouted, and Harry flinched again.

"Yes, m-my Lord," he muttered, raising his eyes to look at the furious face of the Dark Lord.

"I never quite understood Tom's fascination with you. I forgot how foolish I was when I was young; enchanted by pretty things," the Dark wizard growled, and he grabbed Harry's chin in his fingers, and Harry felt a strange sensation run through him. "I hold no interest in that now, but I
should like to hear how pretty you scream. Crucio!"

Harry fell to the floor, shoving his hand in his mouth and biting down hard as what felt like thousands of red-hot knives forcing their way into his body. He felt blood fill his mouth and he whimpered as the curse was lifted.

"I want to hear you scream, boy," Voldemort hissed, and he felt his hand forcibly leave his mouth, and then the pain struck again, so intense he could barely hear his own screams. After what felt like hours but was likely not even a minute, the spell was lifted and he was literally thrown from the room, the door slamming shut behind him.

Nagini immediately was at his side, her tongue flicking against his cheek as if she was trying to comfort him. He followed her back to Tom quietly, and before he could knock on Tom's door, the snake crawled up his body and constricted him for a quick second before releasing him and prowled off down the corridor.

A smile managed to find it's way onto his face, after realising he had just been hugged by a huge and vicious snake. He knocked and the door opened instantly. He was pulled against a hard chest, its owner's arms wrapping themselves around his upper back.

"He would have been much more ruthless in front of others. I shall tell him he is to never hurt you again; you are much too precious," Tom murmured into his hair, and all Harry could do was nod, not quite believing that Tom was really hugging him, and he was disappointed when Tom pulled back. "Draco shall be here in a moment, but I shall see you on Saturday. When others are around, I would prefer for you to refer to me as Lord Riddle, or Marvolo if you are talking to me. The Death Eaters have been told I am the Dark Lord's son, with an unknown Pure-Blood mother who raised me out of the country, and schooled in disguise at Durmstrang."

"I did wonder," Harry muttered with a smile.

There was a knock on the door, and Tom's demeanour changed as Draco was allowed access to the room, and the older boy shut the door on them without even greeting Malfoy.

Draco ignored Harry too until they arrived back at Hogwarts, where he looked at Harry with genuine concern.

"The Dark Lord and Lord Riddle used the Cruciatu Curse on me a lot over summer; I know it well enough now to recognise someone who's suffered the same," the blond muttered, eyeing Harry as if checking for other injuries.

"I'm fine," Harry murmured, "it was just unexpected."

"Try a cooling charm over your skin tonight; it helps ease the after-pain. Don't assume I'm going to be your friend now or anything though; I just have sympathy for anyone who's been under that curse, even if they are an annoying Gryffindor," Draco said dismissively, but he looked like he was trying to hide a smile of sorts.

With that said, Draco bid him goodnight.

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The rest of the week seemed to fly by. Harry made sure to purposely avoid Dumbledore, which didn't end up being too hard because he hardly saw him anyway. He spent most of his free time in the library working with Luna by his side. Hermione had joined their table after she realised they were there to study, and by Thursday Ginny had joined them too. She told them she was getting a
head start on her O.W.L work, but when Hermione went to get a book from a shelf away from their
table she confided in Harry and Luna that Dean was starting to get on her nerves and the library
would be the last place he would look for her.

He spent Saturday morning and most of the afternoon lounging outside near the Forbidden Forest
while the weather was still nice, and as the day started to draw to a close, he made his way down to
the dungeons to meet Draco so they could Portkey to Malfoy Manor.

"Hold onto my arm with your free hand," Draco demanded as he held a large metal serpent figurine
in front of them. "We shall be arriving in front of my mother and I don't want you to cause a scene
by crashing onto the floor like an imbecile."

Harry could tell Draco would have rather he had fallen on the floor once they arrived at the manor.
Instead Harry had pretty much fallen into Draco's arms, and while that amused his mother, Tom
was giving the Malfoy heir such hateful glares he was surprised the blond boy wasn't being
tortured already.

The meeting consisted of him, Draco, Tom, Narcissa Malfoy and Voldemort. Harry stayed silent
throughout. The meeting didn't last long, because Draco didn't have too much to say. This
obviously displeased Voldemort because it ended with Draco screaming in pain.

The Dark Lord left Tom to finish off while he attended to some Death Eaters who had arrived
early, and so were also going to meet the wrath of Lord Voldemort.

"I should like for you to stay the night, Harry," Tom said casually, as if the pleading screams from
the entrance hall were non-existent. "Go with Draco to his room, and I shall collect you when we
are finished."

Draco was silent as he led Harry to his room, which looked much like Tom's room before, only one
wall was covered from top to bottom with a book shelf, and there were numerous paintings and
photos on the walls of Draco and his parents, and even some with his friends.

"Are you alright?" Harry asked.

Draco sneered at him. "Of course I am, and I don't need your pity anyway, Potter."

Malfoy picked up a book at random and flicked through it's pages, seemingly determined to stay
focused on it.

Harry sat down on a chair and had looked at each painting at least twice when Malfoy's voice
broke the silence.

"What's the deal with you and Riddle anyway?" he asked, placing his book down.

"We're-we're friends," Harry told him, and the Slytherin scoffed.

"Please, like Lord Riddle has friends," Draco sneered.

"He doesn't have friends; he's just got one," Harry retorted with a grin.

Draco grimaced. "Save that disgusting Gryffindor sentiment for the lion pit, Potter."

Draco shut up again after that, and Harry was glad when Tom finally opened the door. He gestured
for Harry to follow him, and the Gryffindor happily left Draco's room.
"I have a gift for you," Tom told him as they made their way presumably to his room.

"Oh, those Egyptian books?" Harry asked, blowing a piece of hair away from his eyes.

"Those too, but I have something I believe you shall appreciate a lot more," Tom replied, opening the door to his room.

The first thing Harry saw was Nagini settled on Tom's bed. The second was a kitten with long black fur sat beside the snake.

"There's a cat on your bed," Harry said dumbly, and Tom smirked.

"It's your cat," the older boy said, leading Harry over to the bed.

"My cat?"

"I could see you still felt sorrow about the pet you killed when you were young, so I got you another," Tom stated.

Harry dropped to his knees in front of the bed, and rubbed his thumb and finger together. The cat moved forwards and nuzzled his hand. Harry stroked the kitten gently, marvelling at the softness of the fur.

"Thank you so much. It's so cute; what's it called?" Harry asked, grinning as the cat started to purr.

"He's your cat; you name him," Tom said, sitting on the bed to give some attention to Nagini. "Something acceptable though; no ridiculous muggle names like Fluffy."

"I'll call him Orion. That was Sirius' middle name, and Orion is a constellation and they're beautiful, much like this cat," Harry stated, laughing as Orion dropped down and rolled onto his back. "Nagini won't eat him, will she?"

"She's been warned. I gave her a nice treat earlier so she shan't be hungry for a few days anyway," Tom said with a smirk, and Harry didn't want to know what she had eaten to fill her up for so long.

Tom patted the bed beside him, and Harry got up and sat next to Tom, allowing Orion to crawl onto his lap.

"Where am I going to sleep?" Harry asked, realising he hadn't been given a room.

"I didn't think you would mind sleeping here with me," Tom answered, and Harry felt himself blush.

"Oh no, not at all," he muttered, focusing entirely on the cat. The bed was large enough to sleep four people comfortably, so it wasn't like they would be on top of each other.

"It's peculiar," Tom started, looking at Harry with a strange look in his eyes. "I've realised that over the summer I grew accustomed to your presence. It has been different not having you around. I don't tend to like being in the company of others, yet you've proved to be an exception."

Nagini moved to flick Harry's cheek with her tongue before she slithered off the bed and out of the room, allowing Harry and Tom to move up the bed towards the pillow. Harry lay down, pressing his head against the pillow, while Tom sat with his legs stretched out in front of him, his back pressed against the headboard and his long fingers absently stroking the top of Orion's head. The kitten was fast asleep on top of Harry now, purring loudly and Harry had never seen anything so
adorable.

Tom's hand left Orion and grasped Harry's wrist instead, pulling it upwards. With his other hand he used his fingers to gently trace down the veins, every so often digging in to the skin slightly.

"Another peculiar thing about you," Tom said softly, pressing down harder now, "is that even now, after the Dark Lord tainted you with such a wicked spell, is that this blood flowing through your veins is still so pure. I wonder how it would be to tear your wrist open and watch your blood flow down your arms, and see it stain your skin."

"You're not a vampire, are you?" Harry asked wearily, ready to pull his wrist away if Tom showed any sign of acting out his curiosity.

"Do I show any characteristics of being a vampire?" Tom enquired, raising an eyebrow as he looked down at Harry.

"Well, you're sort of pale," Harry answered honestly, and Tom actually laughed.

"Oh my dear, if anyone were to be a vampire based simply on their pallor, it would be you. Not only is your skin pale, but you have striking eyes and hair to match. Your vampirism would be most unfortunate however, because of the two of us your blood would surely be the sweetest," Tom mused, moving his fingers to draw circles on Harry's palm.

"It would be nice to be a vampire," Harry muttered softly. "Imagine being able to live forever."

Without warning Tom swung his legs over on either side of Harry, making Orion jump onto the floor with a hiss. The older boy rested his hands by the sides of Harry's head, leaning himself down until he was inches away from Harry.

"Would you like to live forever, Harry?" Tom whispered his gaze intense and his words full of passion.

"If I had someone to live it with," Harry answered, as soon as he managed to regain his voice.

Tom lowered his face even more, and he was so close Harry thought Tom was going to kiss him; he could almost feel Tom's lips on his own.

"I can make you live forever, Harry. Together we can rule the world."
"I, er, didn't think it was possible for anyone to live forever," Harry muttered softly, trying to ignore his body's reaction to the combination of Tom on top of him and the fact Tom didn't seem to mind the thought of spending eternity with him. He really hated hormones sometimes.

He shifted under Tom, trying to separate their bodies slightly, but Tom seemed to have other ideas as he pushed Harry further into the mattress. The older boy's eyes weren't focused on Harry however; they were staring into nothingness above him, and he had a distant yet superior look on his face.

"That's what the world likes to believe, but they couldn't be more wrong. It's the Darkest magic known to man, and most prefer to close their minds off to anything that could threaten their ideal world, but I had no fear in pursuing this magic," Tom whispered, and as he spoke he started to move against Harry ever so slightly. The movement was small, and Tom's face was still so focused that Harry wasn't even sure the other boy knew he was doing it, but there was enough friction that Harry had to bite down on his lip to keep from making a noise.

"Can you imagine it, Harry, being able to conquer death?" Tom continued, his hips continuing their infuriatingly slow rocking. Harry attempted to push himself slightly up into Tom, craving more of that feeling; that friction. "You would hold so much power; the world would be yours. It can be ours if you open yourself to the Dark Arts; allow them to take your body and mind beyond it's natural limits."

"S-sure," Harry stuttered, still trying to grind up into Tom's hips without him noticing. He froze as his voice seemed to bring Tom out of his deep thoughts, and the wizard looked down at Harry with a smirk.

Tom placed his hand over Harry's cheek; it was freezing to the touch, and Harry hated to think how flushed he must look. He shut his eyes as Tom started to caress his cheek gently.

A knock on the door caused Harry's eyes to snap open, and he only managed to glimpse the scowl cross Tom's face before the Dark wizard climbed off him gracefully and strode over to the door.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, my Lord," came a nervous male voice from the other side, "but Avery managed to find some muggles; a tourist family we believe."

"I'll be down shortly," Tom drawled, slamming the door shut in the man's face. "I hope you won't mind my absence, Harry."

"Not at all," Harry lied, telling himself the muggle family downstairs weren't about to be tortured and murdered.

Tom smirked again, and when he opened the door to leave a distinct scream could be heard from the lower floor. Tom shut the door quickly behind him and the scream was only distant for a moment before it stopped altogether, and Harry was grateful for Tom putting up a Silencing Charm.

Not that he approved of the torture of muggles, but the thought of it managed to calm down his hormones and he was able to stand without having to worry about a certain ache.

He had never been with anybody in that sort of proximity before, but something about having Tom on him, and feeling him against him just felt right. It made him feel complete in a way, and he
wanted to know how it felt even closer with Tom. Once again he cursed hormones.

He sighed as he ran his hands through his hair; Tom would likely never want him in that way. He was only sixteen and inexperienced; Tom would want someone better.

He had to look away from his reflection; his face was still rather flushed and his hair looked like he’d just had the best sex of his life, although in his defence it looked close to that on a normal day. Brushing his hair only managed to tame it slightly, and one day in fifth year he had forgotten to, and before he could even finish his breakfast rumours had started that he was no longer a virgin. Professor Umbridge had been livid when she heard all the sex talk and of course, she blamed him. His rubbed his hand subconsciously where she had made him use a Blood Quill; fortunately there was no scarring.

Orion noticed he was free again, and Harry soon had an energetic lump of fluff running about his feet. He grinned and dropped to the floor, focusing all his attention on the cat. He had missed out on this for years, so he was going to make the most of it, plus it allowed him to ignore what was going on downstairs.

He nearly regretted his decision when after about an hour of relentless playing, Tom returned to his room to find Harry lying on the floor pretending to be scared of the kitten on his chest. He grinned up at Tom sheepishly as he gently pushed Orion off him and sat up.

"Is this what people do when they have pets?" Tom asked, his eyebrow raised.

"At least in my family," Harry told him, still grinning in embarrassment.

"I never had a pet growing up. There were animals nearby, but they always met unfortunate ends," Tom said with a wicked smirk. Harry tugged Orion a bit closer to him; the movement didn't escape Tom's notice. "I have no desire to kill your cat, Harry. Killing animals is in my past."

Harry inwardly shuddered as admitted to himself that even this Tom appeared to be a sociopath.

They spoke together for a while before Harry decided he was ready for bed. Tom settled himself in an armchair reading while Harry tried to sleep, and after a lot of tossing and turning in the too large bed, Tom came to sit beside Harry. The younger boy snuggled as close as he could to Tom without it looking too suspicious, and when Orion curled up next to his face, and Nagini came in and slithered across his legs, he fell asleep content.

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Tom woke Harry early the next morning so that he and Draco could Portkey back to Hogwarts. He had been made to leave Orion behind for the time being; he would have to wait until the next Hogsmeade weekend to avoid suspicion, but he had been given a number of books on Ancient Egyptian magic, most of which were direct translations or guides written by Egyptologists, but a couple were bindings of original scrolls, all of which had been shrunk down so he could fit them in his robes.

"I notice you stayed upstairs last night," Draco mused upon their return to school. "I wouldn't have thought a courageous Gryffindor would be scared of a bit of torture."

"I wasn't afraid," Harry spat back, rolling his eyes. "I don't approve of it but I don't think they would have stopped if I complained."

Draco shook his head. "Your mind works in weird ways, Potter. Still, at least you picked the winning side, even if you do have a funny way of showing it. I'll see you around."
Malfy walked off in a fashion similar to Snape, and Harry began his walk back to the Gryffindor dormitory to drop off his new books, before deciding to get some more work done on his coursework.

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By next Friday nothing particularly interesting had happened. Neville, Ron and Hermione seemed to be being slightly sneaky and secretive, but that was a common occurrence every year; Harry couldn't know for sure if it was Voldemort related. Likewise, the glares Ron and Neville were giving to Draco were nothing out of the ordinary.

As he pondered this while he walked to the library, he came across a scene which made him jerk to a halt. Heather was standing with two seventh years in the otherwise deserted corridor. He couldn't hear what was being said, but his sister appeared to be crying. Part of him wanted to turn around and leave her; she deserved a taste of her own medicine, but the other part of him was telling him to act like an older brother should, and with that he mind, he tried to ignore the anxiety inside of him and strode towards the trio.

"Are you okay, Heather?" he asked as he approached; better to speak to his sister than the two unfriendly students.

"Oh I see how it is now," the female stranger started, sneering at the siblings. "Your brother can't keep his grubby hands off guys either; I bet your mother must have raised you both to be slags like her."

"Excuse me?" Harry growled, turning round to face the pair head on, both of whom he now saw were in Ravenclaw. He had gotten used to people mocking him, but he found a burst of bravery now it came to defending his mother.

"I caught your sweet little sister there making out with my boyfriend," the girl spat back angrily, grabbing onto the boy's arm as if to make a point.

"He told me he was single," Heather cut in, her voice breaking only slightly.

"Liar," the girl hissed. Her boyfriend, Harry noted, was staying completely silent and was refusing to make eye contact with anyone.

"Of course; because a bulky seventh year boy can't defend himself from the advances of a fourteen year old girl," Harry stated sarcastically. "Sort out your own relationship problems and leave Heather out of it."

"Whatever. I have better things to do than argue with a little girl and her faggot brother," the girl muttered, barging past Harry as she stormed off, dragging her boyfriend behind her. As she walked, Harry noticed a necklace designed with the caps off Butterbeer bottles dangling slightly from her bag.

"Accio, necklace," he called, waving his wand and catching the jewellery as it flew into his hand. "I don't think this belongs to you," he reprimanded as the girl turned to glare at him before stomping off.

"I didn't need your help," Heather muttered, scuffing her shoe on the floor.

"I'll always defend my family," Harry told her, though he hoped she didn't ask why; he wasn't sure himself given how weak his relationship had been with them all recently, but he supposed he would always be loyal to the Potter name, no matter what their differences were.
"Well maybe you should learn to defend yourself first, like, you can argue for me, but sometimes people say really mean stuff about you in front of me and I have to pretend like I don't care because otherwise they'll turn on me. If you stuck up for yourself I wouldn't have to put up with that; why do you have to be so weird?" his sister all but shouted at him, but as she finished ranting she threw her arms around Harry's neck and whispered "thank you" in his ear before running off. Apparently strange thinking patterns ran in their family.

He made it to the library without further distraction, and found Luna sat near the back on her own, surrounded by books on magical creatures.

"I got your necklace back," he said with a smile, dropping the jewellery in front of her.

"Thank you, Harry. This should help to clear away the Nargles," the blonde smiled, putting the necklace on. "Perhaps you could do with one; you seem rather distracted lately. I can make it less girly for you if you'd prefer."

"That would be lovely, Luna," he replied, pulling his Potions book from his bag. "Have you ever heard of the Half-Blood Prince? He owned this book before me."

"I haven't, no. A prince came to Hogwarts not too long ago, but he was in disguise as a girl the whole time."

"I don't believe that for one second," came a cold voice behind them, and then Draco Malfoy pulled a chair up beside Luna as Blaise Zabini sat the other side of Harry.

"It's quite true," Luna responded calmly, a happy gleam shining in her eyes. "It makes quite a lovely tale, and we could all use a happy ending in our lives."

"What?" Malfoy said dumbly. He looked slightly like he wanted to bang his head repeatedly against the table, but Harry noticed a sparkle trying to force it's way to the front of Malfoy's eyes. The blond boy did look very depressed at times and that little bit of hope seemed to radically change his face for the better; it made him look more human.

"Anyway, Potter," Malfoy continued, pulling a large parchment covered in scrawls from his bag. "You can translate these for me; I have more important things I need to be doing."

Harry fought the urge to roll his eyes as he grabbed the parchment, stuffing it into his bag.

"I swear I hate Dean Thomas sometimes," a new voice stated, and Ginny Weasley appeared from behind a shelf, her face bright red with eyes blazing in anger.

"What did he do?" Harry asked, smirking as Ginny scraped a chair along the floor to join their table, causing Madame Pince to flap her arms wildly in their direction.

"He treats me like I'm a damsel in distress all the time. I'm not a princess; I know how to handle myself, but maybe I'm wrong. Aren't most girls supposed to like chivalry?"

"Well you're not most girls, are you?" Blaise answered, fixing Ginny with a determined stare. "You have the same fire inside you as my mother, and I'd like to see a man try and hold her down," Blaise added with a cruel smirk.

To Harry's surprise, Ginny and Blaise seemed to be getting on exceedingly well, although it was obvious that Blaise was still holding her status as a 'Blood Traitor' against her, but all five of them seemed to be able to hold a civilised conversation without too many insults being thrown, and by the end of the afternoon, Harry could tell that he and Draco had never felt so normal.
In bed that evening, Harry drew his curtains shut and made a start on reading the books Tom had given him.

One book in particular seemed to be calling to him; it was a tatty thing, with a torn blank covering, but he felt a surge of magic run through him as he touched it, so he slowly opened it, half expecting something to curse him. When nothing seemed to happen, he gingerly flicked through the pages.

Most had images of hieroglyphics on with writing besides them, detailing what they could be used for. The foreword at the beginning said that Ancient Egyptian wizards didn't use incantations and spells like modern wizards, which had been influenced by the Romans; instead they used the hieroglyphics in some way to invoke magic, although no historian had been able to work out how, although there had been many unsuccessful attempts to explain over the years.

He paused on a page which showed a diagram of an intricate eye; the Eye of Horus. The writing underneath said that it was used by witches and wizards for protection or healing. He traced the outline of the Eye with his finger, humming and shutting his eyes when he felt another rush of magic, only this time much stronger, and the Eye of Horus seemed to be at the front of his mind.

He almost screamed when he opened his eyes again; his skin was practically glowing, with a golden shadow floating over his hands. He sat in shock for a moment, staring at the page for some indication that this could happen, but when it was obvious the author hadn't written about it, his body jerked itself into action.

He listened to make sure his dorm room was empty, and when he was sure he yanked his curtains open and dug through his trunk for his Invisibility Cloak. His dad had given it to him in his first year at Hogwarts, and he had never used it before, but now seemed like a good time; he didn't want people to see him in his current state.

He covered himself and fled the dormitory, waiting for someone to leave or enter the common room so he could sneak out before running through the corridors.

It was only early evening, and he hoped he would find Luna somewhere. He knew she spent a lot of time on the outskirts of the Forbidden Forest, studying the creatures that lived there, so that was his first destination.

He was pleased to see Luna was indeed there, feeding meat to what Harry presumed was an invisible creature.

"Luna, I need your help," he hissed quietly as he approached her. The blonde didn't even jump.

"I didn't know you had an Invisibility Cloak, Harry" she mused, giggling at the invisible animal in front of her.

"It was my dad's," Harry explained. "It's been in my family for years, I've just never used it before."

"It stills works after all this time?" Luna asked, turning in his direction with a big, knowing smile and dreamy eyes.

"It was my dad's," Harry explained. "It's been in my family for years, I've just never used it before."

"It stills works after all this time?" Luna asked, turning in his direction with a big, knowing smile and dreamy eyes.

"Yeah, but that's not important," Harry muttered, pulling the Cloak off. "What's wrong with me?"

He held his arms up so Luna could see better, and she shut one eye, tilting her head as she took in Harry's glowing form.
"Perhaps you've been bitten by a fairy; most people don't believe they can bite, but they do and they have a particularly strange toxin which causes the person to sparkle," the Ravenclaw told him. "But you aren't so much sparkling as glowing."

"I was reading a book on Ancient Egyptian magic, and it started after I touched an image of the Eye of Horus," Harry said, looking down curiously at his hands.

"Hmm, can I have your wand a moment?" Luna asked, smiling when Harry reluctantly gave it to the girl. She placed it on the floor by her feet and drew her own wand, pointing it at Harry.

"What are you-?" Harry started, but Luna cried 'Stupefy' before he could finish his sentence.

Without a wand to defend himself, Harry instinctively held his hands in front of his face. It took him a few seconds to realise he wasn't unconscious.

"What?" he muttered to himself, confused, watching in awe as the red light of Luna's spell dissolved amongst the golden glow.

"You've invoked Ancient magic," Luna explained, looking at Harry with enchantment.

"How have I managed to do that?" he questioned, although if an Egyptologist didn't know he doubted Luna would; she was in Ravenclaw for a reason, but she wasn't a master of all knowledge.

"I'm not sure. Perhaps you could clear your mind to try and stop it," she suggested.

Harry shut his eyes, clearing his mind as he would for Occlumency, and when he reopened them his skin appeared to be back to normal; yes, he knew Luna was definitely in Ravenclaw for a reason. She was very clever, but most believed her to be of just over average intelligence because she focused her studies and interests more on the unknown and incredibly rare creatures.

He imagined the Eye in his mind again, and once again his skin glowed golden, fading when he shut off his mind.

"This is weird," he murmured, kicking the mud at his feet.

"Quite the mystery," Luna agreed, handing Harry his wand back. "I expect we'll have missed dinner now, but we should be in time for pudding.

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Harry decided not to go running to Tom straight away with his new knowledge. He wanted to try and understand it a bit better so he didn't look completely incompetent. He wondered if it was weird that he had been given a boost in confidence by some strange sensation that could just outcast him from the world.

The books in the library didn't have any information on Ancient magic at all, so being able to produce it was probably not highly thought of; he remembered Tom had told him that Dumbledore and/or the Ministry of Magic wasn't too keen on students finding out that kind of information, though he wasn't sure why.

He had experimented with another symbol, this one for water which turned his skin blue and almost made him flood his dorm room; he had never cast so many drying charms in his life. He daren't try any others, but at least now he knew it wasn't a fluke; he just wasn't sure why it was happening.
After much reading he decided that books were getting him nowhere because each of them claimed it was a lost branch of magic and so they could only study the effects, not the cause, but he was sure somebody else in the modern world must have figured it out, but he didn't have a clue how to find out.

He realised he would need Tom for that, but he supposed at least he was showing initiative.

Tired of reading, he wandered down into the common room, which was empty bar Ron, Neville and Hermione, who were talking in hushed tones in a corner.

"Can't you sleep?" Hermione asked as she saw him, drawing their private conversation to a close.

"What time is it?" Harry asked, sitting down beside Ron.

"It's almost midnight," the girl replied, looking at him with concern. Harry hadn't been aware he had been reading for that long.

"Why are you still up?" Harry enquired, taking the subject away from him. He brought his feet up onto his chair and rested his head on his knees.

"Just chatting," Neville said with a small smile which didn't quite reach his eyes.

"Are you ok? You seem a bit sad," Harry pointed out; best to call Neville out on it in case he let something slip, but Neville just shrugged.

An uncomfortable silence fell over them, and for a while none of them spoke, but then Harry noticed a parchment by Neville's feet, which looked like it had markings of a map on it.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing to it, and Neville blushed red.

"It's a map of Hogwarts," the Boy Who Lived told him, clearly not wanting to say much about it.

"Fred and George gave it to us in third year," Ron added. "It's called the Marauder's Map, but it's nothing interesting."

Harry however, found that very interesting.

"The Marauder's being Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot and Prongs? The map showing you where every person is in the school and all the secret passages?"

James and Sirius had told him a lot about the map, and they had had high hopes he would find it after Filch confiscated it from them while they were still at school. He only looked for it once but he had no luck, but it was obvious to him now that was because someone else got it first.

"How do you know about it?" Ron asked sharply, and Harry rolled his eyes.

"My dad and Godfather's made it. Prongs is my dad, Moony is Professor Lupin and Padfoot was Sirius, you know, from the Ministry last June…" he trailed off, quite aware of the sympathetic look Hermione was giving him.

"Would you like it back?" she asked slowly, ignoring the glare from Ron and panicked look from Neville. She didn't seem sincere as such, but the girl knew it would be the right thing to do. Normally Harry would have let it go, but because they could stalk Draco easily with it, he knew he'd have to be rude and accept the reluctant offer.

"Would you mind? I just don't have much from Sirius and it's still hard to get used to," he said.
quietly, not even having to fake the tears that had sprung to his eyes; he didn't know if he'd ever be able to talk about Sirius openly.

"Of course," Hermione stated, sounding more sure of herself now. "You wouldn't mind if we borrowed it at times though, would you?"

"Of course not," Harry sniffed, trying to stay on their good side; it certainly seemed to relax Ron and Neville.

"Good, 'cause Neville's gonna need it if Dumbledore keeps him late again; we all know Snape won't care if he catches him out after-hours, whatever the reason," Ron grinned, his smile fading after he realised what he had said.

"You have extra lessons with Dumbledore?" Harry asked, watching the trio's expressions closely. Hermione was giving warning looks to Neville, who was keeping his own eyes very downcast.

"Just Voldemort stuff," Neville explained vaguely.

"Duelling techniques?" Harry guessed; Neville certainly needed them.

"No, but I'm not allowed to tell you much; Professor Dumbledore's orders, sorry, Harry," Neville continued, standing up. "I think I'm ready for bed now."

Ron and Hermione nodded and stood up quickly, bidding Harry goodnight and rushing upstairs.

Harry grabbed the Marauder's Map from the floor to have a closer look. He noticed they hadn't told him how to clear or activate the map, but his dad had told him all he needed to know. Most of the student's names were clustered around their respective dormitories and living quarters, but one dot was moving about the corridors; Draco Malfoy.

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On Saturday evening Harry made his way down to the dungeons to meet Draco. The Slytherin seemed to be in slightly better spirits than usual; he appeared to once again look like he thought he was better than everyone else.

"You seem happy," Harry commented, and Draco sneered.

"I have reason to be; last night I found proof that Dumbledore truly is a fool," Malfoy stated, looking entirely pleased with himself. He began to activate the Portkey, indicating he would say no more on the topic.

Harry only stumbled slightly once they arrived at Malfoy Manor, much to his pleasure.

Almost straight away they were ushered into a small hall where Tom and Voldemort were sat waiting, Nagini coiled up on the table between them.

"Tell me, Draco," Voldemort demanded, fixing a cold gaze on the boy. "Have you made any progress this week?"

"Yes, my Lord," Draco answered, keeping his eyes downcast despite the confidence in his voice. "I have located the Vanishing Cabinet at Hogwarts. It is broken but I believe I shall be able to fix it very soon. The halfwits at Hogwarts don't suspect a thing."

Harry couldn't stop himself from half laughing, half coughing, drawing everyone's attention to him.
"What?" Draco hissed, looking slightly alarmed.

"Neville Longbottom and his friends suspect you," Harry told him, avoiding looking at the Dark Lord. "They've been staring at you a lot, but then again they do that every year, but at Midnight last night I went down to the Common Room and they were looking at this map which shows the exact location of everyone in Hogwarts. Seeing as you were the only person out of bed I think they were tracking you."

Malfoy scowled. "Have they still got this map?"

"I took it off them. My dad helped make it, so they agreed it technically belongs to me," Harry shrugged, starting to feel uncomfortable with the staring.

"And has Longbottom revealed anything else?" Voldemort asked, his tone harsh.

Harry turned to face the evil wizard, feeling much less confident than he had been talking to Draco.

"He mentioned something last night about having lessons with Dumbledore," Harry said quietly. "He wouldn't tell me what the lessons were, but they're not to do with duelling or anything."

Voldemort's mouth twitched upwards in a cruel smile. Tom's mouth did the same, and despite the drastic physical differences they were still strikingly alike with their expressions and mannerisms, more so when they were together. It was slightly creepy.

"Of course; Dumbledore believes love is the strongest weapon, after all," the Dark Lord mused aloud, the look in his eyes suggesting he had an idea of what those lessons were about. "Leave now, children."

Both Harry and Draco stood quickly and left the room; Harry could feel the relief washing off the blond in waves.

"We did well this week," Draco muttered as he led them upstairs. "He was angry, of course, but at least we did enough to stop him taking it out on us."

It was the first time Malfoy had referenced to them being a team, and the Slytherin realised that as well because his demeanour grew cold once again.

"Malfoy, your library has a lot of rare books, doesn't it?" Harry asked as they passed by said room.

"Yes, Mother and Father have a vast collection," the boy answered boastfully, pausing so they could look inside.

"Can I use it for some research?" Harry enquired, waiting as Malfoy studied him for a moment. It would save him going straight to Tom for answers.

"I presume you're after some books on the Dark Arts?" the boy questioned, and Harry nodded. Malfoy returned the gesture and indicated for him to follow him through the library.

They stopped at a large painting of a blonde haired woman who looked much like Draco.

"Hello, Flavia," Draco greeted the woman, who smiled warmly at him.

"Draco, my darling grandson, who is your friend?" the woman, Flavia, responded.

"This is Harry Potter. I hereby give my permission for him to come and go from the Flavius room as he pleases."
"Certainly, dear grandson; study hard and you shall achieve your goals."

The portrait swung open, and Harry followed Draco into a cramped and dusty room, the shelves filled with tatty books and loose papers.

"My great-grandmother Flavia was a keen reader," Draco murmured. "She had great interest in the Dark Arts and she collected most of the works in this room; everything but the recent works. We don't use this room much, but it is organised so I expect it to stay that way. Likewise, these books are falling apart because Flavia believes it gives them more charm; that doesn't mean you can destroy them. I wouldn't spend too long in here either; the Dark Lord and Lord Riddle come here after meetings."

As soon as Malfoy left, Harry started to search the shelves. The topics of the books had been scrawled on parchment and hung up by the corresponding sections. Harry trailed his fingers along the shelves until he reached the sign reading 'Ancient Magic.'

He glanced at the titles, eyes pausing at a journal with the name 'Lovegood, Selene' written on the side. If Harry wasn't mistaken, that was the name of Luna's deceased mother. Unable to resist his curiosity, he pulled the journal from the shelf.

He flicked through the pages gently. Luna had said her mother loved to experiment, a hobby that ultimately killed her, and her journal recounted her many experiments.

He turned to the last couple of pages, dated November 14th, 1990. This was the experiment that had killed her, and while Luna saw the spell turn against her mother, she hadn't known what it had been designed for, and Harry wondered if Luna would like to know. He looked at the last entry, his eyes widening as he read.

'I believe I have finally found an alternative way for producing a Horcrux. One might wonder why a woman of good standing could be possessed to create such a foul, Dark object, but I must argue that without committing a murder, surely a Horcrux isn't so wrong. I know the Dark Lord will rise again; I have seen in my dreams what is to come. My Seer power is not strong, but I know the visions I do receive are of the upmost importance. I will not stand back and watch my husband and my beautiful daughter die. If I am successful, I shall create a Horcrux for them too, so if the worst happens we shall all be able to return and be together once more. I admit that splitting a soul without the act of an unforgivable crime is unheard of, but it is a necessity. One needn't lose their humanity when splitting their soul. I shall report tomorrow with my findings. With any luck I shall be able to give Luna the greatest gift of all on her birthday; the gift of everlasting life.'

Harry had to wipe the tears from his eyes once he finished the passage. It wasn't until the last line that he realised it had been written a day before Luna's tenth birthday.

He had never heard of a Horcrux before; from what he could gather it involved splitting one's soul in order to produce immortality, or at least the ability to return from the dead, but he couldn't understand how it worked. Selene had drawn a symbol at the end of the passage; a circle with a slanted 'Z' in the middle.

He returned the journal to the shelf, suddenly not so sure he wanted to tell Luna.

He grabbed another journal, this one titled 'Ancient Egyptian magic'.

'My name is Algar Outterridge. I do not have long before they take me away. If you are reading this, then you have been infected just as I have. Perhaps you have sought out my journal after unexpected magical powers have appeared in your life and frightened you, or perhaps you seek to
control them. I am afraid if that is the case I cannot help, for I have no time, but I shall tell you that you are not alone. We are not alone.

My story begins in Egypt. I travelled many times to the Pyramids, and no matter how careful one can be, there is always room for mistakes. My own mistake was very large, and I stepped foot on a trap. I would have been killed, but my hand grabbed hold of an unknown object and I felt strange magic surge through me. It radiated off me, obliterating the trap and saving my life. A peculiar experience, but I was grateful for it.

On my return to England, I noted strange occurrences; Egyptian symbols would flash before my eyes and my skin would glow. I was able to do wonderful but devastating things. I also noticed a shadowy figure that only I could see, and I fear at times it possessed me. I returned to Egypt and spoke to their leading magical historian.

What he told me shall affect you. I was infected, he said, by an Ancient magic that had great influence over my life. In my case, the object I had touched had been cursed, releasing the spirit of an Ancient wizard. His presence in my life opened my magical core to the Ancient powers. That is my own personal story; yours may be very different, but if your life has been influenced by Ancient magic in a significant way, then your core has been infected.

The word infected may seem peculiar; it is not a bad thing, in fact, Ancient magic is very powerful, but that is what makes it an infection. Society does not like to be scared. People you once trusted can turn on you; my own wife has turned me in to the authorities. The Ministry of Magic is coming to lock me away in an Asylum. I shall let them; I cannot live my life as an outcast. I will manage well in an asylum. I can practice my powers in private and I can perfect them until I am ready. I can delve further into other Ancient magic, such as Greek and Roman. I will have peace and thus control.

For you, my reader, do not tell anybody unless you believe they shall guard your secret. Count your infection as a blessing, for it truly is. I can hear them in my home now. It is time. If you need me, you shall be able to find me. You are not alone.'

For a few minutes, Harry stood in shook, taking the information in. He was infected by Ancient magic? This was the first he had ever heard of it really, he couldn't imagine how he could have been affected by it.

He could feel his hands trembling, and he shakily put the journal back. Algar Outtrerridge; he needed to remember that name. The date on the journal was 1979, so there was a high possibility he was still in an asylum. Mentis Morbo Asylum was the only one he knew of, so that would be his first go-point.

He was ready to leave the library, but a parchment sticking out from the shelf caught his eye. The circular symbol from Selene Lovegood's journal had been drawn multiple times on it.

He pulled the parchment fully out; the symbol had been drawn all over the sheet, along with the word 'Horcrux' in crooked writing. It was all the parchment contained, and Harry wondered why he had been drawn to it; he had never heard of a Horcrux before, but now it seemed to be everywhere he looked. Perhaps he was exaggerating slightly, but two times was too many for him.

He froze as he realised his fingernail had carved the symbol into the shelf. He eyed the blood in shock, flinching as the Eye of Horus unwillingly flashed at the front of his mind, the golden glow settling over his finger and healing it before fading back to normality.

He traced over the carved symbol, jumping violently when he heard a voice behind him.
"Were you not told to leave before our arrival?" Voldemort hissed warningly.

Harry turned around, the parchment still clutched tightly in his fist. "I'm sorry; I'm-I'm going now," he stuttered, his heart beating heavily from the shock. He noticed both Voldemort's and Tom's eyes seemed instantly drawn to the parchment in his hand, so he turned back to put it on the shelf.

Tom was eyeing him with a dark look, while the Dark Lord had an evil smile on his face.

He backed slowly from the room, intent on leaving so he could to find a corner to calm down in.

Nagini was hissing to the other men, and as Harry's eyes locked with the snake's, he very clearly heard her say "he can be trusted."

He yelped, slamming his hands over his mouth before fleeing from the room as fast as he could. He didn't stop until he ran out of breath, and he slid down a wall, his head spinning from everything that had happened.

All the Ancient magic stuff, coupled with a sudden influx of information on a rare piece of magic and combined with spontaneously talking snake was all too much.

"Young sir?" came a small voice.

"Great, how I'm hearing things, oh, and now I'm talking to myself too. Wonderful," Harry muttered angrily aloud.

"Young sir, are you alright? Can Dobby help you at all?" the voice came again. A small hand tugged on his sleeve, and Harry turned to see a rather sorry House-Elf.

"I'm okay, thank you for asking," he told the creature, managing a smile. At least he wasn't that insane.

"You don't have to thank me, young sir. Dobby is only doing his job. Mistress is very adamant that Dobby is good to her guests."

"No, I meant it when I said thank you, Dobby," he smiled, his gesture fading as the creature's eyes filled with tears.

"Dobby has not been thanked in a long time, young sir. You are very kind. Would you like Dobby to fetch Young Master for you?"

"If you could please. And call me Harry; I'm not a sir."

Dobby giggled. "Sir Harry then," the House-Elf stated, before vanishing off to get Draco. Harry felt sorry for the elf; it looked like the Malfoy family wasn't kind to him, though that wasn't surprising; it was far too common for House-Elves to be mistreated.

Dobby returned not much later with Draco.

"What's the matter?" Malfoy asked, not looking or sounding like he really cared.

"Just read some stuff," Harry answered lamely, but Draco seemed to understand.

"The Dark Arts can be horrifying but they're addictive. Be careful with them," the blond said, staring down at Harry.

"It almost sounds like you care, Malfoy," Harry retorted with a grin; bantering with the Slytherin
was better than thinking about his real problems, after all.

Before Malfoy could respond, Nagini slithered past them, making the blond boy freeze. Tom followed the snake, and Draco quickly bowed his head in greeting before darting off.

Tom held his hand down to help Harry up, and then he pulled him towards his room without speaking.

Once they were inside, Tom shut the door and looked at Harry expectantly.

"Why is this happening to me?" Harry asked, and Tom tilted his head slightly.

"Why is what happening exactly?" the older boy questioned calmly, sitting himself down in a chair.

"Well I've been hearing random bits of snake talk each time I've been here, and now I've found out I've been infected with some Ancient magic or something which is making weird stuff happen."

To Harry's surprise, Tom stood again, suddenly showing a lot more intrigue than previously.

"Show me," he ordered, and Harry shut his eyes again, feeling the glow settle over his skin.

When he opened his eyes, Tom was staring at him hungrily. "Keep it up," he demanded, stepping closer to Harry, making the younger boy step backwards until he hit the wall.

"There's so much power," Tom growled, grabbing Harry's wrist and holding it upwards.

"It's too much," Harry whispered desperately. Tom grabbed Harry's other wrist and held them both above his head, pressing his own body into the Gryffindor's.

"No, it's perfect," Tom hissed in his ear. "I need to feel this power; I need to taste it."

Then Tom leant forwards, and pressed his lips firmly over Harry's.
Nine

Chapter Notes

I apologise for being a terrible updater, but I've finished one story now and I'm pausing the other, so this story now has my full attention, which should mean more updates, because updating one fic is a lot less daunting than updating three, at least in a procrastinator's eyes.

Anywho, I hope you enjoy the chapter, and no, I still don't own anything. Lord of the Rings is mentioned in this chapter. Don't own that either.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

X

Harry stiffened just for a moment as he felt Tom's lips move against his, but then he noticed how perfect it seemed to be; how right it felt, and how feeling a part of Tom connected with him made him feel complete.

He started to kiss back with as much intensity as he could muster. While Cedric's kisses had been sweet and soft, as if Cedric was scared he would break Harry, Tom's were the opposite. The kiss was demanding, and consuming, like Tom was trying to take all of Harry in.

Harry was drawn back to reality as he felt one of Tom's hands begin to travel down his body, and in a moment of self-doubt he wrenched his wrists out of Tom's grip, dropping the spell.

"Forgive me, Harry; I allowed lust to cloud my mind. Once again you have caused me to act in a way that is unlike me," Tom said, although he didn't sound apologetic at all. Indeed, he was looking at Harry almost hungrily.

"No, I'm just, err, not used to it," Harry mumbled, looking away from Tom, blushing.

"Well that certainly wasn't your first kiss," Tom observed, the smirk on his face making Harry flush even more.

"Well, no, but it didn't mean anything before," Harry admitted awkwardly, finally bringing his eyes up to meet Tom's unwavering gaze.

"Ah yes, the murdered boy who loved you despite the lack of feelings you felt in return," Tom mused, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

"Cedric didn't love me; he never said so at least," Harry muttered, casting his thoughts back two years.

"That didn't mean he didn't. I saw it in his mind, right before Longbottom stepped aside and allowed Peter Pettigrew to kill him on the Dark Lord's orders. You were his last thought."

Harry felt a new wave of anger wash over him, aimed at both Neville and Voldemort. True, he hadn't loved Cedric, but the boy had still meant something to him, he admitted to himself reluctantly.
"You can do much better than a pretty-boy Hufflepuff," Tom continued. "You're beautiful, unique and you have a deep power you have yet to unlock completely. You need somebody equal to you, who can challenge you and show you how powerful you truly are."

"Somebody like you?" Harry whispered, realising only afterwards what he had said. To his surprise, the corners of Tom's mouth twitched upwards, and the older boy leant in towards him.

"Yes, my dear, somebody like me."

And then Tom's lips were against his again, less demanding than before, but it still sent a jolt of electricity running through him. He opened his mouth and allowed Tom's tongue to slip inside, moving against his and exploring his mouth, as if Tom wanted to feel every part of Harry.

Harry's hands were free this time, and they found their way to the back of Tom's head, one gripping the back of his neck and the other woven through soft locks, while Tom's hands were gripping hard at Harry's hips.

"I meant what I said you know," Tom drawled, pulling away from Harry too soon. "We will rule the world for eternity, both of us conquering death." Tom moved his body away from Harry as well, moving to sit on a leather sofa. He patted the cushion beside him as an indication for Harry to sit, before he continued to speak. "Now, you must not let anyone know of these magical abilities. Although modern day magic is based on Ancient Roman spells, most Ancient types are disproved of in our society, just as much as Dark Magic, although it is less known. They are scared of the power you yield, despite how it has it's limitations and drawbacks just as any form of magic does. It will not make you invincible, and it will not make you immortal, but the reason they fear it is because you have something unknown, which is a strong advantage in battle. Those I know of who are able to produce any form of Ancient Magic have been locked away in asylums. You must keep this secret with your life."

Harry looked away awkwardly. He trusted Luna not to tell anybody, but he didn't know if Tom would trust her in any form.

"You already told that girl, didn't you?" Tom asked, though not really a question, his voice suddenly more authoritative and cold.

"I needed her help," Harry said, shrugging as if it was nothing. "I was panicking slightly and she was already there at Hogwarts. I never told her any specifics about you but I'm pretty sure she knows everything and she's never told a soul; she'll keep this quiet too."

"It is too much of a risk. If her mind is unprotected anybody with the right skills could find out. I want you to go and bring her to me. You promised to serve me and if she interferes with that she must be removed."

"No," Harry said quietly, keeping his eyes downcast.

"Excuse me?" Tom questioned, voice now even colder and sounding much more like Voldemort.

"No," Harry repeated more firmly, looking up and trying to stand his ground. "I like Luna. She was the only person there for me when you were gone, and she's accepted me despite everything she knows about me."

"What do you suggest we do then? Allow her mind to wander around the wrong person and have you waste your life in an asylum?" Tom hissed, and for a moment Harry could see the dark side of Tom; the part of him that had turned into the Dark Lord.
"An Unbreakable Vow would stop her telling anybody if you don't trust her not to stay quiet, and she could learn Occlumency. She's clever, and I swear she knows Legilimency already so that should help her."

The look in Tom's eyes made Harry think that in a flash of green light his life would be over, but to his surprise Tom started to laugh.

"You do amuse me, Harry. You're unable to stand up to school bullies, yet you can look a powerful Dark wizard in the eye and refuse an order. However, bring her to me and I will assess her myself," Tom stated, placing a hand gently on the side of Harry's face. The younger boy nodded reluctantly.

"Draco will give you the Portkey. I'll be waiting."

Tom stood, pulling Harry up with him and guiding him over to the door. He kissed Harry softly once more before he opened it, reminding Harry he only felt complete with Tom, so he had to do as he asked, although he'd be damned if he let the man kill Luna.

He made his way to Draco's room, already familiar with the route. He was vaguely aware of screaming from beneath him and he tried to block the sound out.

He knocked on the door once he reached the room, and he heard shuffling the other side of the door as Draco moved to unlock it.

"What do you want?" Draco spat as he eyed Harry. He seemed to look guilty, and Harry looked into the room beyond him; it was in the sort of state Harry's room would be in when he tried to hide something from his mother in a hurry; nothing particularly in sight, as if Draco had been sat doing nothing, while strangely placed items were scattered about.

"I need a Portkey to go and get somebody to bring them back here," Harry answered honestly. He knew Draco had to collect his blood to allow him to the manor, and he didn't want Luna being injured by the wards.

Draco eyed him warily for a moment before begrudgingly allowing him access to his room.

Malfoy's room was everything Harry expected it to be; pristine and impressive. There was a large desk with carved oak legs and a matching chair at one side of the room by a large window looking out onto the grounds. A sofa and two matching arm chairs were near the front of the room, a small table between them with the suspiciously placed books across it. A four-poster bed on a slightly raised platform was towards the back. The top of the bed posts were open, and above it was a patch of glass roof with the stars entirely in view. The room was truly beautiful, but at the same time didn't feel like it should belong to a sixteen-year old boy.

As Draco walked to his desk to retrieve what Harry presumed was the Portkey, the Gryffindor crept towards the small table and shifted through the books silently.

He instantly knew what Draco was hiding when he saw the book on the bottom.

He gingerly picked up the battered copy of 'Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers'. It was a favourite book of his, his love for the series passed on to him from his mother, but the trilogy was written by a muggle, and considering the people downstairs were likely torturing muggles, he didn't think it would be approved of in Draco's world.

Which was probably the reason for Draco's horrified expression.


"You don't tell anybody, you hear me? If I find out you've told then I'll-" Draco started dangerously but Harry cut him off.

"I'm not going to tell; everyone should have the right to read what they want to. I'm more surprised you even wanted to read these."

"I didn't know it was a muggle author at first. I picked up The Fellowship of the Ring in Flourish and Blotts and presumed it was an unknown wizard. Once I found out they were muggle I had already bought and read the last two, as well as The Hobbit," Draco muttered, and it was the first time Harry had seen the blond act so out of his Pureblooded aristocratic character.

"Well there's nothing wrong with reading muggle fiction. I'm a big fan, but if you want a really good discussion about Lord of the Rings you should talk to Luna; she believes Middle-Earth really exists. I'm still dubious but I told her if she finds it she'll have to take me to see it."

"Hmm, now I've charmed the Portkey to allow one person to travel with you on this occasion only." Draco said, clearly wanting the conversation to stop. He handed Harry the Portkey, and then Malfoy's bedroom was disappearing into a whirling vortex, reforming itself as inner Hogwarts.

Fortunately for Harry, despite the late time he knew that Luna wouldn't be in bed, or even in the Ravenclaw common room, and he knew exactly where to find her.

He made his way swiftly through the halls and up the winding staircase to the Astronomy Tower. Luna was peering at the night sky, one eye pressed against the glass of a black and gold telescope.

"Hello, Harry," she greeted without turning around, "Mars is looking rather bright tonight. I suppose that's a sign of what's to come; Mars is the God of war, after all."

Luna held the telescope out to Harry, and he stepped forward, taking hold of the device and peering through it. The Red Planet was particularly bright, seeming to stand out amongst the black depth of night.

"Luna, I need you to come with me to Malfoy Manor; I'll explain once we're there," Harry said, handing the telescope back to the blonde.

"I didn't realise you were friends with Draco Malfoy; he's rather handsome, isn't he?" Luna said dreamily, her hand moving to tuck a strand of straggly hair behind her ear.

"We aren't really friends," Harry muttered awkwardly, holding the Portkey up to Luna with a smile.

As she grabbed it he muttered the incantation to active the Portkey, causing them to land at the Malfoy residence.

"This is lovely," Luna stated, looking around the empty room in which they had arrived at. "It doesn't feel like a homely place, but it would make a beautiful gallery."

"You should see the rest of the house," Harry muttered, wondering where to start. "Luna, listen, you know that Tom I'm friends with-?"

"You mean the one who grew up into Lord Voldemort?" Luna said casually, "The story went that Neville stopped the diary of Tom Riddle killing you, and it was very simple to link the names together. I presume he's in this house somewhere?"
"Well, yeah, but, look, I'm not a Death Eater-"

"I know," Luna interrupted once more. "I trust you would never hurt a soul, and you can't help who you fall in love with. Sometimes love will lead us more than our instincts of good and bad. Even Dumbledore let his heart rule for quite some time."

"So you know everything?" Harry questioned, half wondering what had happened with Dumbledore, along with how Luna had managed to be so perceptive.

"Not nearly anything at all, actually. I doubt even you know everything about yourself, but that's just part of life. It wouldn't be fun if we didn't have to figure it out along the way. I will admit I'm not sure why you brought me here, but I can't imagine you would lead me to something bad."

Harry felt guilt eat away at him at Luna's blind trust in him. He wasn't planning for her to be killed or tortured, but he knew Tom could do it anyway and perhaps even Obliviate him afterwards so he'd have no idea.

"Tom knows about the Ancient Egyptian magic," Harry began slowly, "and he knows that you know, and he's worried for me. I swear I won't let him hurt you though. I think maybe we'd do an Unbreakable Vow and I could help you learn Occlumency."

"I don't need to learn Occlumency," Luna cut in, "Shall we go then?"

Harry nodded, grasping hold of Luna's hands. She squeezed back tightly, and Harry thought he could feel her trembling slightly as he guided them to Tom's room.

The screaming had stopped now, which Harry was partly grateful for, although it was probably for only one reason which he didn't like to dwell on.

He knocked on Tom's door, and waited as Tom's familiar yet colder voice said "enter."

He walked into the room, tugging Luna behind him, standing in front of her as much as he could. The door fell shut with a soft thud and Harry focused his attention on the room.

Tom was sat on the sofa, with one leg crossed over the other. One of his arms was stretched out, resting atop the back of the chair, while the other held a glass of dark red wine. Tom was clearly posed, as Harry had never seen him sit like that, and it didn't seem comfortable, but he supposed it was an intimidation technique or something. Tom smirked wickedly as he eyed the pair.

"Harry, come sit with me," Tom spoke gently, though the command was obvious in his voice. Luna seemed to nudge him with her hand, so he dropped his hand and moved his way over to sit beside Tom, whose arm seemed to fall down slightly to rest against Harry's upper back, the hand moving closer to Harry, though not touching. Despite the lack of touch, Tom's closeness still gave some comfort to Harry.

"This is how it will be," Tom hissed in his ear quietly, "the both of us in control and in power, side by side."

Tom straightened up and raked his eyes up and down Luna. The Ravenclaw stood unfazed by his examination. She seemed to be humming to herself quietly, not showing any fear. Harry rather admired her; he knew from experience it was difficult to stand up to Tom.

"Oh, Harry, you didn't tell me Miss Lovegood here is a clairvoyant," Tom said after a moment, not taking his eyes from Luna.
"I didn't know," Harry whispered. It explained a lot; Luna had always been exceptionally good at reading people, and with her mother's Seer blood it was really no surprise.

"I get it from my mother," Luna mused, reiterating Harry's thought. "She was a Seer, though my skill manifests itself differently."

"Thus a natural Occlumens," Tom continued, finally shifting his focus from Luna and moving it onto Harry. "You are very fortunate in your choice of associate, though we shall still perform a Vow by the end of the night."

"Harry's very good to you," Luna piped up, drawing both the boy's attention back to her. "He always put you first, and though he's the closest thing I have to a friend, I think he needs you more than he needs me."

Tom's lip had curled, and Harry looked between the pair; he was obviously missing something. Luna's brutal honesty could only take him so far in guessing, but even not understanding the secret message, watching the dynamic between the two was fascinating.

There seemed to be, not so much a spark, but a fire between the pair, fuelled with different emotions ranging from anger and jealousy, to interest and curiosity. Luna had always been unique, open with herself and the world, and she wore that openly on her being, and that seemed to fuel Tom, the man wanting to understand all the world had to offer. And while Luna seemed to have her head in the clouds, as Harry knew, that was generally not the case. The Ravenclaw had a different way of looking at the world, seeing things that nobody else bothered with or cared about. She picked up on everything, even the details that didn't seem to matter, and she probably saw Tom, not just as the sociopath who was part of Voldemort, but as the man Harry saw.

Luna and Tom would almost definitely never like each other, but they would offer the other something they couldn't get anywhere else, and that would keep Luna alive and willing to accept Tom for Harry.

They seemed to have finished their silent conversation as Tom took a sip of wine, snapping his fingers and thrusting the glass at Dobby who had appeared. He ignored the elf completely; Harry sent the creature a small smile before he disappeared with a pop.

"The Vow, then?" Tom said, not really a question.

Harry nodded and stood, moving close enough to Luna so that he could grasp her hand once more. She smiled at Harry, her eyes darting about the room, still taking in the style of the manor, as if she wasn't about to make a promise that would literally kill her to break.

Tom moved to stand beside them, pressing his wand down onto the tops of their hands.

Harry paused for a moment; he didn't know much about the Vow, but he knew it was meant to be official, so he wanted to make sure he sounded the part, as well as avoiding any possibilities for loopholes.

"Will you, Luna, keep the information you have about me and Tom to yourself, only discussing it with the two of us?"

"I will," Luna answered, causing a slim steam of painless fire to wrap around their hands.

"And will you ensure to do this in every possibility, including verbally, in writing and in mind?"

"I will."
A second flame moved around their hands, meeting the other and clasping together.

Tom raised his wand, flashing pearl white at Harry.

"Perfect," he said, absent-mindedly pushing his hair into place. "Will you escort Miss Lovegood to Draco Malfoy's room, Harry? He can see to her; you are to return here immediately."

"It was very nice to meet you, Mr Riddle," Luna bid farewell, waving as she span to leave the room. Tom said nothing, turning to his desk.

Harry followed Luna from the room, and as he walked beside he could feel the relief in the air around them.

"I wouldn't have told anybody anyway; it's not my secret to tell, but I suppose Tom wants to be careful. It seems like he truly wants the best for you," Luna mused, trailing her fingers across the vast walls and paintings.

Harry stayed silent, though allowing a small smile to grace his face.

"So why didn't you tell me about you?" he asked eventually, making Luna stop.

"Mum told me not to tell people, even Dad doesn't know," the blonde explained. "It can come in handy at times, especially around you. I can sense many things, from both the living and the dead. The ghosts at Hogwarts tend to open up to me more. It's very sad really, because they're trapped on this Earth for ever, with their last living memory being their death. Helena Ravenclaw is very shy, even with the other ghosts, you see; it does her good to have somebody who understands her."

"Well it explains a lot," Harry said with a grin.

They eventually reached Draco's door and Harry knocked. This time Draco answered much quicker and his room had been tidied.

His eyes raked over Harry and Luna for a moment, and he welcomed them inside.

"Err, Lord Riddle asks if can you see to Luna; maybe find her a room or something," Harry told the Slytherin, who nodded.

"There's a room next door you can stay in; I can't be bothered setting one up for you so you can have it as it is. If there's a problem then call for Dobby; I don't want to know," Draco scowled.

"Thank you, Draco," Luna sang. "You have a beautiful home; I expect the grounds will be just as impressive."

"Yes, they are; some of the best in the Wizarding World," Malfoy boasted, suddenly less harsh.

"Would I be able to look at them tomorrow? Dad says you have a number of creatures hidden about," Luna added, and Draco nodded.

"We have normal garden animals roaming around." Draco emphasised the word normal. "You'll need me or Mother to give you a tour unless you want to get lost. I'll show you providing we go on my terms, so I will come to you when I'm ready to go and we return when I want to."

"I'm going to head back now," Harry cut in. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Luna and even Draco bid him goodnight, and the pair were still talking as he shut the door.
He found it cute in a way that Luna found Draco handsome. The younger Malfoy was arrogant and pompous in public, and even in private at times too, but there was a side to Draco that was hidden, even to the boy's own family. He wondered if Luna would be able to break through Draco's outer shell and connect with the real Draco Malfoy.

He didn't bother knocking when he arrived back at Tom's room.

The older boy was sat atop of the covers in bed, his long legs stretched out as he read a book.

As Harry neared, he could see that Tom's shirt had the top buttons undone, teasingly showing pale and smooth skin underneath.

"She is an intriguing character," Tom commented as Harry clambered onto the bed beside him. "Seers and Clairvoyants are always beneficial to have as allies. It was interesting; despite her natural resistance against Legilimency, she willingly allowed me into her mind; very peculiar. I must admit, you made a wise choice in befriending her."

"We aren't-" Harry started, but Tom stopped him with a wave of his hand.

"I know," the man replied with a small smirk. "It's late; you should be getting some sleep."

"I'm fine," Harry lied. The soft bed, coupled with the warmth radiating from Tom's body was very soothing indeed.

As if he knew that, and to make it worse, Tom shifted and pulled Harry downwards until the Gryffindor's head was resting against Tom's chest, his body curled up alongside the older boy's.

"I'll show you the grounds myself tomorrow," Tom said softly, Harry's Occlumency guards having fallen with his tiredness. "But for now, sleep."

And Harry did, with dreams of a red-eyed angel.

X

Chapter End Notes

I didn't want to stop there, but if I carried on I'd probably have written too much. The next chapter will be out very soon; I'm looking forward to that garden scene.

Also, this chapter turned out far fluffier than I had planned, and it isn't really all that fluffy. But I suppose you should enjoy it while it lasts, because with the word 'horror' in the title, it's not going to be a lovey-dovey story. Being a homicidal sociopath stops Tom being cute and cuddly, you see. The things I have planned for him are oh so creepy. And as you can see, Harry is starting to become more confident in himself and the bullies who knocked him down are eventually going to regret it.

I hope you enjoyed the chapter.
Ten

Chapter Notes

Wow, I actually updated within a decent time frame. Anywho, I don't own anything you recognise. I'm sure everybody knows that, but you never know.

Warning – Paedophilia is mentioned once in this chapter. And I literally mean mentioned; no acts are described and never will be.

X

When Harry started to wake up the next morning the first thing he noticed was the lack of a warm body against his. The next thing he noticed was the fact that in place of a body was something warm and furry curled up by his side. The third thing he noticed as his eyes finally opened were a pair of beedy yellow eyes staring at him.

He jumped up in shock, making Orion jump up with him; the kitten presuming Harry wanted to play. He heard Tom snicker the other side of the room, and even Nagini seemed amused.

"You seem to be an animal person," Tom mused casually. "Animals tended to be very fond of me as a child, but I never shared the same sentiment. I enjoyed talking to the snakes though; they were the only ones I could have a decent conversation with."

"What about your parents?" Harry asked as he stood and stretched his arms above his head.

"I didn't grow up with my parents," Tom replied, and from the tone of his voice Harry decided he wouldn't pry, although he couldn't deny the curiosity he felt regarding Tom's childhood.

Harry settled for an 'hmming' noise, stroking Orion's head with a finger.

"I made the House-Elf get you some new clothes for while you stay here; they're in those drawers," Tom stated, pointing over to a set by the far wall. "I have business to attend to with the Dark Lord this morning, so you get ready while I'm away, and we'll view the gardens on my return. Come, Nagini."

The snake slithered off the bed, curling around Harry's legs as she went.

The bathroom was far more impressive than the Prefect's bathroom that Cedric had shown him once. The bathtub was sunk into the floor, the size of it like that of a swimming pool, and it was built entirely from black marble with hints of emerald green.

A glass door at the back of the bathroom led to the shower, which had the same marble on three sides. The shower room was large as well, and the water could be controlled to fall over the whole room if the user wanted.

Harry opted for the shower, thinking if he went for the bath he'd end up in there for hours.

After a blissful shower, he wrapped a fluffy towel around himself, charmed to stay warm, and wandered back into the bedroom.
As he shifted through the clothes Dobby had got for him, he realised they were all very Pure-blood-esque. During the week he had a uniform to wear, but at weekends he preferred to stay in jeans and t-shirt; a hoody when it got cold, and of course his favourite Converse All Star trainers he had collected in every colour imaginable. His usual clothing choices were very muggle, but clearly that was frowned upon by the elitist Pure-blood families. Being Half-blood meant he was just able to get away with not being Pure-blood in circles where it mattered, as long as he abandoned the muggle side of him.

He chose the most comfortable outfit he could manage, consisting of plain black trousers, a white shirt and black shirt-vest over the top, of course keeping the shirt untucked. He nicked the rainbow studded belt from his jeans, which was just visible from under the shirt, and kept his black converse on so he'd at least feel like he wasn't a business man.

He found it rather ironic that wizards and witches who detested muggles still wore suits and smarter clothing types despite the fact muggles wore similar. The tailoring was somewhat different, and there were features which were not found in muggle fashion, but the general idea was the same. Long gone were the days when magical humans wore robes with nothing underneath; he supposed it was a modesty thing. There were, of course, some who wore more unusual clothing, like Bellatrix Lestrange who tended to stick to medieval-type dresses.

Harry really wanted to go back to the part of the library he had been in before, but not wanting to risk running into someone, he instead picked up one of the books Tom had given him.

The one he grabbed was entitled 'Dark Magic in Ancient Egypt', which contained the history and present-day usage of Dark magic in Egypt.

He curled up in one of the armchairs, Orion jumping onto his lap almost instantly. Although it made holding the book significantly more awkward, he didn't have the heart to kick the kitten off him.

Apparently Dark magic had been commonly used in Egypt throughout the ages, and although Dark magic was viewed as something dangerous and harmful, Dark spells weren't necessarily aimed at hurting somebody, rather they used different energies from the magical core and generally had somewhat shifty ethics. So despite the fact some ancient wizards would use Dark magic to punish their slaves, the majority of the time it was used for bettering Wizarding and Muggle society, as at the time they were combined.

He had managed to read the introduction before Tom returned, and the older boy looked approving of Harry reading.

He offered his hand to Harry, pulling the teenage up, Orion jumping from his lap with a hiss.

Tom waved his wand, casting a non-verbal spell. It appeared to have no effect, but Tom's smirked suggested otherwise.

"It's somewhat of a variation of the Disillusionment charm," Tom explained. "Rather than disguising us entirely, it has formed a shield around us which won't allow anyone from the outside to see us through it. It's a spell I created after I was freed from the diary."

"Impressive," Harry muttered, grinning at the Dark wizard.

Tom's smirk grew stronger, the man apparently confidant in his abilities.

"It doesn't cause complete sensory deprivation, however," Tom continued, indicating for Harry to
follow him from the room "so I'd recommend that you stay quiet whilst we're in the manor."

Harry obeyed, keeping silent as they made their way through the hallway, which was empty, however when they turned into another passageway there were a number of men dressed in dark cloaks moving around. Tom grasped hold of Harry's wrist to manoeuvre their way through without knocking into anyone. He presumed that Tom, Voldemort and Narcissa must be the only ones who knew about him at the moment.

They eventually reached the large glass doors which led out into the gardens. Even from inside Harry could see that they were vast, with high hedges scattered about and a forest just beyond.

"Impressive, aren't they?" said Tom as he pushed the door open and led Harry outside. "The forest and fields around the front don't specifically belong to the Malfoy family, but they've been charmed to keep unwanted visitors out." Tom's lip curled cruelly.

Now they were outside, the length of the gardens seemed to be even greater, stretching far back towards the trees. It was beautiful, but much like the rest of the home, it wasn't really a family setting; it was too pristine and perfect.

"It's lovely," Harry agreed as they walked, heading through a gate which opened into a wide area taken up mostly by a lake which was lined with exotic trees that were clearly not usually found in Britain.

Tom took hold of Harry's hand, linking their fingers together.

"How's school going?" Tom asked, the normalcy of the question taking Harry aback; Tom had been rather obsessed by joint immortality lately.

"Err, okay, I guess. It's hard, but it's N.E.W.T level so it's expected," Harry answered with a shrug. "I managed to get into Potions, and thanks to this old textbook I found I'm probably one of the best in the class at the moment, although that might just be because we have a better teacher than Snape ever was."

"Snape isn't teaching Potions anymore?" Tom asked sharply, and Harry nodded. "Peculiar how he didn't mention that. Who's your professor now?"

"Professor Slughorn…so is Snape really a Death Eater then? Because Dad always calls him that but Mum denies it all the time and--"

"Slughorn, you say?" Tom interrupted, completely ignoring what Harry was saying.

"Yeah, I heard Dumbledore was pretty desperate to get him back to teach for some reason."

"Slughorn taught back in my day. I was his favourite student at the time; I suppose he was my favourite professor-he certainly gave me the most useful information. Has he restarted that little club he had going?"

"The Slug-Club?" Yeah, me and my sister got automatically invited into it because he adored our mother."

"Slughorn never used to care for Muggle-born students," Tom mused. "Strange how when times change, people do too. Dumbledore's clearly brought him back for a reason; I have my theories, but I'd like you to stick close to him. He's a gullible man who's easy to fool."

Harry nodded, and Tom seemed pleased. They had made their way around the lake by now, Tom
having a brisk step, and were walking upwards past stone statues of the Malfoy ancestors. Harry could see Luna and Draco amongst a flower garden, Luna on her hands and knees, digging through the plants. Draco was actually smiling at her antics; very different when he thought nobody could see him.

"So, is Snape a Death Eater?" Harry repeated his question from earlier, looking away from his friend.

"Apparently. I'm not convinced his loyalties truly lie with us, but then again I doubt he is entirely on Dumbledore's side either. Both Voldemort and Dumbledore trust him entirely however, and he does have his assets. I heard some rather interesting things about his involvement regarding the Longbottom family."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked, but Tom shook his head.

"You'll have to find that out for yourself; your family is quite involved in the story and I don't have all the details; I shouldn't like to mislead you. Now, do you remember that parchment you had in the library yesterday?"

"The Horcrux thing?" Harry questioned, making Tom nod.

"Do you have any idea what a Horcrux is?" the older boy asked, and Harry shrugged.

"I know it's something to make somebody immortal, or at least come back to their body after death. Some soul-splitting is involved too?"

"That's the very basics of it. I must emphasise the word 'basic' there; it is a much more complicated piece of magic than that. The actual creation of a Horcrux is difficult to master, although most only get a single chance at it because failure tends to result in death, but when successful, one can place a piece of their soul in an object which will enable them to return to the living world after their body has been destroyed by death."

"Is that what everyone meant when they said the Dark Lord wasn't really dead? A lot of people thought that even though he was hit by the Killing Curse, he was still alive somewhere in some form, and now he's back entirely. Did he have a Horcrux?"

Tom nodded, a dark expression on his face. "He has five; he originally had six but the soul encased in the diary enabled me to return to life. The Dark Lord believes having me in place of a Horcrux is more beneficial, as a Horcrux can be more easily destroyed. Now, Slughorn is the man who first told me what I needed to know to create a Horcrux; I believe Dumbledore has his suspicions but cannot be sure, which is why he needs Slughorn at the school."

"So you want me to stop Slughorn telling?" Harry asked, almost falling over when Tom stopped abruptly.

"Oh no, Harry, I want you to make sure they find out," Tom said, a cruel smile crossing his face. "But wouldn't-?" Harry started, but Tom cut him off with a wave of his hand, and he leant in close to Harry's ear.

"It is not possible to destroy the Dark Lord at the moment. Why would I risk my own life to destroy the Horcruxes myself when I can get Dumbledore and his lackeys do it for me? They know nothing of me; they'll take down the Dark Lord, then I take down them. I said it would be the two of us, and I meant the two of us; Voldemort won't be part of it. He's nothing more than a monster, lost in insanity. Now I see what mistakes I made, I can avoid them this time round."
Harry didn't even get time to think about the revelation Tom had just made, because Tom's lips were suddenly eagerly devouring his, and Harry willingly allowed his thoughts to be carried away.

He pouted when Tom pulled away, their fingers still entwined. Tom tugged Harry forward again, until Tom's free hand was moving over a marking on a tree. There were a line of trees, spread out openly, which seemed to symbolise the end of the Malfoy gardens rather than using a wall. Beyond that was a small stretch of grass before the forest began.

"Those beasts need to be checked again," Tom was scowling.

"What beasts?" Harry asked, trying to peer into the vast darkness of the forest.

"The werewolves; they live in the forest because Greyback believes they should live in the wild. They're charmed to stay away during the Full Moon, but Greyback enjoys pushing boundaries."

"They're not beasts-not all of them anyway," Harry said quietly.

"What?" Tom said stormily, turning away from the tree to eye Harry unblinkingly.

"Not all werewolves are beasts. I know ones like Greyback are, but Remus Lupin would never hurt a soul, and he's had such a hard life because of people judging him on something he can't control. He'd give anything to stop the transformation, but he can't, and that's not his fault."

Harry had always felt very strongly for creature rights. Growing up with a werewolf practically living in the house meant Harry hated creature prejudice from a very young age.

"Ah, Lupin; he certainly isn't so innocent anymore; he may not have killed anyone but he's assisting Greyback with research to help make the clan more efficient."

"Remus is out there?" Harry asked, already making a move to run into the trees, if only Tom's grip wasn't so strong.

"I won't allow you to go in there; I will bring Remus to you on your next visit. You're young, which is how Greyback likes them; he'd eat you alive, and likely do awful things to you beforehand; he has no problem with raping children."

Tom changed the subject after that, which Harry was very grateful for, and they finished their walk around the entire grounds, before Harry, Draco and Luna returned to Hogwarts.

Harry was incredibly busy the first two days the next week. Draco had asked him to do his Transfiguration homework for him, because apparently McGonagall was an old bat and her work was the least important, at least in Draco's eyes, so he had that to work on as well as his own studies. He was still trying to figure out a way to work his way into the Golden Trio and stay in the good books of Professor Slughorn.

The latter became considerably easier on Tuesday after Potions, when Slughorn came over to Harry, Neville and Hermione and invited them to a special dinner on Friday night. Harry didn't miss the jealous glances Ron was throwing their way.

He mentioned it to Lavender on their way out of the class, and the girl almost immediately ran to a bewildered Ron trying to emphasise with him. Cue Hermione's jealous glare.

The next day after classes Harry found himself wandering towards Moaning Myrtle's bathroom. It
felt like ages since he had been in anxiously awaiting Tom's return. It was ironic the bathroom never came into the picture again, though the monster that had been petrifying the students had never been reported as being caught or killed, so there was always the possibility of it's return.

"So you've finally come back, have you?" Myrtle greeted upon seeing him. "You used to come every day, but I've been alone for ages."

Harry had rarely spoken to the ghost in the past, so he wasn't sure why she had missed his presence so much, but he imagined being a ghost could get pretty lonely.

"Sorry, I'll try and come by more often," he apologised, but Myrtle didn't look happy.

"That's what they all say," she said sadly, sulking off into a stall.

Harry rolled his eyes at Myrtle's antics, and walked over to the sink which covered the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets, running his fingers over the carved serpents on the taps.

He jumped when the door banged open, and then Ginny was storming inside, her eyes red rimmed.

"Sorry, I didn't realise anyone would be in here," she said apologetically, but her voice sounded hoarse.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked with concern.

Ginny shrugged at him, but her eyes had started to tear up again. Harry inwardly winced; he wasn't particularly good at comforting people.

"I've been fighting with Dean again," Ginny told him, wiping her eyes furiously before any tears could fall. "When we're not fighting we have a really good time, but sometimes he's just so infuriating and our arguments get pretty bad."

"What do you argue about?" Harry asked, hoping he didn't sound too invasive, but Ginny seemed glad at the chance to open up. At least she had stopped tearing up now.

"He insists on following all these supposedly romantic traditions, but half the time they just make me feel like some useless doll, but he can't understand that. I know most girls would love a boyfriend who treated them like a princess, but I'm not that girl."

"What are you doing about it then?" Harry asked, looking at Ginny pointedly. The girl stared back, a thoughtful glint in her eyes.

"I can't decide. I really do like Dean, but these fights are getting out of hand," she mused.

"Well I'm not going to tell you what to do," Harry told her, "but I think there's somebody out there who you're more compatible with, but if you can put up with arguments and Dean makes you happy otherwise, then stay with him."

Ginny nodded, still looking like she was debating with herself. After a while she laughed gently and shook her head.

"I have the worst luck with boys," she muttered. "My first crush was on you; oh I was so disappointed when I found out you were gay. Michael Corner was a sore loser; I mean, I'm competitive, but I don't sulk when I lose. Now Dean's too nice, and Neville has a crush on me but I can't tell him I don't feel that way because he's basically part of the family and it would make things too awkward."
Harry managed to get over the bewilderment of Ginny having had a crush on him when they were younger, and instead smiled at Ginny.

"Well, let's find you somebody with the right requirements," Harry suggested, only half joking. Ginny seemed to catch onto the non-joking part.

"So from my previous list, I need somebody who's straight, competitive but not a sore loser, nice but not too nice, and who doesn't feel like a brother," she retorted with a grin. Harry was glad to see she had cheered up somewhat. "Are you invited to Slughorn's dinner on Friday?"

"Yeah, why?" he answered, glad the subject had changed.

"I got an invite too; so did Neville and Hermione. We should all go together."

"Sure," Harry agreed; it would give the perfect opportunity to talk to Neville.

X

That Friday evening came round quickly, and Harry was reading in the Gryffindor Common Room while he waited for the others to get ready. Draco had inspired him to re-read Lord of the Rings, and he was so drawn into the story that he jumped when Neville cleared his throat next to him.

"Hi," Longbottom greeted, smiling at Harry, who decided he couldn't be bothered with smiling back. He simply nodded in acknowledgment.

"Err, are you looking forward to tonight?" Neville asked awkwardly, and Harry inwardly sighed, knowing he'd have to make conversation.

"Not particularly," he answered honestly. "It just seems an excuse for people to show-off."

"Yeah, I thought that on the train, but at least Slughorn will pay attention to us in class. He doesn't even know Ron's name."

Ron was currently sat playing chess against a third year student, a miserable look across his face. Lavender was watching the game with far too much interest to be natural. She kept on flipping her hair, but Ron never showed any sign of noticing.

"Slughorn really likes you anyway," Harry pointed out. "Ginny mentioned you knew about him before anyone else did."

"Dumbledore brought me with him when he was trying to get Slughorn to come back," Neville explained. "Thought it might be a bit more incentive for him, I guess."

Harry almost rolled his eyes at how that sounded.

"I heard he taught here for years," Harry carried on. "Way back when You-Know-Who was in school." Harry was sure not use the name Voldemort or the Dark Lord around the Gryffindor students.

"Strange thinking like that; like he used to be a student just like us," Neville muttered, and Harry did roll his eyes this time.

"He did used to be a student just like us," Harry argued.

"Well, yeah, but he was evil even then. Only Dumbledore could see it though," Neville said bitterly.
'Good Old Dumbles,' Harry thought to himself sarcastically. "Shame that. He could have just expelled him and you wouldn't have to fight to the death now."

Neville paled at those words. "I d-don't know what you mean. Those Chosen One rumours are just that - rumours."

"Then why has Dumbledore been giving you all those extra lessons? It's not fair if you get to train to stay alive when the rest of us only have basic Defence training." Harry was ranting about the first thing that came to his head, but it seemed to work. Neville looked around him, beckoning Harry closer.

"I'm not training to fight," he confided. "We're not doing anything that beneficial really. Dumbledore just wants me to learn the history of Voldemort so I understand who we're all up against; that's all. But Dumbledore knows what he's doing."

"Sorry for snapping at you," Harry said, not sorry at all. "It's just been so stressful with this war, especially having loved ones in the Order; it just makes everything seem worse."

Neville nodded, an understanding look in his eyes. He opened his mouth to speak, but Hermione and Ginny had come over to join them now. Hermione's eyes glanced over the book title and she rolled her eyes, making Harry want to attack her with every fantasy and sci-fi book he owned, which would have taken a long time considering how many he owned. He said nothing though, and then they were on their way.

They walked to the meeting room together, Ginny and Harry feeling slightly left out as Hermione and Neville seemed to be talking closely, obviously not wanting to be over-heard by anyone.

They arrived at the room and Slughorn greeted them cheerfully, guiding them into the dining area. Harry immediately noticed Heather hadn't got an invite, and he felt a brief moment of pity for his sister, who Harry knew craved popularity and attention. It only lasted a moment though, and then he had to grin to himself knowing how annoyed she'd be.

He purposefully sat next to Hermione, leaving a gap between him and Blaise Zabini for Ginny to sit in; he had seen how well the pair had got on before. He seemed to be playing matchmaker a lot lately, and he cursed his mother because she had clearly passed down some of her interfering gene onto him.

The dinner passed as Harry expected it to; Slughorn went round everyone at the table, asking for more information about their families, with the exception of Neville, Hermione and Ginny who were asked about their own skills. Slughorn brought up Harry's Potion skills, not knowing Harry had a textbook teaching him all he needed to know, so he awkwardly stammered his way through that conversation.

Harry hung back once everyone started to leave; he wanted to talk to Slughorn alone, although he had no idea what he wanted to say to the professor.

"Harry, m'boy, what can I do for you?" Slughorn asked once everyone had vacated the room. The professor poured himself a glass of brandy, chuckling to himself.

"I just wanted to know a bit more about my mother when she was at school; she doesn't tend to tell me much," Harry made-up on the spot, but as Tom stated before, Slughorn was gullible and the man easily fell for the lie.

"Ah, yes, Lily has always been modest about herself. Very talented, you know? One of the best
students I've ever taught, surprising considering her upbringing. Not that I'm against Muggle-borns, or anything," he added hastily, "but for someone thrown into something so new and different she caught on quick. Always polite as well, never a bad word to say to anyone, well except perhaps your father." Slughorn laughed again, and even Harry had to smile imagining his parents in their youth; they may annoy him at times, but he thought they had a beautiful love story.

"So what were your other favourite students like? I know you taught for a very long time," Harry asked, trying to see if Slughorn would mention Tom.

"Oh, there's been a few; all of them were great at school and have gone onto great things. Mildred Miller was the first female to become a professional Quidditch player, and-"

"Neville said you taught You-Know-Who as well. Is that true?" Harry asked, cutting to the point. The joy seemed to leave Slughorn's face at his words.

"Yes, I did," he said almost sadly. "Of course I didn't know what he would become; none of us did."

"Forgive me, sir, I was just curious," Harry smiled; Slughorn clearly didn't want to talk at the moment, for he had started to tidy up the plates and glasses from the table without the use of magic.

"Of course; a young boy's mind is bound to be inquisitive, especially considering your past with the man."

"What past?" Harry asked slowly; Tom had mentioned something to do with his family past earlier in the week; perhaps they were talking about the same thing.

"Didn't they ever tell you?" Slughorn asked shocked. "I suppose if Lily wanted to protect you from the information it's not my place to tell."

"No," Harry said quickly, "she's just protective because she's my mother. I can handle things; would you have kept information from her because you thought she was too young?"

"No, no, I suppose I wouldn't have," Slughorn muttered, taking a big sip from his brandy. "I'm afraid I can't tell you much because I only know the basics. All I got told by your mother is that she wouldn't be talking to me for some time because you all had to go into hiding from You-Know-Who. She wouldn't tell me why you were targeted, but you came out of hiding after his defeat and she never mentioned it again. I'm sorry I can't be more help."

Harry wasn't sorry though; that had given him a very good head-start.

He bid Slughorn goodnight, and had only taken a few steps out the door when he was accosted by Draco Malfoy.

"Come with me," Malfoy hissed, his hand gripping Harry's upper arm tightly as he dragged him along.

Draco pulled him through the corridors until he stopped abruptly, pacing three times in front of a blank wall until a door appeared.

The door led to a room full of items that had been piled on top of each other, balancing precariously, as if one thing moved would send whole towers crashing down.

Draco released his grip on Harry's arm, and the Gryffindor cautiously followed him through the
room, stopping at a large object covered by a dust-covered sheet.

Draco yanked the material down, revealing a large brown cabinet with an intricate design. It looked like it opened down the middle.

"Lord Riddle demanded I show you this," Draco stated, sounding rather displeased with the fact.

"What is it?" Harry asked, reaching a hand out to touch the woodwork but Malfoy batted his hand away.

"It's a Vanishing Cabinet; broken at the moment. I need it fixing, and Riddle is insisting you're better off helping me directly rather than running errands."

"You don't sound too happy about that," Harry pointed out, and Draco shrugged.

"I wanted the opportunity to prove myself to the Dark Lord, but the sooner I get this done, the sooner Father will be freed from Azkaban. Of course the Dark Lord isn't to know of your assistance."

"So you're breaking the Dark Lord's orders to follow his son's?"

"Riddle can be just as cruel as the Dark Lord, but he's also more mentally stable. There's talk among the Death Eaters that Riddle will be a far greater Dark wizard than any other, and to please him is more important than pleasing the Dark Lord. Though his regime is great, his obsession with Dumbledore and Longbottom holds us all back."

No wonder Tom was so confident about taking over from Voldemort; he already had a willing group of followers. Even if Voldemort had seen the Death Eater's views, Harry suspected the man was a narcissist, and thus believed he would always be far greater than Tom, Dumbledore and Neville and would forever remain undefeated. Harry did hope the Dark Lord never realised Harry was using information he read in his mum's muggle psychology textbooks to analyse him.

He drew his thoughts away from Voldemort and back onto the Vanishing Cabinet.

"How's it broken?" he asked, walking around the object to study it all.

"I'm still in the process of finding that out," Draco muttered, looking thoughtful.

"Would you mind if Luna had a look? You don't have to tell her anything about it, but she took an oath to stay silent about whatever I tell her. She's really good at inventing things, and probably fixing them too."

"Fine, but no matter what you both do, I'm taking the credit," Draco asserted. "Lovegood already knows I carry the Dark Mark. She said it was unusual I've never worn short sleeves since returning after summer; not even my closest friends realised that."

"Yeah, she's annoyingly observant," Harry grinned, and even Malfoy smiled.

"I'll say," he murmured, remembering himself after a moment and re-applying his façade. "Meet me tomorrow, usual time. Goodnight."

Then Malfoy was storming from the room, leaving Harry alone.

On his way out, Harry managed to knock slightly into one of the towering piles of mismatched items. Fortunately only something small fell to the floor, landing at his feet.
The item seemed to be calling to him however, and when he picked it up, he felt a welcoming jolt run through him.

And so he decided to keep the diadem.

X
Eleven

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

X

Harry rushed back to his dorm room, the diadem tucked underneath his jumper. He could feel it throbbing against his skin, warm and electric.

It really was a pretty thing; a gold eagle accentuated with dark blue. A blue gem sparkled in the middle, with a circular and tear shaped crystal dangling below. If he were to hazard a guess he would be confident in saying the diadem was related to Ravenclaw in some way, possible even to Rowena Ravenclaw considering the aged look to the jewellery, but he couldn't understand why he felt such a draw to it.

He went straight to his bed upon arriving at Gryffindor Tower, pulling the curtains shut around him and placing Silencing and Sticking charms on them. He wasn't sure what he needed to hide from the other boys in his dorm, but every precaution helped.

He gingerly pulled the diadem out from under his jumper, gently brushing off a stray strand of wool that had become attached. Despite some of the rumours about him, he had no particular urge to wear the diadem, but just touching it was pleasing.

He ran his thumb over the sapphire, and as he did so a strange feeling of coldness swept throughout his entire body, and then he felt darkness overcome him.

X

When he awoke he was lying on a hard and uncomfortable ground. As his mind started to awake with his body he came to the realisation that he was in a forest. Trees seemed to surround him at every angle, long and thin, blocking out the sky above.

He jumped to his feet, looking around fearfully. He patted down his body, desperate to find his wand but it wasn't on him. A thorough search through the leaves told him he hadn't dropped it nearby either.

Feeling more panic start to rise in him, being inexplicably lost in a forest without a wand, he got the Eye of Horus clear in his mind, hoping he could somehow work out an Ancient spell to help him leave, but nothing seemed to happen. When he really focused it was almost as if he couldn't feel any magic, either in him or the atmosphere.

So Harry did the only thing he could think of; he ran.

He didn't care what direction he went; he just needed to get somewhere. Getting up each time he fell and ignoring the branches swiping his face, he ran until he spotted a woman standing with her back to him by a large tree.

"Hello?" he called, but the woman seemed to ignore him. Her hair was long and dark, flowing freely down her back, and her dress was a faded blue, very old-fashioned with a poufy skirt and ruffled sleeves.

He took a step nearer, calling out a second time, but once again she showed no sign of hearing him.
He walked cautiously towards her, until he was close enough to tap her on the shoulder, yet as he did his hand fell right through her.

He gasped and pulled his hand back swiftly, the woman still showing no recognition that Harry was there.

The woman turned suddenly, somehow looking vaguely familiar to Harry. He turned his head too as he heard a twig snap behind him, and then a large man with a curly wig on strode past him without paying any attention to Harry; he looked suspiciously like the Bloody Baron.

Before Harry could contemplate any further, the man had a knife plunged into the woman's stomach. The teenager gasped again, horrified as blood started to stain the woman's stomach and she fell to the floor as the man turned the knife on himself, plunging it into his heart, before the man and woman both disappeared altogether.

Harry could take no more, fearing he was going insane, and he turned hurriedly and ran even quicker than before. And then he could see a bright light just in the distance; hopefully his escape from the nightmare inducing trees.

The light was getting nearer and nearer, and he pushed forward, ignoring the pain in his body. He was so close now; he could almost taste the freedom.

Then he saw a wall of shining white, and he was suddenly thrown backwards, feeling his palms get torn open against the ground. He wiped the dirt and blood on his shirt, climbing shakily to his feet and limping towards the wall again.

It was glowing white, reaching far higher and far wider than he could see. He banged his hands against it, screaming in frustration as they did nothing more than collide with the wall.

That was all he could do; scream and attack the wall with as much force as he could, not caring how sore his throat was or how much his body ached.

"It won't work," an amused voice said softly from behind him, and he turned, clapping his hands to his mouth when he saw who had spoken.

It was Tom, except it wasn't Tom.

He was clearly the same man, the facial features and height clearly identical, yet this man appeared much older than his Tom, perhaps thirty or so. While his Tom was pale, but not unnaturally so, this one was almost ghostly white, his skin almost translucent and with a slight waxy look to it. His cheekbones appeared almost completely sunken and his eyes were almost entirely red. While Tom was slender, this Tom was almost skeletal. Harry was skinny, but he was nothing like the man in front of him, whose bones he could see sticking out sharply from under his robes. He looked the halfway point between Tom and Voldemort, and perhaps looked more terrifying for it.

"Who are you?" the man; Tom, hissed.

"Harry Potter," Harry answered honestly. Tom was circling him, getting closer and closer to the teenager. Harry felt like prey caught in a trap.

"And tell me, Harry Potter, how did you end up in here?" Tom asked; Harry didn't even know where here was.

"I don't know," he told the man. "I had this diadem; Ravenclaw's I think, and I blacked out and woke up here."
"Curious," Tom murmured, ceasing his circling. "Part of your soul is distant, yet another part of it feels like a brother; presumably the part that drew you in from the diadem. How is it you are able to be of two, Harry Potter? And why were you in possession of the diadem?"

"Be of two?" Harry repeated, confused. "I swear I don't know a thing; I don't even know what it means. But I found the diadem hidden and it was calling to me, so I kept it."

"You really don't know," Tom stated, reaching a pale hand out and tracing bony fingers down Harry's cheek; his skin was cold to the touch. "Yet you must know something, even if you cast your mind back."

Realisation seemed to hit Harry in an instance. Tom had been trapped in a diary for years, preserved at the age of sixteen until he was freed, and all that time he had been within another world in the diary, the diary which Tom had said had been a Horcrux.

"This is a Horcrux," Harry uttered softly.

"The inside of one," Tom corrected. "How do you know of the secret? Be careful of your answer; the forest is an unforgiving place."

"I-I wrote in the diary when I was twelve, and the Tom inside of it used me to bring him out of it. I've joined his cause and he's told me about the Horcruxes."

"He used you to release himself and yet you're still alive. I truly was ingenious, even at such a young age. Tell me, what is the year?"

"1996," Harry told him, and the older man repeated it to himself quietly.

"Strange how the slow the years pass in here," Tom said, more to himself than to Harry.

"Err, who are those two people; the man and the woman? Don't they keep you company? Is there anyone else here?" Harry asked, and Tom shook his head.

"I am the only living soul here, aside from you now, of course. Helena Ravenclaw and Baron Wulfgar are simply shards of souls left in the diadem from their brutal deaths. They do not know the present; rather they appear from time to time, living their last moments over and over. Due to their taint on the diadem, the world it has created is the Albanian forest in which their deaths occurred."

"Oh," Harry muttered. "So, is there any way out of here?"

"Not for me," Tom answered, beginning to walk away from Harry at last.

"What about for me?" Harry questioned, chasing after the man.

"Yes, but I have been entirely alone for a very long time, not even able to perform magic. Perhaps you can entertain me for some time. There must be much that I do not know from the years I've been entrapped, and if you are the lover of the version of me you freed, surely I should also be able to have reign of your body."

"N-no," Harry spluttered, "we're not-we're not lovers."

"Liar," Tom hissed, the collected attitude vanishing for a moment, leaving Harry more terrified than he had been in any moment of his life. "I can taste him on you."
Tom had started to calm down now, turning back into the calm yet cold persona he had previously.

"Well we are sort of, lovers I mean, but we've not done anything yet," Harry said awkwardly, wincing at the realisation he was explaining his sex life, or rather lack thereof, to a soul fragment belonging to the Dark Lord.

"That is of no interest to me," Tom told him. "Your Tom and I may be different yet we are also the same; it should make no difference to you which one of us you give your innocence too."

It did matter to Harry though, but he knew saying that to a Dark wizard suffering from severe cabin fever was useless.

"What if I tried to free you?" Harry said quickly, thinking on his feet. "I did it before with the diary; I could free you too and then you could live out in the open. I'm sure the Dark Lord can make another Horcrux to replace this one."

"You would be unable to do that," Tom stated simply. "Even if I were to call on your magic to transfer to me, the Tom you know would recognise the signs instantly and stop it. I know I have a tendency to be highly possessive."

"There must be another way," Harry guessed, trying to come up with anything that might let this Tom free him from the confines of the Horcrux. "Isn't there some sort of anti-Horcrux spell which would release you?"

"The only way to stop a Horcrux is to destroy it or have the remaining Earthly soul to recall it. Both of those options would simply cause me to vanish."

"Well, if you let me out of here I'll promise to find a way to do it," Harry begged, not ashamed of himself for resorting to it. Being without any form of magic truly was debilitating.

"And you would never return to me again," Tom said firmly, eyeing Harry narrowly.

"I will come back," Harry assured. "Can't I do something to prove it?"

Tom stayed silent for a moment, bending down and rustling through the plant life on the ground. He eventually found what he was looking for, cupping it in his hands so Harry was unable to see what it was.

"Give me your hand; palm up," the older man demanded, and Harry hesitantly offered it.

He didn't even have time to see Tom's hands uncurl until the object he had swiped Harry across the palm, causing a slightly deep cut. Blood immediately came to the surface, pouring out of the injury.

Harry hissed, pulling his hand away and cradling it to his chest.

"That was one of many magical and poisonous plants found in this forest. I know the plant which will cure you. You will have five days to return here or else you will die. I doubt you would be able to identify the plant used in that timeframe. The only way you would remain alive is if you stayed here, as this is a vessel for your soul, thus your body would simply become frozen and so undying. It's your choice."

"I'll go," Harry chose, and Tom nodded, the smirk Harry knew very well crossing his face.

"One last thing before you go," Tom requested. "A parting kiss?"
Harry scowled, but knowing Tom wouldn't let him go without it, he begrudgingly moved towards the man, lifting on his toes slightly, and pressed his lips against the man's. Tom grabbed the back of his head with his hand, deepening the kiss and thrusting his tongue into Harry's unwilling mouth.

He eventually let Harry go, ignoring the way Harry wiped his mouth with the back of his hand afterwards.

"Farewell for now, Harry Potter, I should hate to think you'll be dead in five days if you choose to forget about me." With that said, Tom pressed his hand to Harry's forehead, and then there was pain and blinding white light.

Harry gasped and bolted upright, finding himself back in his bed in Gryffindor dorm. For a slight moment he wondered if he had been dreaming, but his body ached and every injury he had sustained in the forest was still marked on his body, including the gash across his palm.

He imagined the Eye of Horus in his mind, feeling the glow settle over his body. He felt a rush of warmth across his body as he was healed; the grazes from his hands disappeared along with the rest of scrapes over his body, but his muscles still ached and more importantly the cut remained on his hand.

He frowned, imagining the Eye again, trying to focus on specifically on the injury, but it didn't show any sign of healing at all.

He threw the diadem at his curtain in frustration, before picking it up angrily and shoving it underneath his pillow.

He didn't sleep much that night.

X

It was still dark when Harry decided to get out of bed. A quick glance at the clock told him it was five in the morning. He had only managed a couple of hours sleep on and off in the night as his mind was ticking over everything that had happened.

He casted a few Protection charms over the diadem, and then he shuffled out of bed silently, dragging his feet across the floor to the showers.

One possibility was to tell Tom everything and hope he could figure out what had been used to poison him and could find the antidote in time, but Tom would probably be angry at Harry for being so stupid. Plus he'd be nothing more than a damsel in distress, and he was more than that.

Another option was to research everything he could. It could work out well and he could find a way to release Tom and get cured in time, but if he couldn't find anything then he would either die, or Tom might trap him in the Horcrux world until he tired of him, and then release him to be killed.

He considered the possibility of giving the diadem to a girl, hoping she'd wear it and her magic could be drained, but he was pretty sure that would make him a murderer, and considering it was a priceless and historical artefact he didn't know who would wear such a thing, plus somebody like Dumbledore could notice and take it off them.

A third possibility which came to his head as he turned on the hot water tap was to just stand in the showers until he drowned himself. It was Saturday morning, so the other boys wouldn't wake up until around ten o'clock, which gave plenty of time for the water to fill his lungs.
He sunk to the floor, wrapping shaking arms around himself. He really had got himself into a mess, and it felt horrible. He couldn't understand how Neville allowed it to happen year after year if every time felt like this.

But it would no good to sulk and cry; that wouldn't solve anything. In a burst of motivation, he left the comfort of the steamy shower and got ready, going straight to the library. He couldn't stomach the thought of eating that morning, but the library was open early, although books could only be taken out from nine o'clock.

After a thorough search of the library however, he found that there were no books on Horcruxes whatsoever. He supposed he'd need a pass for the Restricted Section, and Malfoy Manor had a lot of books on Dark magic, and he'd seen plenty about Horcruxes there, so that would be a good start point.

Grimmauld Place technically belonged to him now; Sirius had left it for him in his will. He had wanted to leave it to Remus, but anti-werewolf laws prohibited him from inheriting property. Harry had said Remus could live in it all he wanted, but if he was living with Greyback in the forests it was probably empty. The Black library was vast and filled to the brim with Dark magic books, and he was confident it would have what he needed.

Harry decided Slughorn was his best bet for a pass for the Restricted Section, and the man readily gave him one, hardly asking for any explanation.

Unfortunately, there were no books mentioning Horcruxes in there either, making Harry increasingly frustrated. Time had passed too quickly for his liking, as a glance at the time made Harry notice he was almost late for meeting Malfoy, and he still had to return to Gryffindor tower.

He couldn't muster a run with his low energy levels, so he walked as quick as he could, grabbing some fingerless gloves and a bandage from his trunk. Lily had made him take a First-Aid Kit with him to Hogwarts every year, just in case he couldn't get to Madame Pomfrey quick enough and he didn't know the necessary Healing spells. He had scoffed every year when he never used it, but he was grateful for it now, wrapping a thick wad around his hand. He pulled the fingerless gloves on top, hoping Tom would buy the lie that it was a fashion trend.

He was fifteen minutes late when he finally got to the dungeons, and Draco was tapping his foot impatiently.

"Where have you been?" he spat when he saw Harry, his face looking shocked and somewhat concerned when he really took in Harry's appearance. "You look like Hell."

"I didn't sleep much last night," Harry said with a shrug, emphasising his point with a yawn.

Draco tutted and Portkeyed them away, where Voldemort, Tom and Narcissa were waiting. Harry noticed Tom was giving Draco a pointed stare, and the young Malfoy seemed to understand as he took the blame for their lateness, something Harry knew Draco wouldn't have done of his own free will. Harry winced visibly as Draco shook under the Cruciatus.

The meeting ended up in the same way, as Voldemort was displeased that Draco hadn't made more of a plan regarding Dumbledore. Tom walked with Harry immediately after the meeting had finished, though staying silent the whole way, making Harry nervous. He was sure Tom had seen through him, and he was ready to grovel.

"I brought Lupin for you," Tom said, taking Harry by surprise. "He didn't believe me when I said you were part of my cause now, but he didn't want to take the risk and not see you. I have business
out of the Manor to attend to tonight, but I will likely be back before Midnight."

Tom took hold of Harry's gloved hands and gently squeezed it, before striding down the corridor, power prominent in every step, leaving Harry to go into the room alone.

Harry paused for a moment before pushing the door forward. There was a quick blur and then he was in someone's arms, pressed hard against a familiar chest. Harry could do nothing but hug the older man back tightly, breathing in the comforting scent of chocolate and tea that was so like Remus.

Remus finally pulled back, bending slightly and looking deep into Harry's eyes, checking over for signs of the Imperius Curse, Harry presumed, before he was pulled back into another hug.

"Oh Harry," Remus breathed, "I'm so sorry."

Harry shook his head adamantly. He had been angry at Remus for leaving, but seeing him again made him realise how much he had missed the werewolf, and all the rage seemed to vanish.

"You should have stayed with us," Harry said after a while, cursing himself for how pitiful he sounded. "We could have helped you; you shouldn't have got yourself caught up with the bad werewolves; we could have helped you."

"I know, cub, I know," Remus whispered, pulling back and seating them on the edge of the bed. "I was just so upset and angry too. All but you and your family treated me like I was nothing to Sirius; they didn't want me to attend the funeral, they didn't honour his will, all because of what I am. You and your family had each other, and you and Heather will be all grown up soon, and I felt I had nothing but this curse, but Fenrir offered me a chance to get back at the world that had shunned me, and in my grief I latched onto it, but I realised my mistake too late; I owe Fenrir now, but Merlin, Harry, I'm an old man with nothing much left, you shouldn't be involved with this. Did my leaving drive you to this?"

Remus had buried his head in his hands, and Harry laid a hand gently on his shoulder.

"No," Harry had softly. "Err, Lord Riddle has been in contact with me for a while; he was my best friend. I chose to help him, and when I needed him most he was there and offered me a place. It wasn't the same after you left. Dad started to drink, which Mum hated, and their marriage was suffering. Heather left home, and I had nobody in that house. I just wished you and Sirius had been there to help, but you weren't and-" he stopped, aware he was crying now. Remus noticed too, and he pulled Harry into another hug.

They sat like that for a long time, letting their tears flow and taking the comfort of each other. Though Sirius had been named as Harry's Godfather, Remus was an unofficial uncle of sorts, and he really did love the man as much as his parents.

"Why are you stuck helping Greyback now?" Harry asked eventually, and Remus sighed.

"It's complicated; it's to do with werewolf laws. He's my Sire, and he helped me by giving me a purpose in life, but in return I owe him, especially now he's called in a Sire's Order, which basically means I have to do what he tells me. I refuse to kill or torture anyone, but Fenrir is one of the few werewolves who was born as one. He was raised by his father who had the same beliefs as him, and as such he grew up almost like an animal; he can't read or write, and because apparently I have a reputation for being smart, he makes me do anything like that for him, doing research into successful werewolf clans."
"I see," Harry said gently. "Just stay careful."

Remus stroked Harry's head affectionately.

"I will," the man murmured. "I can feel Fenrir calling me back. Lord Riddle tells me you're here every weekend; I'll try and get the day to spend with you next week."

"I'd like that," Harry said with a small smile. "I've missed you."

"I've missed you too, cub," Remus replied, growling animalistically as he glanced out the window at the half moon in the sky, before his expression softened. "Take care of yourself."

After Remus had left, Harry swung his legs wildly, biting down on his lip as he considered what to do. There was still plenty of time until Tom's proposed return time.

"Dobby," he called, waiting for the pop of the House-Elf.

"Sir Harry!" the creature greeted enthusiastically. "How can Dobby be helping you?"

"I'd like to go to the library, the Flavius Room I think it's called, and without anyone seeing me. Can you help with that please?" Harry asked, and the Elf beamed at him.

"Certainly, Sir, Dobby will take you there himself."

"Thank you, Dobby, you're very kind," Harry said, and then wished he hadn't. Dobby's eyes had filled up with tears, and then he was sobbing loudly.

"You shouldn't be so kind to Dobby, sir," the House-Elf wailed.

"No, no, Dobby, you deserve to be treated nicely," Harry cut in, not even knowing if the creature could hear him over his cries.

"You're right, sir Harry, Dobby's masters are cruel." The Elf stopped crying at those words, only to start viciously slamming his head into the wall instead, chanting 'Bad Dobby' as he did so.

"Stop, stop," Harry yelled, trying to pull Dobby away from the wall.

"Sorry, young sir, Dobby misspoke of his masters. That is most punishiable."

"Well I won't tell," Harry said, trying not to roll his eyes. Dobby thanked him, and then snapped his fingers, Apparating them both to the library.

"Can you let me know when Lord Riddle returns, please?" Harry asked, and the Elf assured him he would.

"Ah, hello Harry Potter," Flavia Malfoy in the portrait greeted. "I'm glad to see a young man studying hard; I only wish my grandson would take the same interest in proper magic, rather than that nonsense they're teaching him at school. Take pleasure in your studies."

The portrait swung open and Harry entered.

He had found the writings on Horcruxes in the Ancient magic section last time, so that was his first port of call.

He grabbed every book with the world Horcrux in the title to begin with, totalling three books. The first was written in Ancient Greek, and though Harry recognised the alphabet used, he couldn't
translate it. The second was half-understandable. The author was someone named Herpo the Foul, and was filled full of pages. Unfortunately the writing seemed to be switching between letters and squiggly looking lines, neither staying long enough for him to interpret, and it was giving him a headache just looking at it. The third book was written in English, though it was rather small, but it was better than nothing.

He skimmed the pages, looking for anything that might suggest how to remove a soul from a Horcrux without destroying it, but the closest he got would involve Voldemort calling the Horcrux back to him and re-attaching the souls together, but diadem Tom had claimed he didn't want that.

He shoved two of the books back into place, keeping the one by Herpo the Foul out just in case he was able to make sense of it when he was less tired. He shrunk it and pocketed it, hoping the Malfoy's wouldn't mind.

Even now he was struggling to keep focused on anything, his tiredness catching up with him faster and faster by the minute.

He pulled books from the shelf at random, desperately searching the texts, but none he grabbed had any mention of the word Horcrux in them, but he had to keep on reading.

He jumped when a large popping noise sounded next to him, and he jerked his head up, a page stuck to his face. He must have fallen asleep over the books.

"Sorry to awaken you, sir, but Lord Riddle has returned and is requesting you," Dobby said, almost fearfully. Harry nodded dumbly and allowed Dobby to Apparate them back.

Tom looked expectant as Harry took him in; Harry wasn't sure if he was just tired or if Tom really did have blood on his robes, but Tom didn't seem to care.

"What's wrong with you?" Tom asked sharply, no concern evident in his voice at all.

"M'tired," Harry muttered, rubbing fists across his eyes for good measure. "And Remus made me think about Sirius which made me sad."

"Have you been out with the werewolf?" Tom asked tone even sharper and Harry shook his head.

"Library," he said, wanting nothing more to crawl into bed and sleep. Maybe he'd wake up and find out it had all been a nightmare.

"Go to bed; I'll talk to you in the morning when you're more coherent," Tom ordered, and Harry was more than happy to comply.

But once his head hit the cold pillow, his head was filled again with everything.

Tom sat down beside him on the bed.

"Hold me," he said quietly, and Tom didn't hear him.

"Please," he repeated, louder, "can you hold me?"

Tom heard him that time, and he said nothing, but shuffled down to lay beside Harry and wrapped his arms around him.

Harry buried his head into Tom's warmth, breathing in the scent of him. Tom was so strong and wise, and Harry had to make him proud. He had had some stress, and the lack of sleep had made it
worse, but he had to take a leaf out of Tom's book and shut down his emotions to get what he wanted doing done.

"I believe in you, you know," Tom murmured softly from above him.

And that was all Harry needed.

X

Chapter End Notes

For any of you who are wondering, there will be no slash between Harry and this third Tom. He's just been alone too long. I really need to think of a name for him to make it easier to distinguish between them all xD And as for whether this third Tom is going to make an appearance in the real world, well you'll have to wait and see.
Twelve

Chapter Notes

So from this point onwards I shall refer to the third Tom as Riddle, until the character specifically states that he's going to be named Marvolo (which will be next chapter), and then it'll change for the last time. I hope that's not too confusing.

X

The next morning Harry awoke feeling worse than he had the day before. Although he had slept for a long time; the room was now filled with bright light streaming in from behind the curtains, he felt somewhat groggy and achy. His cut hand was throbbing slightly, and he scowled into the pillow, not wanting to get up. He felt cold and the bed was plenty warm.

"You can't stay in there all day," Tom's voice said somewhere above him, as a cold hand forced it's way onto his forehead and he heard Tom tut.

Harry just pulled away and wormed deeper into the bed, wincing when Tom yanked the covers from him.

"I'm afraid I have to be out today. Something…urgent has come up, and the Dark Lord and I will be gone for a few days, leaving now. You appear to be coming down with something so I'd like for you to go straight to the nurse on your arrival at school."

Tom sounded slightly angry, though Harry didn't know whether the anger was aimed at him or whatever was going on with Voldemort, but despite that he was incredibly grateful Tom wouldn't have time to question him this morning; if he found out the truth, given the mood they were both in, he didn't see it ending well.

The Gryffindor forcibly made himself sit up, trying to get his bearings as the room started to spin. He wondered if it was the poison taking effect or if he had simply come down with something.

"Don't get your hopes up that I'll have forgotten our talk, Harry," Tom reminded him with a smirk. Harry resisted the urge to stick his tongue out at the Dark wizard.

Tom left after that, and it took Harry a bit longer than usual to get himself out of bed and ready for the day. Even after showering and dressing he longed for the comfort of the bed.

He slowly made his way from the room, pausing before each new corridor and doorway to hear if there were any voices, but the Manor seemed to be deserted. He wondered if it had anything to do with what Tom and Voldemort were leaving for.

It was so quiet that Harry jumped when Narcissa Malfoy appeared in front of him.

"Hello, Harry," she greeted kindly. "It's very quiet today; perhaps you could keep me company and join me for some tea."

The tone of her voice suggested she wasn't really offering Harry a choice, so he nodded and followed her to a large and cosy sitting room overlooking the gardens.
Dobby was already waiting for them, a steaming pot of tea in his small hands, and upon their arrival he shakily poured out two cups for them, before bowing and vanishing from the room.

Narcissa indicated for him to sit in a chair across from her, and he took a sip of the hot tea as to not appear impolite.

"Nice tea," he said awkwardly, wondering what the woman's motive was for talking to him.

"We only get the best," Narcissa told him, sipping her own drink. "It's wonderful being in love, isn't it?"

"What?" Harry asked quickly, taking his eyes away from his cup to land on Narcissa.

"Being in love," she repeated, waving a hand. "I can see it in your eyes; the same look I have whenever I think of my Lucius. I suppose love is the only way someone from your family would ever consider joining our side."

"Well that's not the only reason," Harry muttered as he shrugged.

"I didn't mean that as a criticism," Narcissa assured him. "I was the same as you when I was young. I was raised understanding the values of blood purity; you know the Black Family motto?"


Narcissa nodded. "We weren't a family of Death Eaters, though we believed in their cause, but then I met Lucius and we fell in love, and Lucius wanted to join the Dark Lord. As his wife and lover I accepted that, even assisting him in whatever ways I could, though I shall never take the Mark. However, despite my love for my husband and my willingness to accept him, what I cannot abide by is my son becoming involved; a mother's love for her child far outweighs that of her love for her husband."

"Do you know everything Draco's been asked to do then?" Harry enquired, looking at the woman with concern.

"Oh yes, I know," Narcissa said softly, her gaze drifting off, making her look entirely lost. "I am eternally grateful for you. Draco needs help, and I have asked a friend for assistance, but you are Draco's own age, and though you may not be school friends, a bond is growing between you and this will give Draco strength. He may not say so, but I know he is glad of your help."

"I have to help him, he doesn't deserve what the Dark Lord has planned for him otherwise," Harry answered with a small smile.

"I have two older sisters; Bellatrix and Andromeda. They are only a year apart, but I'm a few years younger than the pair, and I watched them both grow up in different directions. Bellatrix married a Pure-blood who she didn't truly love, becoming a Death Eater straight from school, while Andromeda married a Muggle-born and was disowned from the family. I disprove of Andromeda's choice of husband, but I knew she was happy, and her daughter, my niece, has been free to live her life as she wished and has had a safe and successful life so far. Yes, I do disprove of my sister, but I envy her for the life she has provided for her child."

"Does Bellatrix have any children?" Harry asked curiously, and Narcissa shook her head.

"She was still at Hogwarts when she fell pregnant. Due to her age and being out of wedlock, my mother killed the baby while it was still in the womb; Bellatrix could not bear to carry another after
that, and I believe she devoted herself to the Dark Lord to distract herself from her pain. She is very much in love with the Dark Lord, and so she views Lord Riddle as her own son now."

Harry almost felt sorry for Bellatrix, had she not been the psychotic murderer of his Godfather.

They finished their tea in a comfortable silence, occasionally broken by Narcissa asking him questions about school and his plans for after graduation. She seemed to be friendly and somewhat motherly to him, but he could feel her depression coming off her in waves.

"Is it possible to get to Grimmauld Place from here?" Harry asked as the thought came to him.

"Of course, but I shall only tell you on one condition," she told him, and Harry nodded, indicating for her to continue. "Please take Draco with you; I don't want them returning and deciding to take Draco with them."

Harry nodded, Narcissa returning the gesture, and she called for Dobby to collect Draco for them.

"Draco, darling, I'd like you to accompany Harry to Grimmauld Place," his mother greeted, and though her voice was gentle, he could hear the motherly order in it as well.

"Certainly Mother," Draco replied, shooting a questioning glance at Harry who chose to ignore it for the time being.

Narcissa led the boys to another room with a large fireplace in and nothing more. She grabbed a pot from the top of the fireplace, which had the Black logo across the front. The Floo Powder she pressed into Draco's hand was the usual grey-ish colour, but it had specks of deep blue amongst it.

"Only those of Black blood can activate this Floo," Narcissa explained to Harry. "You'll have to travel with Draco."

The Slytherin threw the Powder into the flames, using his finger and thumb only to grab at Harry's wrist, pulling him into the now green fire.

"12, Grimmauld Place, London," Draco called, and moments later the pair were spluttering as they stumbled out the fireplace the other end.

Draco let go of Harry the moment he got his bearings straight.

"Why do you need to be here? How did you even know about this place?" Draco questioned, dropping the polite attitude he had used with his mother.

"My Godfather owned it; I guess I technically own it now, but it won't be official until I'm seventeen, not that I particularly want the place," Harry said with a shrug. "I wanted Remus to have it-you know, Professor Lupin? But he's not allowed."

"Of course not," Draco murmured. "Maybe when you're seventeen you could pass it on to another Black relative; the only way you'll be able to be rid of it now is to hand it over to family."

"Is that your way of asking me for a house?" Harry said with a grin, and even Draco smirked.

"Well it's either me or my Death Eater Aunt," the blond added, making Harry shake his head.

"Oh no, you have a dis-inherited Aunt and cousin who could own it; they're still Blacks even if they were blasted off the family tree."

"Of course, I forgot about Aunt Andromeda. Father never liked Mother to mention her," Draco
muttered. "What are you doing here anyway?"

"Library," Harry answered simply. "I've tried yours and Hogwarts but they've not got what I need."

"It wasn't in the Manor's library?" Draco repeated with surprise. "How Dark are the spells you're looking at?"

"Err, pretty Dark," Harry answered honestly, taken slightly aback at the impressed look on Draco's face.

"I didn't know you had it in you, Potter," he commended. "I'll have a look at the library as well; I heard Great-Aunt Walburga had a vast collection."

"Hmm," Harry murmured. "Her portrait is down another hallway somewhere. I was never allowed near it but I could hear her screaming throughout the house. She'd like you though, I bet."

"I'd rather not; Mother said she was nearly as insane as Aunt Bellatrix. I was angry at her for what she did you know; blood-traitor or not, Sirius was still a Pure-blood and the last male heir of the Black family."

Harry just nodded mutely, turning away from Draco, the topic of Sirius still being a sore subject.

"I think we can get to the library through this doorway and avoid Mrs Black. I haven't been here much but I think that's right," Harry said, determinedly changing the subject.

It turned out that Harry was right and they managed to make it to the library without disturbing the screaming portrait. Harry thought he saw a small pair of beedy eyes watching them at one point but he couldn't be sure.

Draco had become thoroughly entranced with a book about murdering somebody without a wand, and had ceased all conversation with Harry as he read.

The first book Harry grabbed, only wanting to move it out of the way, had burnt him, and as the title was 'Ways to Protect Belongings from Those with Dirty Blood', he wasn't all that surprised.

He was slightly more wary after that, but after some time searching, when Draco was over half way in his book, he had managed to find two books about Ancient Magic which had information on Horcruxes in, although one was written in Ancient Greek and he'd need some way to translate that, as the only thing he understood was the name of the Author; Herpo the Foul. However he could find a spell for translating or something similar easily in Hogwarts. Surprisingly, despite the large size of Grimmauld Place library it didn't have any books not centred on Dark Arts.

Harry also managed to find a book about the Veil Sirius had fallen through, and he shoved it into his bag to read when he didn't have to quickly find a way to free a soul from a Horcrux.

"Are you alright?" Draco asked suddenly, and Harry looked up at him.

"What?" he answered dumbly.

"I've called your name three times; you're spacing out. You're not coming down with something contagious are you?" Draco asked warily, edging his chair slightly further away from Harry.

"Oh, yeah, I don't feel great but it's not contagious. Think I just had an allergic reaction to something; that happens sometimes," Harry lied, but Draco seemed to accept his answer.
"Well I've found a fascinating curse in here," the Slytherin told Harry proudly. "It puts a deadly curse on an object so whoever touches it is killed instantly. I can find a way to deliver that to Dumbledore and it won't be able to be traced back to me."

"And you won't have to look him in the eyes before you kill him," Harry said under his breath, but Draco heard him and scowled, though he had no response to Harry's comment.

"I think I might get Blaise to do my school-work for me from now on. You can come here at weekends to find out information on the Cabinet while I set up this curse."

"Sure-what is that?" Harry said, eyes zoning in as he saw the eyes again before they disappeared around a corner.

Harry jumped to his feet and turned into the aisle, where he could see something small attempting to hide behind a pile of books. Harry would recognise House-elf ears anywhere.

"Hello?" he called out. If the House-elf belonged to the house, it would now be his elf, and so should have to answer any order he had. "Come out to face me now, please."

Draco was behind him now, and they both watched as an old, angry looking House-elf left it's hiding spot, sulkily walking towards them.

"Are you my House-elf?" Harry asked the creature, and it nodded.

"Yes. What would my poor Mistress say, knowing Kreacher was having to serve a disgusting Half-blood, blood-traitor; Godson of Mistress' traitor son?"

"He may be Half-blood but he's no blood-traitor; he knows who to follow," Draco said in defence of him. "Stupid elf doesn't know what he's talking about."

"Err, Kreacher? Walburga Black was your favourite mistress then?"

"Oh yes, Mistress was very important to Kreacher, and Master Regulus; very kind to Kreacher he was," the elf told him

"Well, listen, I'm not going to be here much, so you can have free reign of the house unless I need you, and I'm going to let you keep anything you want belonging to Walburga or Regulus, apart from clothing, okay?" Harry said, in an attempt to soften the bitter House-elf up.

It seemed to work as the Elf's face seemed to light up; he could feel Draco rolling his eyes.

"That is very kind of you, Master. Kreacher will take good care of Mistress' and Master Regulus' belongings."

"Good, and don't call me Master; my name's Harry."

"No, Kreacher must treat Master with respect," Kreacher replied, looking at Harry with curiosity.

"Well, fine, but how about you go and have a look now? See if there's anything you like," Harry said, and the elf bowed before popping out.

"I don't see why you're so nice to them," Draco commented, and this time Harry rolled his eyes.

"You saw how angry he seemed before I was nice to him; a happy House-elf will be more loyal and work better."
"Whatever; we need to be getting back to Hogwarts soon."

As they were packing up to leave, Kreacher popped back in to see them.

"Master, I found this for you; it smells like you," he said, holding out a gold locket with a snake-like 'S' made from glittery green emeralds. Harry knew instantly what it was; the atmosphere around it was almost identical to the diadem.

"Kreacher, I need you to hide that in this house somewhere, and you are only to let me know where you hid it when I ask for it, okay?" he demanded, eyes growing wider as he could almost see the locket shaking.

Kreacher nodded and disappeared again, and Draco was looking at him awe-struck.

"Wasn't that Salazar Slytherin's locket?" the blond asked, amazed, and Harry nodded.

"We don't need it falling into the wrong hands, do we?" Harry responded.

Harry didn't think anymore of the locket as they returned to Hogwarts.

X

On Monday, Harry woke up feeling noticeably worse. He couldn't contain his shivering, and despite the beads of sweat on his forehead he could feel no warmth.

"I think I've just got a bad cold," he insisted to his dorm-mates who were trying to force him to see Madame Pomfrey.

He felt well enough to go to lessons and read the English-written book he had, but nothing of relevance came up.

On Tuesday, along with his fever he now had moment of dizziness to contend with. He battled through this in the morning, but by the afternoon he was feeling worse than before. He only had one more day until the poison killed him, and as he tried to cast a translation spell over Herpo the Foul's book he found his magic core was too weak to allow him to do that. Using Ancient magic almost caused him to collapse.

In a moment of desperation on Tuesday evening he found himself knocking on Snape's door.

"What do you want?" the professor snarled as way of greeting.

"Please, Severus, I need to talk to you," Harry said, calling him Severus to indicate it wasn't a school related problem.

"I told you to call me Professor Snape whilst we're at Hogwarts, Potter" the man hissed, getting ready to slam his door, but Harry reached a hand out to stop it.

"Please, it's urgent," he begged, wincing at how broken his voice sounded.

"Fine, come in, Harry," Snape said shortly, but his switch to Harry's first name told him that Snape was willing to listen.

As Severus shut the door behind him, Harry started to unravel the cloth from his hand.

"Are you unwell?" Snape questioned, and Harry nodded, showing his cut hand to Snape. The professor's eyes widened dramatically as he took sight of the injury which was now deep red and
spread underneath his pale skin. "Poison? How has this happened? You need to get to a Healer immediately. I shall inform Lily for you."

"No!" Harry cried. "There's no point; it will kill me tomorrow evening. I just wondered if you knew what it was that did it; I know who can help me if I know what was used. But Mum will go crazy if you tell her; please don't."

Snape looked deep into Harry's eyes, frowning as he did so.

"Strange; there's a block, but it isn't quite Occlumency, almost as if this happened in another time," Snape muttered, more to himself than Harry. He took hold of Harry's hand and examined the cut, and after a few minutes he sighed and shook his head. "I'm afraid I cannot source the poison used. I can tell it's from a plant, and I can narrow it down to a type, but within that type are too many options and further tests would take too long."

"That's okay," Harry said softly, "it was worth a shot. Thank you anyway."

"Harry, stop, I don't know what's going on with you; you've clearly been taught Occlumency by an expert, and now you've been poisoned by some natural Dark magic; what exactly are you involved in?"

"It doesn't matter," Harry said, and Snape scowled.

"Of course it does; it's putting your life at risk; do you really have to be such a fool you'll allow yourself to be put in these situations? Your mother would die of a broken heart if you were to be killed."

"I won't be; I'll figure this out myself; just keep this quiet, please," Harry begged, and Snape nodded.

"I'm sorry, you know," the man said softly. "I hated your father and you were so like him as a child that I've never seen you as anything but James, even when you changed into your own person. As a professor I'm meant to stop bullying, but I ignored your troubles, thinking James deserved a taste of his own medicine, but of course it didn't affect James; it affected you. I know from personal experience how easy the Dark Arts can draw you in when you have no other comfort; I should have seen the signs, but now it's too late. I only hope your mother forgives me for failing you."

"How do you-?"

"Your Occlumency is good but not better than mine. I know you're soliciting with Death Eaters, but I don't know how deep or what you're caught up in, due to this block, though whatever it is, it's something bad. I've kept your alliance secret; it's your own choice."

"Thank you, just, trust me when I say I'll work this out and my parents won't have to bury their child."

"They better not have to," Snape said sharply, but he inclined his head as he showed Harry the door. "I expect you to do nothing but study this until tomorrow evening."

Harry returned to his dormitory to read.

Harry tried to do as Snape asked, but he was so tired from reading he ended up passing out, thankfully on his bed.

Neville pulled the curtains away from his bed Wednesday morning, and Harry hissed as the bright
light blinded him, causing his head to start pounding.

"Are you still ill? Madame Pomfrey will be able to cure you in seconds, I bet," Neville said, his voice too loud.

"Don't want to. G'away," he mumbled into his pillow, and Neville sighed but complied.

"If you're not better by tomorrow I'll drag you there myself," he heard Longbottom say, and Harry laughed at the irony; tomorrow he'd either be better or dead.

He couldn't find the energy to go to lessons, but he forced himself out of bed. The only books he had found had drawn up blanks, and he didn't know what he could do now, other than accept his fate.

He shakily reached a hand down to grab the book on the Veil; perhaps it would say something about what happened to souls after death; it would be lovely to see Sirius again, and maybe he could find a way to send a message to Tom, telling him how sorry he was. He supressed a sob at not being able to say goodbye to Tom, but he couldn't find a way to get to him in time; he may not even be back from whatever he had been doing with Voldemort.

He decided to go to the Room of Hidden Things, taking the book with him so he could be alone. He threw the diadem in his bag as well, just in case he needed it. Maybe he could beg Riddle to cure him in exchange for anything the man wanted. He shuddered at the thought, but he was prepared to do that if he couldn't stand the fear in the last few minutes he had alive.

Harry flipped through the pages, realising with interest that the Veil was creating using Ancient Magic, and was dated back to the Greeks who believed it to be a new pathway to the Underworld. However many people were able to walk in and would come back out again as they were not accepted by the Veil, and these were people who had marks on their soul.

Harry's mind twitched at that; wasn't that what the books had said about him? That his soul was tainted with some kind of Ancient Magic? Maybe he could enter the Veil and that would hold off death for some time.

He forwarded through the pages, until he reached a passage about items entering the Veil. Some items in Ancient times were used to harbour souls, for all different purposes, but the items used would gain their own power and could be used by the dead in the afterlife. The items would be taken into the Veil by somebody with an 'impure' soul and exchanged for rescuing their loved one who had been trapped.

That was it. The answer to everything had been in the book he hadn't bothered to read, thinking it was of no importance.

But before he could do anything a sharp, searing pain swept across his forehead and he gasped, clutching his head as the pain spread and he couldn't feel the world shaking as he collapsed to the floor.

He awoke some time later with Draco above him, the blond looking unnaturally concerned.

"Do I need to alert Lord Riddle? Do you need the Hospital Wing?" Draco asked, but Harry shook his head.

"In my bag," he croaked, voice hoarse, "is a diadem. Can you get it for me please?"

Draco nodded and did as Harry asked, handing him the diadem.
"Ravenclaw's diadem? Did Riddle ask you to collect the Founder's items or something?"

Harry shook his head. "I need to do something now with the diadem, but it will knock me unconscious. Please, just let me do it, but don't leave me alone."

"Fine," Draco said, sounding annoyed, but he looked both curious and anxious as he watched Harry.

Harry ran his shaky fingers over the sapphire, and once again he felt the coldness and darkness take him over.

Riddle was watching him when he awoke, and he looked rather pleased.

"I was hoping you would return; I hope with good news," Riddle greeted, and Harry nodded.

"I found out a way to do it," Harry said, fighting off the urge to jump around and burn the sudden energy he had. Every ailment seemed to be gone, only a cut against his hand remained the proof of why he was here.

"I shan't heal you until I approve," Riddle warned, and Harry rolled his eyes.

"Do you know the Veil in the Department of Mysteries?" Harry asked, and Riddle nodded, interest now clear in his expression. "Well apparently items that hold souls are valuable to the souls of the deceased, and they'll exchange the soul inside for the item."

"How will you pass through without dying yourself?" Riddle questioned.

"I have a err, infection of my soul, from Ancient magic, I don't know what exactly, but apparently that's what it is, and the Veil doesn't like impure souls."

"Ah, so that's what I could sense on your soul; I did think so, but I couldn't be sure," Riddle mused, looking at Harry hungrily.

"What?" Harry asked, and Riddle smiled darkly.

"You shall find out in time," he answered simply, indicating for Harry to give his hand.

Harry held it out, and Riddle pressed something green into the cut. Instantly it began to feel hot, making his palm feel like it was on fire under his skin.

He watched transfixed as the cut healed itself, and Riddle's smile grew wider.

"Thank you," Harry said softly, and Riddle placed a cold hand against Harry's cheek.

"You wouldn't have died, you know? I would have kept you here and made you mine," Riddle said, and Harry didn't doubt him for a second. "You don't want me that way, do you? But there are no laws in this world; nothing to stop me, then again there's nothing to stop me in the real world either; I know no laws after all, but I can make the world mine out there; why control a single boy when I can control so many more."

"All you Tom Riddle's are focused on world domination, aren't you?" Harry said scathingly, and Riddle laughed coldly.

"How many versions of me are there in your world?"

"Just the two at the moment; there's the one from the diary, and then the, err, real one I guess,"
Harry told the older man, who nodded.

Riddle said nothing, but picked something sharp from the ground; an arrow head from the looks of things. Harry instinctively took a step back, much to Riddle's amusement.

Harry watched in horror as Riddle took the arrow and ran it across his own mouth, causing a burst of red blood to spill over his lips and chin, staining the pale white. It made him look like a monster.

Riddle stepped forward, pushing Harry into the nearest trip and gripping his wrists above his head. The older man pressed his bloody lips against Harry's, tightening his grip as he used his tongue to force Harry's mouth open. The younger boy struggled against the grip, but Riddle was too strong.

The teenager whimpered in pain as Riddle bit down hard on his tongue, and Harry felt his own blood fill his mouth, mingling with Riddle's.

Riddle finally released him after what felt like hours.

"You'll see," Riddle said vaguely, pressing his hand to Harry's forehead, causing a blinding white light across his eyes.

When Harry could see again he was back in Hogwarts, Draco still looming above him; the boy looked ghostly white.

"You looked dead," he said in a faint whisper.

"I almost was," Harry admitted. "I'm better now though."

"Well good, Lord Riddle would have skinned me if you died on my watch," Draco responded, but he couldn't meet Harry's eyes as he spoke. "Are you sure you're-?"

"Yes, I'm fine," Harry said with a smile as he eyed his healed hand. "Do you know any way I can get to the Ministry of Magic? I need to go to the Department of Mysteries but nobody can know; the sooner the better." He decided he may as well get started on freeing Tom straight away; the man hadn't said he had cursed Harry in anyway, but he was certain the Dark wizard would have put some precaution on Harry to make sure he would do as he said he would. Figuring it out was probably part of the man's torture regime.

"Yes, Pansy's father works in the Ministry; he's on our side of course, but the Ministry don't suspect him at all. Pansy owes me so I'll get her to contact him for us," Draco told him.

"Wait, us?" Harry asked, repeating what the blond had said.

"Well, yes," Draco answered somewhat awkwardly. "You wouldn't know your way round enough, and if you ran into anybody you won't be able to talk your way out of it because you appear to be useless when it comes to talking to strangers, especially if there's more than one. You need a guide, and you seem to be hiding things from Riddle at the moment, so I'm your best chance."

"You're very cocky, you know?" Harry said with a sigh. "But you're right. If Longbottom worked his way in I'm sure we can do it much more efficiently."

"Exactly," Draco answered with a nod. "I shall go and ask Pansy now. We'll do Ancient Runes work tomorrow in the library after our final lesson of the day; I'll pass the details onto you then."

Draco left him, bidding him goodnight, and Harry stood to prepare to leave too, but then he nearly yelled in terror as a voice echoed inside his head.
"Wonderful start, Harry Potter," the voice; Riddle's, said from within him. "The sooner you fulfil your duty, the sooner your mind shall be yours again."
Chapter Notes

Warning for the beginning of this chapter – (technically) solo sexual acts, with a dub-con feel to it.

X

Harry very recently decided that having a Dark Lord in your head was highly irritating; perhaps the most irritating thing possible, in fact.

He cast his mind back to what Riddle had told him.

"I have inserted enough of my soul inside of you that I can access your mind without causing any other effects. Once you've given me my body, I'll call the soul segment back to me. Until then I shall be making myself comfortable inside your mind. Curious; this wasn't what either of us thought when I expressed desire to be inside of you."

Harry had cringed at that.

It turned out that he could only hear Riddle when the man wanted to be heard, yet he could hear Harry's thoughts any time he liked. Despite his best Occlumency shields, for a skilled Legilimens like Riddle to be at such close proximity to his thoughts, the shields were basically pointless.

The whole situation was infuriating, and it hadn't even been twenty-four hours yet. Riddle criticised him at every thought he disagreed with, and tended to angrily curse any Muggle-born who came into contact with him, even if it was something as simple as walking past him.

Harry hadn't managed to sleep much in the night; Riddle's combined tactics of complaining about the hours people unnecessarily slept for, and being in close proximity to blood-traitors and those with Muggle blood mixed in their veins kept him awake a while. When Riddle mentioned how easy it would be to manipulate Harry's mind in his sleep, the Gryffindor forced himself to stay awake until exhaustion overtook him.

The following morning, Harry awoke groggily; his eyes were open yet his mind hadn't really caught up to anything at all yet. All he was really aware of was a stirring in his lower regions.

His fingers ghosted over his rapidly hardening cock, stroking himself to full hardness.

He closed his fingers and started to fist his cock, moving harder each time, slicking his cock with pre-cum. He slowed his pace, reaching his other hand downwards and lifting his hips up to meet his exploring fingers.

As he continued to jerk his erection slowly with one hand, the other trailed down further, shifting his hips more to allow him access. He moved a finger gently around his hole before pushing it roughly inside, his sleep addled mind taking no notice of the slight burn. He thrust the finger in and out, building his pace before pushing another inside. He thrust the pair deep inside of him, jerking his cock faster and faster, matching the pace of the fingers.
Harder; he had to go harder, something was telling him. The pleasure was too intense now, and he could feel the pressure building as he neared his release.

He urged his fingers inside deeper and quicker as he imagined them replaced by a thick cock, belonging to a lightly muscled body with thick dark hair. He pictures one of his hands threaded through that hair, and another wrapping around the firm body.

He came with a cry, caused by both pleasure and horror, for as his mind was overcome by lust, he heard a voice say 'faster', and then he found himself staring into the face of the pleased Tom Riddle who was haunting his mind.

To say he was horrified would be an understatement.

"What the Hell?" he hissed into his mind. Riddle simply tutted.

"Muggle curses are vile; you should learn to watch your tongue or you'll cross the wrong people," the voice answered, ignoring Harry's main concern, clearly on purpose.

"I don't care," Harry growled. "How; why did you make me do that? I know Voldemort is evil and doesn't feel remorse or anything, but I never thought he'd resort to forcing himself on a minor."

"I didn't force you to do anything; you did it all yourself. It felt good, didn't it?"

"Up until I found out you were controlling me; it was basically what your hand wanted to be doing," Harry retorted angrily, but Riddle laughed coldly, infuriating Harry further.

"Are you going to report me, Harry?" Riddle said mockingly. "Will you tell the Ministry a part of Voldemort's soul is inside your mind and made you touch yourself?"

Unfortunately the man had a point, twisted as it was. Harry sincerely hoped Draco would arrange for them to go to the Ministry before nightfall. He could not stand another like the previous, especially if the wakeup call was the same.

He blanched at the thought.

"I suppose I wouldn't mind waiting a few more days for you to free me," Riddle continued. "I have many ideas for what we can try. You can't avoid sleep forever."

It was almost as if Riddle knew what he was going to think before he did.

He vowed to try and ignore the Dark wizard for the rest of the day, though it proved very difficult considering the man was apparently rather listless, and his favoured entertainment proved to be talking to, or rather irritating, Harry.

Riddle did have his bonuses however, as he was rather helpful in lessons; his Transfiguration work was the best in the class, though even impressing the stern McGonagall wasn't enough to forgive Riddle for earlier. Harry was particularly pleased when the man disagreed with the notes the Half-Blood Prince textbook had stated in Potions, and Harry and the mysterious author turned out to be right. This displeased Riddle, and sent him into silence for a blissful half hour afterwards, until he returned with his own theories about the potion.

"Well I'm not testing the theories for you," Harry had told the voice bitterly.

He had returned to his dorm room to collect an Ancient Runes textbook, just to keep up appearances with Draco in the library. He shoved his Invisibility Cloak and the diadem into his bag
too, just in case he needed them. He sensed Riddle stirring as he grabbed the Cloak, but the man said nothing, something Harry found somewhat suspicious.

As he opened the door to leave his dorm, he found himself face to face with Seamus Finnigan.

"Ah, Harry, just the guy I wanted," Seamus said with a goofy grin.

"Err, okay; what do you need?" Harry asked, hoping Seamus wouldn't take too much of his time.

To his surprise, the sandy-haired boy blushed slightly and averted his eyes.

"Well, I was just wondering if you'd mind if I asked your sister out," Seamus told him, gaining back the confidence the boy usually had in excess.

"No, I don't mind. Why did you need to ask me first?" Harry asked curiously.

"You've seen how Ron's been with Dean ever since he started to date Ginny; there's too much tension in our dorm and I didn't want anymore."

"Ah, well, no, I don't mind. If anything, it will make Heather more bearable," Harry said. Heather had been desperate to date an 'older boy' for ages. If Lily heard then she'd be in trouble, of course, but Harry was in no rush to tell on her.

"Great, I'll go and ask her now," the Irish boy said, grinning widely.

"Remember she's fourteen so keep it clean," Harry shouted after the boy, pleased he had somewhat carried out his duty as an older brother.

Harry eventually made it to the library, where Draco was sat with Pansy Parkinson and Blaise Zabini.

"They're in on it too," Draco explained upon seeing Harry's questioning expression, "though they shan't be coming with us."

"I may owe you, Draco, but you shouldn't have expected me to ask no questions," Pansy said, laughing lightly.

"This is the company you should be keeping," Riddle said approvingly. "Much better than those hormonal fools in Gryffindor towers; why I thought they were bad back in my day."

"Yes, they're the ones who are overly hormonal," Harry retorted sarcastically, unwillingly casting his mind back to the morning.

"Where's the Weasley girl today, Potter?" Blaise asked, looking at Harry sharply. He reminded Harry a bit of Tom, able to intimidate with a simple look.

"I dunno," Harry said with a shrug, ignoring Riddle reprimanding him for talking uncouthly. The Dark Wizard wasn't particularly threatening as a voice in his head; he wouldn't dare ignore Riddle in person. "Probably arguing with Dean; seems every time I see her she's upset over him."

"Well what does she expect dating a Mudblood?" Pansy tutted, while Blaise and Draco nodded in agreement. "That's why Daphne and I never argue."

Harry's eyes widened in surprise; he hadn't known Pansy liked girls; though Pansy was known as the most ruthless gossiper in school, and she had a vindictive mean streak; anybody who tried to say anything against her would immediately feel her wrath.
"Well, you and Daphne don't do much talking, do you?" Draco added, lip curling.

Pansy smirked. "At least I'm getting some, dear," she retorted coolly.

"Sit down, Potter, you'll draw attention to us," Blaise hissed quietly, and Harry obeyed, drawing a chair.

"We'll go tomorrow," Draco announced, getting back to the subject at hand. He lowered his voice so they all had to lean in to hear. "Pansy's father will allow us to Floo into his office, though he said things have become different at the Ministry recently. He wouldn't say much on the topic in case of letter interception, but The Dark Lord has taken some control over the Ministry, and has done so under the radar of the outside Wizarding World."

"Can't we go tonight?" Harry asked quickly, imaging the glee Riddle must be feeling.

"No, we're going tomorrow," Draco repeated. "Unless you'd rather ask Lord Riddle, then be my guest." He sat back smirking, knowing full-well Harry had no other choice.

"A group of us is going to play Suits tonight; you should join us," Pansy offered.

Suits was a card game, quite similar to the Muggle game Go Fish, where the player had to collect the numbers in each suit by trading with others. Of course the suits were different in Wizarding card sets, with dragons, pixies, unicorns and goblins instead of the Muggle alternatives.

"Yes, we beat you at Quidditch already, we may as well add card games to the list," Draco said with a smirk, making Blaise roll his eyes.

"Err, who else will be there?" Harry asked uncertainly.

"The three of us, Daphne and Theo," Draco told him, "Bring Lovegood with you."

"Bring the Weasley girl too," Pansy added, sending an amused glance in Blaise's direction. "The more of you we beat, the better."

"What about me?" a female voice sounded behind them, and they turned to see Ginny looking plenty amused, though her eyes did linger questionably on the unconventional group.

"Do you want to play Suits with some Slytherin's later?" Harry asked the red-head who nodded enthusiastically.

"So long as there's something in it for us if we win," Ginny answered, taking a seat beside Harry.

"I didn't take you for a gambler, Weasley," Blaise smirked.

"Surely you don't even have enough money to gamble with," Draco added coldly, but Ginny didn't take the bait.

"How about, if one of us non-Slytherin's wins, you have to give one of you to be a slave for one of us for a day, and vice versa," the youngest Weasley suggested, and the Slytherins looked rather impressed. Even Riddle had nothing critical to say.

"Deal, Weasley, I'll draw the contract up later. As it's your suggestion you'll be down to be the slave when you lose," Pansy said, blowing on a fingernail.

"Fine, but you can be the slave for Slytherin then, seeing as you're so sure we'll lose," Ginny replied, and Pansy nodded with a sneer.
The dark-haired girl did open her mouth to reply, but a shrill voice cut her off.

"Harry, Harry, guess what?" Heather Potter said excitedly, running over to him at their table. Madame Pince immediately popped her head round the corner at them and hushed at them threateningly.

"What?" Harry asked, though he had a vague idea where she was going with this.

"Seamus asked me out," she grinned, bouncing on the balls of her feet. "He asked me to join him for dinner tonight, and we're going to go to the next Hogsmeade weekend together too."

"Oh wow," Ginny interrupted before Harry could reply. "Maybe me and Dean could go on a double-date with you."

"As if," Heather said dismissively. "Oh, but can you believe it Harry? You can't say a word to Mum though because she'll freak out. I'll have to beg Severus not to say anything to her either. Oh, there's Lyra; I need to go tell her the news."

With that said the overjoyed girl ran skipped off to her friend.

"I don't care much for your sister," Riddle stated, and the expressions on the other's faces suggested similar thoughts from everyone.

After that they worked in a comfortable silence, until the time came for them to go their separate ways.

X

Luna had been more than happy to join them for some games, although she was truly bad at it, preferring to play with the cards than actually play Suits.

Harry ended up joining her building castles and bridges and the likes.

Despite not being very good at the game, all of the students had actually been getting on well; Harry had never spoken to Theo before, and he was quieter than Harry himself, but he was polite enough. Daphne was rather similar to Pansy, though perhaps friendlier, and she held Pansy's hand the entire night.

Riddle had been bored the whole time, and had been suspiciously quiet, so Harry hated to think what he might be planning.

The game had now dwindled down into a match between Ginny and Pansy, both furiously competing to ensure they wouldn't have to work for the other for a day. Ginny was exceptionally good at the game, and Pansy was clearly feeling slightly hustled, as she had fierce determination mixed with slight worry etched onto her features.

Draco sat down beside Luna, and to Harry it looked like he was fighting her urge to knock down her card pile. Luna seemed to notice to, because she smiled at the blond and moved her hand away so Draco would have free access, but Draco seemed to be able to contain himself.

"I suppose," Draco started, looking utterly defeated. "We could go tonight; we'd have much less risk of being caught."

"Great," Harry said, wanting to hug Draco in gratitude.
Pansy's screech caught their attention for a moment, as it turned out Ginny had won the game.

"Even better; now I can watch Pansy slave around after the Weaslette all day tomorrow," the blond Slytherin sneered.

"Be careful, Harry," Luna said gently. "If you're going where I think you're going, don't allow them to convince you of anything."

"Umm, okay," Harry said, not entirely sure what she meant.

"You stay careful too, Draco," she added, placing her hand gently over Draco's. The boy stared at their connected hands for a moment, before shaking it off and standing.

"Let's go then; I don't want to be kept up all night by you," he said, gesturing for Harry to stand with him.

Harry said goodbye to Luna and the others and followed Draco from the room.

"I was rather hoping for another night with you, Harry," Riddle said mockingly. "I had such plans."

"I'm sure a body will be a lot better," Harry answered, and he shuddered as a course of pleasure; not his, ran through his veins.

"So what exactly are your plans?" Draco asked once they arrived in a private Slytherin room; the Head Boy's office from the looks of things.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," Harry answered honestly.

Draco just tapped his foot impatiently.

"I need to go to the Department of Mysteries, to see the Veil," Harry continued, and Draco's eyes widened.

"Why are you going there? It's dangerous! I'll take you to the area, but I'm not stepping foot near that thing," Draco exclaimed, forcibly grabbing the Floo powder and throwing it into the flames.

"Paulinus Parkinson's office, Ministry of Magic," Draco called, and Harry repeated the words afterwards, stumbling into a scowling Draco as he arrived.

"Watch it," Draco hissed, "you're getting ashes on my robes."

Harry rolled his eyes, and pulled his Invisibility Cloak from his bag.

"Shall we use this? It's extra cover," Harry asked, and Draco eyed the Cloak jealously before nodding.

"Father would never buy me one of these," the blond said bitterly.

They made their way silently through the vast Ministry of Magic. Draco seemed to know exactly which way to go, which was incredibly useful.

Despite being night, there were still some signs of life in the Ministry, though so far these had been heard and not seen.

It was once they neared the main Atrium that the signs of life really became clear.
A large number of masked Death Eaters were stood in a circle, with a group of Ministry workers inside. Voldemort was stood with his wand aimed at the group, and a white mist was overcoming the people while the Death Eaters laughed.

"What are they doing?" he asked Draco quietly.

"Mass Imperius," Draco answered, sounding horrified. "It's meant to be impossible to pull off correctly, but the Dark Lord seems to be having no trouble."

"Of course, the night staff are the lowlifes of the Ministry; they don't care about their safety nearly half as much as the day staff, yet putting them under his control can have a most damaging effect," Riddle mused aloud, and Harry nodded.

He cast his gaze across the room, and stifled a gasp as Tom's eyes locked with his. His expression suggested he knew Harry was there, and more worrying, Harry couldn't tell what the expression was. Fortunately Voldemort seemed to be more focused on the workers.

"Let's go," he hissed to Draco, who nodded and hurriedly moved along.

Harry could feel Tom's unwavering gaze on his back as they left the Atrium.

"He knows of my presence in your mind; doubtlessly he'll follow you as soon as he has the chance," Riddle said warningly.

Their pace became faster as they neared their destination, and they eventually arrived at the shining black tiled entrance hall.

"There are no Protection Charms to the rooms you require here; if you truly need a room you shall be allowed access," Riddle explained, as the boys easily made their way to the Chamber of Death.

Draco stopped by the very edge of the room.

"I'm not going any further," he said firmly. "I wouldn't recommend you get to close; you falling in shan't reflect well on me."

"I'm not going to fall in," Harry said, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly.

He moved out from the cover of the Cloak, and clasped the diadem in his hands.

The whispering from the Veil seemed louder than ever, and he slowly walked towards the object, trying to stop the images flashing in his mind of Sirius falling.

He stopped right by the edge, reaching a hand out to simply ghost over the flowing mist.

"What are you doing?" he heard Draco hiss, "suicide is highly frowned upon."

"I'm not committing suicide, but I need to go inside. I'll be back soon," Harry said, and with a deep breath he stepped forward, leaving Draco's gasp and hurried footsteps behind.

As he passed through, a strange sense of coldness washed over him, and the world seemed to disintegrate away, leaving him in a dark void.

He looked down at himself; a murky white glow surrounded his body, a dark grey shade pulsing alongside it, and an even darker shade was just visible amongst the glow.

Whispers were suddenly all around, but he could see nobody. Riddle was saying nothing, and
Harry was terrified he had failed and he was now trapped forever.

A figure started to appear before him, fading in to a body with a light grey blur around it.

"We have not had one of your kind for many years, and you are the worst of all, with two disfigurements on your soul," the figure spoke; it's voice gravelly and deep. "You are not welcome here; leave."

"I have something," Harry said quickly, holding up the diadem. "It's a Horcrux; the book said you-"

The figure snatched the diadem away from him before he could finish his sentence. He turned the jewellery over, fingers exploring each part of it.

"The soul inside here is very dark; why are you so willing to trade with us for it?" the voice asked, and the whispering stopped.

"The soul forced itself upon the child's own soul," a female voice spoke this time, a figure appearing with a pure white glow. Even with the hard to distinguish features, she appeared to be incredibly beautiful, even after death. "With it's body returned, it shall leave the child be."

"It must have realised," the male voice argued. "It already houses part of another's soul."

"I don't have anyone else's soul in me," Harry said quietly, and both the glowing forms stared directly at him, unblinking.

"The grey you see is not your soul, my child," the woman said softly. "It belongs to another; a young one who has committed murder."

Harry stared down at the glow around him, watching as the grey pulsed around the lighter colour, trying to take it over. What could that even mean?

"We accept your trade," the male voice said at last. "We shall return you and the soul to the realm of the living."

"Wait," Harry cried, holding a hand up. "My Godfather fell through here a few months ago; is he here?"

The man looked at the woman who nodded, and as they disappeared, another, much more familiar figure appeared.

Harry ran forward to hug Sirius' form, but his arms fell through the figure, making Harry fall to the floor with a thump.

Sirius crouched down, placing a ghostly hand near his cheek. The icy chill radiating off the hand gave Harry comfort.

"I'm sorry, Harry, my little Prongslet, forgive me for leaving you," Sirius said softly.

"Can't you come back with me?" Harry asked desperately. "Please, Sirius, I miss you so much."

He felt tears freeze on his cheeks, and the ache of losing Sirius was once again so fresh.

"I'm sorry, young one," he heard the female say from the shadows. "His soul is entrapped here forever; we shall take care of him for you."
"Your time is running out," the man interrupted. "Your presence will taint us. Say your final goodbyes."

"You'll tell them all I love them right?" Sirius asked urgently. "Tell them I'm sorry I left them, and tell Remus he'll always be mine, and I want him to move on and be happy." Harry nodded, trying to control his shaking form. "And you stay strong for me, Harry. I've accepted my death; I've found peace here. Stay strong for me."

The dark void began to shake and shatter, and the whispers started to fade away.

"I will, Sirius, I will; I'll always love you."

He felt ghostly lips against his forehead, and then a force was pulling him backwards, taking him away and into the light.

He landed roughly on the ground, a heavier figure landing on top of him, who was looking all too pleased with his position. Riddle placed a hand out over Harry's forehead, and Harry yelled as he felt a surge of pain, like he was literally having Riddle's soul ripped out of him.

"What in Salazar's-?" Draco shouted, and with surprising force the blond had marched to the pair and shoved Riddle off of Harry.

"You'll do well to watch yourself, boy," the man snarled; yes, Riddle was definitely a lot more terrifying in person. As a voice he was harmless, as a memory he was somewhat creepy but still easy to look at, but now he had a body and likely his magic back, he was the worst parts of Tom and Voldemort combined.

"Who are you?" Draco growled, pulling Harry from the ground, while the Gryffindor wiped away the tears that were still falling.

"My name is Tom Riddle, but I suppose that is taken now. Marvolo Slytherin is how you shall refer to me; Slytherin's heir who will carry out his true destiny," Riddle, or rather Marvolo stated. "Of course, you must be a Malfoy; you look much like Abraxas. Pity you will have to die."

"What?" Harry and Draco both yelled, not caring who they attracted now.

"I shall take that," Marvolo said, ignoring their protests, and he lunged forward, snatching Draco's wand from his grasp.

Harry immediately drew his and cast a Stunning Spell, the first cast that came to mind, but Marvolo quickly formed a defensive shield around him.

With a flick of the wand he summoned the Invisibility Cloak to him.

"I don't suppose you knew you owned one of the Deathly Hallows, did you, Harry?" the Dark wizard said mockingly, fingering the soft material of the Cloak.

"That's just a story," Harry said, wondering why Tom could seem so sane when he was clearly crazy in his later years.

"Oh, no, it is most true. Dumbledore owns at least one more; if I can't find the third I'm sure he'll have that too. But for now, I shall need my own Horcrux, and as the young Malfoy here is an unnecessary witness, I can solve two problems with one simple spell. It shan't hurt at all, and you'll be able to have peace," Marvolo said, as if he was somehow going to convince Draco to willingly be killed.
Harry moved to stand directly in front of the Slytherin boy, ignoring his shaking limbs.

"Come now, Harry, I can incapacitate you in a moment; why bother risking your own health?"
Marvolo taunted, but Harry stood his ground.

"You're not killing Draco," he said, trying to sound demanding. "I can't stop you killing, but you're not going to hurt him."

He could feel the terror radiating off Draco in waves, and the teenager had scooted closer to Harry; without a wand he was defenceless.

Marvolo's wand movement was quick, and Harry would have been unable to react with his own wand, but he threw up a hand in front of him, forming a shield around him and Draco, the eye of Horus blazing in the middle of it.

"That must have been an unexpected consequence of Tom's actions," Marvolo mused. "No wonder he wants to keep you. Pity you can't stay in that shield forever, and surely you see, Harry, that now Draco is better off dead to protect your secret."

"If his life depended on it he wouldn't tell," Harry argued, and Draco nodded urgently behind him.

"I-I'll keep quiet, I swear. Besides, I'm the only child in my family; you'd be risking a Pure-blood line dying out because-" Draco started, but he yelped and shut up when Tom sent a charm at the wall behind them in rage.

"I believe Pure-bloods should have full access and secrecy in the Magical World, and I believe Mudbloods are filth and vermin, but that doesn't mean I have no problem with Pure-bloods dying either, especially not weak, snivelling children. I suppose Voldemort never admitted he was Half-blood to anyone, did he?" Marvolo ranted, looking pleased when both Harry and Draco paused their movements in shock. "Oh, but we pulled ourselves out of the mess our mother created by mating with a filthy Muggle, and we pushed ourselves to the magical limit to create the world we crave, surrounding by pathetic fools who believe by siding with us, their chances of survival increases."

Harry pushed his hand against Draco slightly, pointing a finger towards the door, hoping Draco would realise it was a sign to run. He felt Draco nod very slightly behind him, and Harry dropped his shield, immediately focusing on the was sceptre and hieroglyphic name of Set, trying to focus on the storm part of the God's power. The room began to darken and storm clouds formed, swirling around them. The teenagers didn't need to be told twice to run; a green beam narrowly missed Draco's head.

Harry shouted Confringo at the door as it shut it behind them, hoping the rubble from the Blasting Curse would slow down the wizard somewhat.

He wasn't sure if he had grabbed Draco's hand or Draco had grabbed his, but they held on to each other with equal strength as they raced away from the Department of Mysteries.

"I'm so sorry; I didn't want to drag you into this, and I never thought he'd try to kill you," Harry cried, panting as they ran.

"I'll forgive you if you get me out of here alive," Draco replied, turning them suddenly down a corridor and into a room. "My father's old office; nobody else has been granted entry so technically he still owns this, and my blood will keep us safe; Father set up the Blood Wards without the Ministry being aware, of course."
"I really am sorry, Draco," Harry apologised again, biting his lip. "I made a really stupid mistake which caused this whole disaster."

"Well, tell me everything thing, and don't leave anything out," Draco demanded, started to revert back to his usual self.

"Can we do a Blood Oath?" Harry asked, and Draco rolled his eyes, but nodded. He reached over and pulled his father's drawer opening, and revealed a menacing looking knife.

Draco brought the blade across his palm, and allowed Harry to do the same. When they were both finished they clasped hands once more.

"I swear to keep everything you say in confidence, unless the person already has the knowledge of the information you are about to tell me and permits me to talk about it to them."

A red light wrapped around their hands, and then faded, causing the cut on their hands to heal, living just a thin scar as proof.

Now satisfied, Harry began to tell Draco everything, from finding Tom in the diary, of his Ancient Magic, discovering the Horcruxes, and accidently going inside the diadem. He told him of the curse, and Marvolo inside of his head and what he made Harry do, and what happened inside the Veil. The only thing he left out was his and Tom's relationship.

Draco stayed silent throughout Harry talking, and when Harry finished he opened his mouth to speak, before shutting it again. He repeated this action a number of times.

"You don't look very aristocratic doing that," Harry said, trying to lighten the mood.

"I think I preferred when you didn't talk you; you can be terribly sarcastic, you know, but Merlin, you're in a terrible situation; I thought I had it bad."

"Yeah, I don't even know how Lord Riddle will react to this; maybe he'll kill me," Harry said worriedly, but Draco shook his head.

"You don't seem afraid of him in the slightest, so clearly he doesn't treat you like he treats everyone else; that is a sign he at least respects you," Draco reasoned, but Harry shrugged.

"But what I've done is really bad," the Gryffindor muttered, pulling at his hair.

"Perhaps he won't find out," Draco suggested, and he scowled when Harry shook his head. "I'm actually trying to be nice and that still isn't good enough for you."

"It's not that, it's just, he knew I was here tonight, and I have no idea what Marvolo is up to, because he's either given up on finding us or is still trying to work a way in, but there's a high risk all three of them will run into each other."

"Maybe they'll off each other? If Lord Riddle wants to take out the Dark Lord, he could let him take care of Slytherin first. Let's hope they don't all join together though; that would be far too much evil."

"I think they're all too megalomaniac for that; Voldemort only accepted Riddle because he's replaced the Horcrux for him, but he has to treat Riddle somewhat lesser than him."

"Hmm. Do you think the other one is gone yet?" Draco asked, with slight concern in his voice.
"What would happen if I opened the door? Would the wards still protect you?"

Draco nodded, so still feeling somewhat confidant Marvolo wouldn't kill him, Harry cautiously opened the door, only to find himself with an even more terrifying fright.

He ended up face to face with an angry Tom Riddle.

X
Fourteen

Chapter Notes

We finally get to the return of Tom. For those of you who are concerned about how angry Tom is, don't worry, because there is also a warning for smut in this chapter, so yeah, enjoy the chapter.

X

Harry didn't even have time to express his surprise before Tom was pushing roughly at his chest and slamming the door behind him. The older boy drew his wand and sent a blue beam at Draco, causing the blond to emit a muffled cry and fall to his knees. He was clawing at his face desperately.

"What did you do to him?" Harry asked, horrified as he eyed Draco in shock.

"I took away his senses," Tom told him with a dark look, "but he is not who I am here to talk about. So tell me, my dear, what exactly have you been playing?"

Without any time to answer, Tom pushed Harry against a wall, pulling his hands above his head and crushing his wrists with an iron grip. Tom leant over Harry, his height being an advantage, and he could feel Tom's cold breath against his cheek.

"I didn't mean for any of this to happen," Harry said, suddenly all too aware of Tom's hardness pressing against his side. Was he getting off on this? Harry gulped; Tom was angry, but apparently pleased too; whether it was the domination he was showing or just having the younger boy at his mercy, Harry didn't know.

Tom seemed to notice the situation too, and he snarled, dragging Harry away from the wall and over to the desk. He kicked Draco away harshly, and the sense-deprived boy stumbled away, crashing into a wall. He fell to the floor in a slump; the only sign of life was his chest moving slowly up and down.

Harry found himself pushed onto the desk, his legs dangling off the edge as Tom pressed him down; while the older boy stood with his legs either side of Harry's hips, and he leant down to grasp Harry's wrists in one hand. From this position, Harry could see the blazing look in Tom's eyes, and he unwillingly whimpered, struggling slightly against the man's grasp.

"Don't you have any idea what you've done?" Tom hissed, the frames on the wall shaking slightly as the man raged.

"I didn't mean it," Harry repeated, "I found the diadem; I didn't know what it was, and it drew me in. He forced me to bring him out of it, or I'll have either died or been kept his prisoner inside it."

"Did you not think to come to me?" Tom asked, his breathing shallow and his eyes wide.

"I wanted to do it myself. I'm not as weak as everyone thinks; I'm no damsel in distress," Harry explained, staring directly into Tom's eyes; better to show he wasn't weak minded.
"I told you about using muggle words and phrases," Tom almost shouted, spit hitting Harry's face. He raised his free hand, and Harry flinched, awaiting the hit, but the fist splintered the desk beside his head instead. "So you chose to stubbornly prove your independence, allowing him to access your mind instead."

"I didn't allow him," Harry protested weakly, but he stopped upon seeing Tom's expression.

Every glass in the room broke, shattering shards across the floor, and Tom's grip on his wrists tightened considerably.

"You're hurting me," he said quietly, but Tom paid no attention to his comment, or rather he chose to ignore it; the Dark wizard was unable to feel remorse after all.

"Did you enjoy it?" the man asked sharply, almost growling as he spoke. His teeth were barred, and his fingernails dug into Harry's skin.

"What-?" Harry started, but a single look shut him up.

"What he made you do last night; did you enjoy him controlling you, using your body?" the other snarled. Harry had thought Tom had been angry before, but apparently he hadn't known every detail; he must have been searching through Harry's mind, but now the man looked murderous.

"N-no," Harry stuttered, "I swear, he made me. I- ."

Tom's lips cut him off as they were pressed roughly against his own. Tom took complete control, forcing his tongue into Harry's mouth, biting down on his lips hard enough to draw blood. He sucked at the wound before pulling back.

"You are mine!" he growled against Harry's lips. "Nobody else is to touch you, even if they use you to do it, is that clear?"

Harry frightfully nodded, wincing as his head was forcibly turned to the side, but then Tom's lips were against his neck, and oh Merlin that felt good. Harry shut his eyes as Tom sucked hard on the skin, nipping it with his teeth. He yanked Harry's head back up and connected their lips once more. The grip lessened on Harry's wrists, but he still found himself unable to move them.

The world suddenly darkened as a soft cloth was magically woven around his head and eyes, and as Tom stopped kissing him, a similar material was pushed into his mouth. If Harry had to be honest, he much preferred this method to whatever horror Tom had bestowed on Draco.

Cold hands dove under his shirt, fingertips tracing his skin. The other side of his neck had Tom's attention now, making Harry whimper into the gag as the man bit down hard. The lips travelled upwards, stopping to take Harry's earlobe into the warm mouth.

"This is how it should feel," Tom said breathlessly into Harry's ear, grabbing a handful of the dark hair and yanking Harry's head backwards harshly. "Only I have command over your body; it belongs to me. Do you want to prove yourself to me? Then submit to me completely; do it."

Harry nodded, which was all Tom needed.

Harry winced as Tom pinched one of his nipples, before dragging the hand down Harry's stomach until it rested at the top of his trousers.

Without a word, Tom pulled them down in one swift motion, leaving Harry's pale skin to the mercy of the chill air. A spell was whispered and his clothes were gone, leaving Harry feeling
incredibly vulnerable.

A hand stayed atop his chest, as the other reached further down, taking Harry’s erection in it’s grip. A course of pleasure rushed through his body at the touch, and he moaned against the material in his mouth as Tom moved his hand up and down slowly, torturing Harry with the speed.

It felt so wrong, allowing Tom to touch him with Draco, albeit unconscious, only a few feet away, but Tom’s hands felt so good, and his mouth was nothing but divine.

Tom’s hand left his cock, and travelled back up to his mouth. Tom roughly pushed his fingers past the gag, pressing them as deep as he could into Harry’s mouth. He thrust them in and out of the orifice, ignoring Harry’s slight gagging.

When he was finished Tom moved the gag back into position, and the hand moved back down. A finger slick was cooling saliva pushed inside him; Harry squirmed against the sensation.

“You did this easily enough for him,” Tom panted in his ear. “Don’t you think it’s only right for me to get my share, dear?”

Tom pushed another finger inside, scissoring the pair inside of him, before adding a third. Harry cried out against the painful feeling of being filled, whimpering as Tom pushed the digits in and out of his hole at increasing speeds.

As he groaned against the pain, Tom hit the bundle of nerves inside him, and he cried into the gag, pleasure coursing through him as Tom continued to assault his prostate, and Harry decided the pain was worth it.

“You see how much better I make you feel,” Tom hissed to him, before biting down on his collar bone.

Harry could feel himself getting closer, and each push of Tom’s fingers against his prostate, each bite and each scratch brought him nearer to completion.

But it was when Tom moved down, taking his fingers from Harry’s arse to jerk his cock instead, and replaced the fingers with his talented tongue, that pushed Harry over the edge.

The slick appendage moving inside him, and Tom’s fingers expertly working his erection finally caused him to release into Tom’s hands. The sticky fingers were pushed back into his mouth, and Harry licked them clean, tasting himself on his tongue.

The gag was pulled from his mouth, and Tom kissed him deeply again. As Tom pulled away, he took Harry with him, pulling him up and then making him kneel on the floor. The blindfold was pushed up his head, and Harry found himself at eye level with Tom’s groin, who had a very obvious erection behind his trousers. Harry knew exactly what Tom wanted him to do.

“I’d fuck you right here if we weren’t in the office of a weak-minded fool,” Tom whispered lowly, and Harry whimpered with need.

The man unzipped his trousers, and Harry took the now free erection into his hands, before hesitantly taking the head into his mouth. He had never given anyone a blowjob before, but he knew how it worked, thanks to the discussions Dean and Seamus had at night when they thought everyone else was asleep.

He tentatively licked the cock, until he got sure enough to take more of it in his mouth. Tom
bucked his hips in order to get more inside.

“Look at me,” Tom ordered. “Let me see those pretty eyes.”

A hand threaded in his hair, guiding Harry at the speed Tom wanted, also giving Tom complete control over the situation.

Harry sucked hard, not looking away from Tom’s eyes which were now glowing red. Between the pair of them, he had now taken Tom all the way in, ignoring his watering eyes as his throat protested.

Harry winced as Tom yanked his head away, and the man tugged at his own erection, holding Harry’s head nearby, until he released onto Harry’s face.
With a wave of Tom’s wand Harry was dressed again, and another had him feeling less sticky, though he could still feel the remnants of Tom’s cum on his face.

The boy seemed less angry now, though his eyes were still swirling and his face was hard-set.

"You will, of course, learn the consequences of your actions the hard way," Tom said, continuing their conversation like Tom hadn't just given Harry the best orgasm of his life. "That Tom-


Tom's lip curled. "Well, Marvolo Slytherin, will have his own agenda. He left you alive for a reason, and though that may appear as a good thing, I can assure you it will be anything but. You brought him back, so you will be responsible for helping me dispose of him. There is one thing I do not understand though; your memory blacks out after you reached the Veil."

"You want to know what happened inside?" Harry asked, and Tom nodded. For once Tom didn't look like a furious Dark Lord; he looked simply like a curious scholar.

"I went in, and it was all nothing, like being in space without stars or the planets; it was just dark, but nothing like the darkness we know. I could hear whispers, and then a glowing figure of a man appeared, followed by a female one. They spoke to me and they arranged a deal for the Horcrux. They let me see Sirius too, but then they said I had to leave because I was impure and they didn't want me nearby."

"The so-called infection of your soul would be why," Tom said matter-of-factly, looking down at Draco in disgust. "I should kill him right here for bringing you to it rather than me."

"No; nobody is killing Draco, okay?" Harry said angrily. "And about this infection thing, you know more about it than you're letting on, don't you?"

"Do I?" Tom asked, amused, though it wasn't a cheerful kind of amused; it sent a shiver up Harry's spine.

"The figures only had one colour glow around them; I had three. They said the darkest part was Slytherin, and the other which wasn't mine, they said it was part of another's soul; someone who was young and someone who has killed. Isn't that what you do with Horcruxes? Put some of your soul inside it. Does it belong to you?" Harry questioned, breathing heavily as realisation began to sink in. What exactly had Tom done to him?

"Would you rather be dead?" Tom asked with a smirk. "You said yourself you didn't know why you were alive after you went into the Chamber; now you know why."
"Y-you made me a Horcrux?" Harry summarised slowly, feeling his heart restrict. That would put him at risk from Voldemort, Marvolo and Dumbledore at the very least.

"Not exactly; rather I transferred the last of the soul fragment from the diary to you. I had enough of my soul and your magic and life force to give me a body, and I chose to give the last bit of life to you," Tom told him, and Harry was sure he had stopped breathing.

"Why?" was all Harry asked, stiffening when Tom pulled him against his chest; Harry immediately took advantage of it and buried his face into Tom's shirt.

"I told you; I saw something in you; something powerful. You reminded me of myself in some ways; I saw your potential. Of course, it made things more convenient with Dumbledore as well; your death would have confirmed my return to him, and transferring the remains of the Horcrux left the diary completely clean, so the old fool would have believed it to be destroyed. However I could have got round that, I just truly wanted you."

"Won't they all want to kill me if they find out?" Harry mumbled into the shirt, and Tom laughed.

"Do you really believe I would allow them to kill you? Or even find out for that matter? I realised long ago I passed on my power of Parseltongue to you; I put a block against it as much as I could to prevent the Dark Lord from realising. Marvolo may be aware, but he is using your status in a different way, and Dumbledore has no reason to suspect," Tom said, gently stroking Harry's hair. "You should be grateful it will give you immortality, too. Otherwise I'd have expected you to create your own Horcrux, and you are far too innocent to kill; it would have destroyed you."

Harry nodded solemnly, fingering the buttons on Tom's shirt. The man was three different people it seemed; the angry side that most only ever saw, the charismatic man Tom was when he needed something, and the gentler side Harry hoped only he knew. Even knowing what Tom could be like didn't stop Harry running away from him.

Without a second thought Harry lifted his head up to kiss Tom, much more softly than Tom ever did when he initiated the contact.

"I love you, you know," Harry admitted as he pulled away. "Only ever you; not even another part of you. I love you."

"I know," Tom answered, somewhat sadly. Harry tried to ignore the hurt that came from Tom not saying it back; he had expected it, of course, he wasn't sure if Tom could even feel love, but he supposed Tom showed his warped feelings in unusual ways.

"Was me being Half-blood anything to do with it?" Harry asked suddenly, remembering what Marvolo had said. "He said you were Half-blood too."

Tom tensed for just a moment before collecting himself. Harry wouldn't have noticed had he not been so close.

"It isn't our fault we each have a parent who became pathetically attached to Muggles," Tom answered bitterly; Harry didn't bother to point out his mum was a witch. "My filthy excuse of a father abandoned by mother long before my birth, and she lived just long enough to name me after him before abandoning me to a Muggle orphanage. I grew up neglected, treated as a freak, oh no, they never bullied me; they were too scared of me; I made sure of that, but it was once I found out I was a Wizard I saw my possibilities, and I took them. I am now showing you your potential, much like I found mine."
"Can you at least promise me this time you'll grow up different?" Harry asked softly, tucking his head under Tom's chin. "Don't become insane and focused on destroying everything like the other yous."

"You doubt me, sweet?" Tom asked gently, and Harry shrugged.

"I just don't want-" he started, but Tom hushed him.

"Neither of them had you now, did they?" the older boy added, and Harry blushed.

They both looked as they heard Draco stir. Tom waved his wand at Draco, presumably returning his senses.

"I'm afraid things are going to get very difficult for the Malfoy boy this weekend. Fortunately for you, The Dark Lord is unaware of the situation, otherwise I can assure you, even with my word for you; you would suffer greatly under his wrath. Draco however is at the Dark Lord's whim; it will serve me as his punishment for bringing you here, but will also be an incentive for the Malfoy family to join me; Narcissa will be a great ally. I shall leave you two to return to Hogwarts; Slytherin has left the vicinity now, and I shall see you soon. Also, I expect you to leave your neck uncovered," Tom said, smirking teasingly.

Harry felt himself pale, and as Tom Apparated away, he ran to the nearest mirror and nearly fainted; his neck was covered in red welts from Tom's mouth, and would definitely be bruised for a long time. He thanked Merlin the holidays were months away; Lily would kill him if she knew.

"What the-?" he heard Draco moan, and he turned to see the blond picking himself up from the floor, rubbing his head. He looked unwell, but then he looked at Harry, and his eyes widened in a somewhat comical way. "What happened to you?"

"Err-" Harry started, and Draco sighed.

"As if even you are getting some; even if it is with Lord Riddle."

Harry felt his cheeks flaming.

"You might want to get your head checked when we get back," Harry said to change the topic. "You bashed it pretty hard."

"Feels completely healed," Draco told him, rubbing the back of his head again to be sure. "I never want to feel whatever hex he threw at me again though. Is the other one gone?"

"Yeah, he is," Harry said. "Fuck, he took my Cloak. Dad will murder me."

"I can't believe Slytherin thought it was one of the Deathly Hallows; he won't be getting far as a Dark Lord if he believes in fairy-tales, will he? Lovegood believing in all that stuff is fine, because she isn't planning to take over the world as far as I'm aware."

Harry shrugged and led Draco cautiously from the room; neither of them were completely convinced Marvolo was gone.

They ran into nobody else on their way, and left each other with a nod upon their return to Hogwarts.

X
He had of course received comments about his neck from all of his dorm mates, despite trying to disguise it as best as he could without outright hiding it. By breakfast students were theorising about who might have given him the love bites; the most popular rumour was that he was sleeping with a seventh year Ravenclaw who seemed in no rush to deny the rumours.

The Daily Prophet gave no sign that anything had happened at the Ministry concerning Voldemort, and the only possible indication of Marvolo existing was that a muggle boy had been murdered in the Muggle streets near the Ministry at a similar sort of time. The boy's name was Dudley Dursley, and Harry froze upon reading that name. Wasn't that his cousin's name? Lily and Petunia didn't have much to do with each other, and it was only due to Lily's pushing that they had any contact at all, and this was usually a card around Christmas, though the women did meet for coffee every couple of years. Harry had met his cousin twice, though that had been before Hogwarts, and from what he remembered the boy was a spoilt bully, not that he deserved to die for that.

"Who did that to your neck?" he heard Heather ask in disgust behind him.

"Nobody," Harry answered annoyed. "Is our cousin named Dudley Dursley?"

"I don't know, why?" his sister replied, snatching up the news article. "Oh, that's sad."

"What's wrong, Heather?" one of her friends ask, to which Heather burst into tears.

"My cousin's been murdered," she sobbed loudly, drawing the attention of everyone who was nearby.

"We don't even know if it's him," Harry hissed quietly, but she ignored him as she walked off wailing in the arms of Seamus, leaving her friends staring adoringly at them afterwards.

Saturday morning Harry and Heather received a letter from James, who confirmed it was their cousin Dudley who had been killed, and Lily had been to see Petunia who had screamed at her that it was her fault for bringing freakishness onto their family. Eventually Lily had talked her down from her rage and was staying with her for comfort and planned to bring her into their family home when she was ready; her husband had left her many years ago, though nobody knew why, and she would be completely alone now.

Despite not truly knowing them, he still felt sad over the death of his cousin and his aunt's situation, and combined with Tom's warning for Draco on his mind, he could only feel apprehension about going to Malfoy Manor.

The apprehension only mounted when Voldemort was kind during their meeting, at least as kind as he could manage; he even smiled for crying out loud, even if it wasn't so much a normal smile and more of a creepy one.

"You will be rewarded tonight for your work, Draco," the Dark Lord announced proudly. "It is time all our Death Eaters see what happens when they please me."

"Can you believe it?" Draco exclaimed after they left the meeting, "he was actually happy with what I had done for once."

"Are you sure he actually wants to reward you?" Harry asked, remembering Tom's warning from before. He had never told Harry not to tell Draco; perhaps it had been a way for Tom to help Draco. "Seeing him that happy is a bit unnatural."

"Just because he's been acting strange doesn't mean it's a bad thing; perhaps I'm doing a better job than the rest of the Death Eaters put together."
Harry wanted to point out Draco hadn't made much more effort with the Cabinet or planning Dumbledore's death, and that was possibly because Draco really didn't want to do it, but he knew the Slytherin would react badly so he settled for shrugging.

"Well, think about it; you could always come up with an excuse if you don't want to go tonight," Harry suggested, causing Draco to sneer.

"You really believe making excuses to the Dark Lord would be wise, Potter?" Draco retorted, pointing his chin upwards; the compliments had truly gone to his head. "I'm going to take whatever I'm rightly offered, and if you're so against it, I won't bother to share."

With that said, Draco bid him farewell and slammed the door in his face. True, he may be annoyed Harry warned him after he was praised, but considering it was Voldemort they were talking about and Tom would have no reason to lie about that, Harry thought his warning was pretty reasonable.

He relaxed himself playing with Orion while waiting for Tom. The cat had grown significantly already, and seemed even more energetic than usual. Orion scampered off when Tom entered the room, and Harry wondered why the cat was so scared.

"The Dark Lord requests your presence for Draco's reward tonight," Tom told him, settling himself into the sofa. He patted the seat beside him, and Harry complied, sitting beside him, very relieved to have the normal Tom back.

"What exactly is he going to do to Draco?" Harry asked, picking at the cushion; it was too immaculate to be frayed, but with Harry around that wouldn't last long.

"You'll see; I wouldn't want to ruin the surprise," Tom answered simply, pulling Harry into his side.

"I tried to warn him, but he wouldn't listen," Harry said, and Tom smirked, playing with a strand of Harry's hair.

"That is his choice; you should feel no blame."

Harry shrugged, biting his lip.

"Something else is bothering you?" Tom asked, and Harry shrugged again; not like Tom would care much about a Muggle dying. "What is it?" Tom persisted, with a tone that sounded demanding; after Thursday Harry wasn't sure if it would be wise to anger Tom again so soon.

"Did Voldemort or any of the Death Eaters murder any muggles on Thursday?" he asked, looking at Tom seriously.

"Ah, no, would this have anything to do with that murdered Muggle boy? Slytherin killed him, you know; the boy was largely overweight and rather piggish looking; it's no waste of a life, although the man will have doubtlessly created a Horcrux with the murder."

"He was my cousin," Harry told Tom sadly, picking at the cushion again. "I didn't really know him or anything, but it's still upsetting in a way. I guess to you he was just another Muggle, but he was still part of my family."

"Why does it upset you if you didn't like him?" Tom asked with genuine interest, looking like the concept truly fascinated him.

"It doesn't matter, you wouldn't understand," he said the last part quietly, but Tom still heard him.
"True, I don't feel a lot of feelings the way you and most others do," Tom said, turning to face Harry. He grabbed his hands, preventing him from pulling anymore of the cushion apart. "I feel angry sometimes; I was furious on Thursday, and had you been anyone else I would have killed you on the spot, but that thought never crossed my mind. You, my dear, make me angry more than anyone else, because you make me act in a way I've never acted with anybody else; you change me. I remember you told me you loved me, and I will never be able to say that back to you; I don't love you; I don't love anything, but you make me want to run away with you so I can hide you from the world. I would kill any man or woman who harmed you in an instant. I want to take a knife and slit your skin, watch your blood pour and drink you, but I don't want you to be in physical pain from me. That is how I feel, and part of why I was so angry at you was because I didn't know what I would do if I lost you, because despite how angry I get for these thoughts, it would be strange not to have them now. I may not understand the common concept of love, but I think I go much further."

Tom gently brushed away a tear that had fallen from Harry's eye during Tom's speech, or rather many tears.

"I'm sorry," he muttered, blushing and wiping his eyes furiously.

"I've never cried before," Tom admitted quietly. "Not since being a young child; if we cried we got no attention, so there was no need for it."

"When I cried when I was little my Mum would always come and read me a story. Normally a fantasy story, so I could escape to a faraway world and forget my worries. She always favoured the Tales of Beedle the Bard and-" he stopped as he remembered the Invisibility Cloak. "Do the Deathly Hallows really exist?"

"Why?" Tom asked, suddenly solemn. The atmosphere in the room seemed to go icy, and Tom's unblinking gaze told Harry his answer.

"He took my Invisibility Cloak; Marvolo I mean. He said it was one of them. He reckoned Dumbledore has at least one, or possibly both."

"So that's his aim, is it?" Tom asked nobody, lip curling. "Pity Draco will get there first."

"You want Draco to get the Deathly Hallows?" Harry questioned, making Tom laugh coldly.

"He won't get to keep them of course, but when Dumbledore dies, he'll take the Elder Wand with him to his grave; then we know where it is. Now, talking of Draco, it is time for his punishment."

"I don't want to watch," Harry said stubbornly, crossing his arms, but Tom yanked him up with ease.

"Truthfully, Draco is being punished as a warning to the others," Tom explained as he pulled a struggling Harry through the hallways. "He hasn't particularly done anything wrong, but for the Dark Lord to show wrath to a child, means he will have no mercy on anyone. He is simply a message for the others."

"Why are we going outside?" Harry asked as Tom pulled him through the wide doors and into the gardens; Tom ignored him.

The Death Eaters were all waiting, Draco amongst them, recognisable by his blond hair. Tom stood to the far side with Harry, so they could not be seen, but Voldemort's voice still carried over to them clearly.
"My followers! We gather here to witness Draco Malfoy's punishment for displeasing me. Bring him forward."

Two men roughly grabbed Draco by the shoulders and pulled the struggling boy forwards; he had seemingly only just learnt the truth.

"Draco, I asked you a simple task and yet you waste my time with pitiful excuses, taught to you by your fellow Death Eaters," Voldemort stated, and the Death Eaters hung their heads in shame, all but Narcissa and Bellatrix who had eyes only for Draco and the Dark Lord, respectively. "However I see it as necessary to punish you as I see fit. Crucio!"

Harry's eyes widened as Draco shook violently on the ground, screaming in pain.

"It hasn't even begun yet," Tom purred in his ear, placing a hand on each of his shoulders.

Harry jumped when something cold pressed against his hand, and jumped again when he turned to see a large wolf next to him, but something about the amber eyes seemed familiar.

"Remus?" he whispered, and the wolf hung its head as if to nod.

Harry glanced up at the glowing full moon above their heads, just as a wolf howled in the near distance.

"Oh, no, he's not." Harry started, horrified as realisation struck him.

Remus whined, and Harry dropped to his knees to hug the wolf, burying his head in the soft fur.

The howling came again, and this time Harry looked up to see a wolf much larger than normal stalking from the forest and near to Voldemort.

It's eyes were aimed at Draco, who had been bound by a spell.

"No, no," Harry shouted, jumping up. He prepared to run, but Tom caught him round the waist and surprisingly Remus leapt in front of him to. "Let me go, he can't."

The wolf charged at Draco, and the boy screamed in agony as the werewolf sank it's fangs into his skin.

X
Harry was standing silently outside Draco's door, waiting for Narcissa to leave so he could talk to the boy alone.

After the werewolf had bitten Draco, the horrified Death Eaters had left the scene, whispering hurriedly amongst themselves when they thought the Dark Lord was out of sight. Harry had been able to see them fine though, and the looks of disgust mingled with their horror, sickened Harry. The looks they were throwing Draco, failing in their attempts to be discreet, were filled with contempt that hadn't been there before.

The two that had remained behind, Rabastan and Rodolphus Lestrange if Harry remembered correctly, had been the ones who were left to take Draco inside, and they simply dragged him in like he was an animal to them, and Rodolphus was his uncle; he would have thought family would be accepting.

The way they had all treated Draco since he had been bitten, even in such a short space of time, proved how prejudiced people were and how much Draco would be rejected from society, though that was doubtlessly what Voldemort wanted.

That was why, however, Harry wanted to talk to Draco; to prove he wouldn't be completely alone and shunned because of his new condition.

The door opened and Narcissa Malfoy stepped outside, her hands linked together tightly; nail marks were evident on the backs of her hands.

"He's ready to talk to you," the woman said hoarsely, and she kept her eyes downcast. She opened her mouth to say something once more, and then shut it, acting the opposite of her usual aristocratic persona.

She stalked away without another word, and Harry thought he heard a sob as the woman rounded the corner; he just hoped she was upset because of how her son would be treated, rather than because of the bite.

Harry stepped through the doorway to where Narcissa had just been. The room was completely bare, and housed only a small metal bed. There were no windows, but that wasn't stopping Draco from staring at the wall longingly as if he could see through.

He appeared well enough, though his left shoulder was wrapped up. As Harry neared the bed, he could see the boy's form shaking slightly, though not in the usual way such as when one was cold or scared.

"Why are you here?" Draco asked, not turning to look at Harry. "Have you come to mock me?"
"Why would I do that?" Harry said gently, stopping as he reached the bed. It was such un-like Malfoy quality and style, and it was no wonder he could feel Draco's discomfort.

The Slytherin finally turned to face him, and Harry tried not to show shock as he saw that Draco's normally grey eyes were now a shocking yellowy amber colour. The boy stood shakily from the bed, his bitten arm hanging limply by his side.

"Surely you'll want to brag that you warned me and I chose to ignore you; look where that got me," Draco growled, swinging his good arm and punching a hole through the wall. Draco made a half laughing, half sobbing noise as he stared at the hole. "Look at me! I'm a monster."

Harry debated whether to hug Draco or something, but decided against it in the end. "You're not a monster," Harry assured him instead, watching as the other tensed. "Even if you turn into a wolf at the full moon, with the Wolfsbane you're basically a human trapped inside a wolf, and even if you didn't have it, the wolf would be the one in charge, not you."

Harry was making sure to avoid any words such as monster, freak or beast.

"You think so, do you?" Draco snarled, and with inhuman speed he had Harry pinned against the wall, hand clutched in his shirt and face so close Harry could feel the spit hitting him. "If I'm no monster, then why is everyone treating me like vermin? Why is my own mother afraid to look me in the eyes?"

Draco seemed to change completely at those words, and he released Harry, dropping to the floor and burying his face in his hands. His shoulders started to shake violently as the boy finally broke down.

Harry dropped down beside him, this time not hesitating as he wrapped his arms around Draco; he needed to know there would be at least one person who wasn't afraid of him. The fact Malfoy hadn't shrugged him off and seemed to relish in the comfort suggested he really had needed it.

"My whole life is over," Draco continued, eyes flashing in anger. "I'm worse than anyone; Muggles, Mud-bloods. I'm going to be outcast from everything I ever knew; my friends are going to turn on me-"

"If they turn on you they weren't good friends to begin with," Harry interrupted. "When my dad and godfather found out Remus was a wizard, they accepted him as he was and helped him in every way possible."

"Well they were Blood-traitors anyway," Draco snarled, but frowning afterwards. "I had so much planned; Father arranged me a marriage with Astoria Greengrass, and she was actually likable, but this will destroy the contract, and who else would marry a beast?"

"Lots of people would; not everyone cares," Harry said, knowing it was basically a lie, and Draco knew that too.

"People do care," Draco insisted, "you and your family aren't normal."

"Well maybe you need to find more unusual people then," Harry suggested. "Luna certainly wouldn't care. I hate to say this, but Ron, Neville and Hermione were protesting when Remus had to leave because of his Lycanthropy. People like us do exist."

Draco had stopped sobbing, and pulled away from Harry, not as rough as Harry imagined he would have.
"I'd rather be alone than befriend Longbottom and his fan club," he said with a sneer, glancing at Harry. "I suppose you and Lovegood are bearable enough if I need company."

"I'm glad to hear that," Harry said somewhat sarcastically. To his surprise Draco looked like he was about to cry again.

"I guess I'll have to work on my attitude, now that I'm not the perfect Pure-blood son anymore," the blond admitted woefully. "Especially when you and Luna are likely the only people I can stand who will be willing to treat me like normal. Did Riddle know what would happen?"

"Yes," Harry answered truthfully, "but he didn't approve of it, but Voldemort was kind of determined to make his point to the Death Eaters; you hadn't even done anything wrong; you were just the one who would make him look more powerful," he added quickly as he felt Draco tense again; he knew Tom wanted Draco and Narcissa on his side.

"He wouldn't care either way what happened to me," Draco said slowly, glancing at the door. "I can smell him coming; I've found out apparently everyone has their own scent."

"How do you know it's him before you've seen them?" Harry asked curiously, and Draco looked at Harry with interest.

"You have rather similar scents, which is unusual because everyone so far has been rather distinct. I suppose it would either be him or perhaps one of your family members but they have no reason to be here, and given how close you and Riddle seem to be, it makes sense," the new werewolf told him, smirking slightly. "Don't worry; I'm in no place to judge you at the moment, am I?" the Slytherin added at Harry's grimace.

There was a knock at the door, and Tom was striding in before anybody could call admittance.

The man's eyes lingered dangerously over Harry and Draco's close positioning on the floor, and the boys both stood with a start, Draco wincing as the bite protested against the sudden movement.

With a dark look Harry understood the order to go stand beside Tom, so he obeyed, trying not to lean obviously against the taller boy's warm figure as Tom wrapped an arm around his shoulders.

"I believe Harry has told you much about us," Tom said to Draco, the older smirking as he felt Harry wince beside him. "He seems rather adept at spilling secrets and creating bonds to stop the secrets going any further."

"So are you just going to kill me anyway?" Draco said shortly, hanging his head. He jerked it up when Tom laughed coldly.

"Oh no; that would be rather pleasant for you at the moment I suppose. I would like to offer you the chance to pledge allegiance to me over the Dark Lord when the time comes."

"Of course I will," Draco said without giving any consideration to the thought. "You may not have had objection to the Dark Lord's plans, but he was the one who arranged it all and has completely destroyed my life. I'd do anything to be against him aside from following Dumbledore." He spat the headmaster's name as if it was venomous.

"Excellent," Tom said, smiling, waving his wand and turning the bed into a two-seated chair. He pulled Harry to sit beside him on it.

"I was thinking," Harry said after a few moments of awkward silence, "to help you disguise your eyes because they're obviously different to your normal colour, you could get coloured contact
lenses. They're Muggle, but they won't be detected and you won't have to worry about a Glamour spell wearing off without you knowing."

Both Tom and Draco scoffed.

"Do you really expect me to wear some Muggle contraption?" Draco sneered, glancing at Tom to make sure he wasn't stepping too far out of line.

"Well it's either that or risk losing your friends," Harry said with a shrug, making Draco frown.

"You should be grateful Harry holds the peculiar belief that your kind are no different to humans; he and that strange friend of his; or rather not-friend as Harry claims," Tom mused, smirking at Harry.

"Well they aren't really," Harry defended, but he knew Tom would never listen to the argument. "How is the bite anyway?"

"It hurts," Draco said simply, prodding at the wrap over the injury. "It's healed quickly though; something to do with the wolf I'm presuming. Mother says Lupin will be sending me a letter in the week because he wants to tell me everything I'll need to know. He would have come to see me but Greyback forbid it."

The way Draco said Greyback held far more hatred than he had used when talking of Dumbledore and Voldemort.

"Nobody ever told him anything; I imagine he'll want you to have every advantage that he could never get," Harry told the blond, and Draco laughed genuinely.

"I have never heard anything so Gryffindor," he muttered, rolling his eyes, but he seemed to be somewhat more cheerful. Hopefully Remus' kind-hearted nature would rub off on the boy.

"I trust you know how to sneak from Hogwarts on a full moon without drawing attention to yourself?" Tom asked Draco sharply.

"Of course; how would I have survived in Slytherin without the ability to make myself invisible when I needed," Draco assured, appearing once again as the usual character he portrayed.

"Good; we don't need unnecessary attention drawn to yourself. You should be made aware the Dark Lord still expects you to fulfil your duty, otherwise your mother shall be the one to suffer next," Tom warned, lips curling as he watched Draco's face darken.

"She'd probably want that," the Slytherin said quietly, keeping his eyes downcast. "She won't want to live knowing what her only son is."

"You might think so," Tom added cruelly, "but I'm sure she wouldn't want her beloved husband to return from Azkaban to learn that his love was dead and his child a beast."

"He isn't a beast," Harry argued, and Tom ignored him. "He isn't, so stop talking about him like he's a monster just because he got bitten by a werewolf," he said louder, looking pointedly at Tom.

"Aren't you feisty tonight?" the man answered mockingly, glancing between the two younger boys. Draco seemed to be grateful for Harry's defence, even if Tom had rejected it. "Nonetheless, you shall give entry to Hogwarts for the Death Eaters, kill Dumbledore and balance your Lycanthropy in complete discretion. Considering Harry's passion for treating your kind as normal, I recommend you stay in good companionship with him."
"I have no choice, do I?" Draco muttered under his breath

"The Healing Salve has been prepared for you to take with you," Tom continued, ignoring Draco bar rolling his eyes. The man leant into Harry, breathing into his ear so quietly that even with his enhanced senses Draco wouldn't have been able to hear it. "And you, Harry, be prepared for what I have planned for you next week." Tom's hand that was lightly squeezing his thigh gave Harry an idea of what Tom was talking about, and he felt his heart flutter as the older boy pulled away. Draco was pointedly staring at the ceiling.

Tom left them without another word, and the blond looked back to Harry with a look of defeat on his face. "Shall we head back then?" he asked, frowning at the floor. "I doubt Mother wants to see me at the moment, so I shan't bother saying goodbye."

"I'm sure she wants to see you before she goes," Harry mused, jumping as Draco kicked the wall and pulled his foot angrily away from the hole he had made.

"No, she doesn't," he snarled, a punch creating a hole higher up. "The further away from her I am the better."

Draco's chest was heaving heavily, his shoulders hunched over. It looked almost feral, and it was only the tears marring his eyes that made him look vulnerable.

"It's your choice," Harry said quietly, edging over to Draco slowly. He reached out and put a hand on his shoulder, but it was shoved off instantly.

Harry backed away slightly, but before he could blink Draco had pulled him against his chest and buried his head into Harry's soft hair. He could feel tears against his head, so he cautiously wrapped his arms around Draco's shoulders, rubbing his fingertips gently in what he hoped was a comforting manner.

They stayed like that for a while, no words spoken between either of them. Harry took it at Draco's pace, so when the Slytherin pulled away and grabbed the Portkey from the cabinet, he had no objections.

X

Harry had lain awake all night, tossing and turning over Draco. He could see the emotional effects the bite had had on him already; his mood swings were rapid, and even when he tried to act as normal it was easy to see what was lurking in his mind. The Slytherin was clearly both angry and distraught over what had happened, but there seemed to be a bit of denial too, though his other emotions took over whenever that was the case.

The physical effects hadn't even happened yet; the bite was healed by a special salve mixed with the werewolf venom, but come the next full moon Malfoy would definitely feel it.

At around three in the morning he had a bright idea, so after Transfiguration, the last lesson of the day, he approached Professor McGonagall.

"Excuse me, Professor?" he asked gently when everyone had left the classroom.

McGonagall turned to face him expectantly. She was a stern woman, but Harry knew deep down she did have a soft spot for the Gryffindors; according to his father, the woman loved him dearly despite giving him a record number of detentions.

"Yes, Potter?" the woman questioned, sounding a bit impatient as she waved her wand to clear up
the mess the students had left.

"I was just wondering if you had any advice on becoming an Animagus," he explained, looking at the floor rather than his teacher.

Whatever McGonagall had been expecting, that was not it. Her eyes widened for a slight moment before she regained her composure.

"You have an interest in becoming an Animagus?" she asked. "Why?" she continued when Harry nodded

"Erm, I just thought it would be cool," Harry answered lamely. McGonagall looked disapproving.

"Becoming an Animagus requires intense preparation and focus; it is not something you can take on lightly just because you think it's cool," the woman said sternly, and Harry knew he'd have to tell her the truth somewhat.

"I have a friend, who, well, they're going through something tough, and I've heard that animal companionship helps," he told her, and this time the Professor's interest was raised.

"Why not provide a pet?" she questioned, and Harry raised his eyes to meet hers at last.

"I wanted to show them that they aren't alone, and getting a pet is too impersonal. An animal with a human brain would be a lot more beneficial I think," he explained, trying not to show his surprise when McGonagall nodded.

"Very well, but I must stress you must be prepared for the emotional and physical strain this will have on you for a lengthy time period."

"I can handle it," Harry assured, and McGonagall nodded again.

"We shall meet from tomorrow at eight pm in my office, every week night. Do not over-exert yourself before our meetings or you could end up in the Hospital Wing," the woman told him warningly.

Harry nodded in agreement, and left to go and find Luna as he hadn't spoken to her for a while.

Finding her was much easier now he had the Marauder's Map, so he made his way quickly down to the Forbidden Forest where she was by herself.

He fought his way through the thick tree branches, ignoring the squelching of the mud beneath his feet.

He eventually managed to reach Luna, who was standing near a herd of skeletal horse-like creatures with large wings. They seemed a bit like something from a Muggle horror movie, but Harry supposed they were cute in their own way.

"Hello, Harry," Luna greeted, throwing something to the creature which ate it greedily from the ground.

"Hi, what are these creatures?" he asked, smiling as a foal appeared nervously from behind an adult's legs.

"They're called Thestrals," Luna told him, "I did wonder when you'd be able to see them."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked, gently caressing the foal's head as it pushed underneath his
hand. It was a strange, leathery type feel.

"They pull the carriages to Hogwarts, but most people think they pull themselves; they're wrong though. Only those who have seen death can see them," Luna explained, throwing an apple to the foal.

"But I saw-I mean I saw Sirius," he winced inwardly at the name, "die months ago. How come I couldn't see them before?"

"You have to accept the death first," the girl told him, taking hold of Harry's hand. "I could tell for a long time you were still in the first stages of acceptance; you seem different now."

"I-I went inside the Veil," Harry said, and Luna nodded as if to say she already knew. "I met Sirius in there; he told me he was at peace, and he wanted me to move on."

"That's good," Luna mused, smiling brightly. She cast her eyes up towards the treetops, peaking through at the patches of visible sky.

A twig breaking caught both their attentions, and they were able to catch a blur of a blond head stalking past, the figure muttering to itself.

"Draco?" Harry called out, chasing after the figure, with Luna right behind him.

He pushed through the trees, the view taking him aback.

Draco was standing beneath a tree, a thick rope tossed around a branch, falling down into a noose.

"What on Earth are you doing?" Harry found himself shouting in a panic, causing birds and other winged creatures to go flying from their branches.

The Slytherin turned to look at them, and the look of complete despair and desperation on the boy's face almost made Harry break down.

"Let me do this," he said dangerously, scowling as Harry and Luna both pulled their wands out.

"There's no point anymore; everything I had in life has been taken away from me."

"You have plenty to live for," Harry tried to re-assure, but Draco shook his head violently, grabbing the rope with one hand. Harry knew he could Stupefy the boy, but he'd rather Draco choose not to kill himself rather than being forced not to.

"Nott's father told him all about me, you know?" Draco sobbed. "And now all of my friends despise me. Even Crabbe and Goyle were disgusted with me; Crabbe and Goyle of all people! They told me they would keep my secret as long as they didn't have to be anywhere near me."

"Well they're idiotic bigots," Harry affirmed, looking at Luna for support.

"I think being a werewolf makes you more interesting," the girl agreed, smiling sweetly at Draco. "You are one of the lucky ones who gets to communicate with the Moon."

"What about Blaise and Pansy?" Harry asked, and Draco shrugged.

"Blaise stayed quiet, but that's how Blaise is, and I've not seen Pansy; I'm sure she'll agree with the others."

"You don't know that," Harry pointed out. He noticed Draco had dropped the rope; a significant gesture he supposed.
As if to prove his point, Pansy appeared from the trees, stumbling over roots as she hurried. Blaise was close behind her.

"What do you think you're doing Draco? Are you out of your mind?" Pansy screeched, drawing her wand as well.

"I think that much is obvious, Pansy," Blaise added, eyeing the rope with distaste.

"Of course I have; I don't even have a human mind anymore," Draco cried. He tugged at the rope, causing the thick branch to come crashing to the floor with a clean snap. "You see?" he sounded strangled as he spoke. "It's no surprise everyone has kicked me out for being a monster when they're right."

"You're not a monster," Harry said for what felt like the hundredth time in two days. "Yes, you turn into a wolf at the full moon; so what? You're human the rest of the time, and I told you before, with the Wolfsbane you can keep your human mind even when you're in the wolf's body. If anything you're better than other people because you have extra strength and stronger senses."

"Exactly, so stop being a drama queen and come with us back to the castle," Blaise added, his annoyed tone coming through. "I told the others they were being unacceptable and that werewolf or not, you are still a Malfoy. I may have used some, er, persuasion, but they agreed to allow you to sleep in our dorm."

"Why? I can understand these two not caring," Draco asked, pointing at Luna and Harry, "but I thought you'd have more common sense than to associate with someone like me."

"For the love of Salazar, Draco, we've been friends since we were infants," Pansy sighed, sending a Severing Charm at the rope. "I'm not about to let you kill yourself over some stupid breakdown you're having. No, I don't particularly want to be around you at the full moon, or even hear anything about it, but that doesn't mean I want you dead. Now quit being stupid and get yourself back inside."

With that said, Pansy stormed off, angrily batting branches out of her way.

"Believe it or not," Blaise started, staring after the girl, "she's really upset about what happened to you. She said she hoped we were playing a prank on her, and she's furious at the Dark Lord."

"Why's she so angry then?" Draco questioned, and Blaise looked at the blond sadly.

"She heard Daphne and Astoria saying they didn't want to be anywhere near you, and Pansy broke up with Daphne on the spot."

"And you thought everyone would hate you," Harry stated, moving over to stand beside Draco again. He was trembling once more, and his eyes were glowing bright yellow. "I told you, the people who really care about you won't let this affect them in the long run. Of course, if they already hold the prejudice it might be hard for them to get over, but they'll get over it. Anyone who doesn't is of no importance to you."

Draco nodded, and then laughed coldly, staring down at the broken rope.

"Draco, will you come for a walk with me?" Luna asked gently, and to Harry's surprise the Slytherin nodded, and even took hold of Luna's hand when she offered it.

Harry and Blaise watched as they took off into the forest, both of them with a slight smile on their faces.
"You're far better to him than we are," Blaise stated, and Harry looked at him in confusion. "Pansy and I think his Lycanthropy is horrific; he may as well be a Mudblood, but he doesn't need to know that as long as it keeps him happy. We'll act as normal so he doesn't do anything drastic. You and Lovegood actually seem to genuinely not care what he is."

"Of course we don't," Harry tutted, and Blaise rolled his eyes.

"On Hallowe'en Mother is having a ball at our Manor. I shall issue you and Lovegood with an invite."

"Err, okay, thanks," Harry muttered awkwardly and Blaise rolled his eyes.

"Perhaps one day you'll actually be articulate," the boy drawled. His nose wrinkled in disgust. "I'm leaving this place now; I swear I'll end up smelling like Hagrid if I don't get out now. Are you coming?"

Harry nodded and followed Blaise from the forest.

"How did you know Draco was here?" he asked, struggling to keep up with the boy's strides. Zabini was much taller than Harry and the Slytherin clearly didn't care if Harry couldn't match him.

"We saw him running off in the direction of it; that was our first sign something was wrong because Malfoy never runs," Blaise stated, pulling out a bottle and spraying the pair once they had left the trees. "Merlin it's awful," he cried, spraying frantically.

"It's only outdoors," Harry muttered and Zabini scoffed.

"Well we have no need for the outdoors other than travelling; why bother getting dirty when we can have everything we need indoors?" he complained, itching his head. "Draco better appreciate what I did for him. I'll see you around."

Harry rolled his eyes, waving off Blaise as he went, before making his own way back to the castle.

X

The next evening at eight, Harry stood outside McGonagall's office waiting for her to answer the door.

"Hello, Potter," she said once she opened it. The woman gestured for him to come inside. "I will warn you now that for the first few lessons you shall not be doing much at all; you first need to work on meditation and focusing your magical core."

It sounded a bit like when Tom taught Harry Occlumency, trying to shut off the mind, although with a bit extra work on magical focus.

"That sounds okay, I've meditated before," he voiced out loud, and McGonagall looked pleased.

"Good, but I assure you this will be hard work, despite how much practice you've had in the past," she warned, indicating for Harry to take a seat. "You need to close your eyes and shut your mind off. Once you've done that, you must focus on your magical core. The idea is to feel the magic in your veins, as the transformation can only work if you are aware of how your core works."

Harry shut his eyes, and easily cleared his mind; that part was easy. Focusing on his magical core was another story altogether. It took him around half an hour to feel something stronger, and as he
did his eyes jerked open at the unexpected feeling.

"I think I finally got it," he said sheepishly, trying not to go red as McGonagall looked at him sternly.

"Very good, but this time try to keep your mind shut when you reach it," she scolded. "You shall likely reach it sooner this time, so have one more try; I shan't be sending my own students to Madame Pomphrey for exhaustion."

Harry shut his eyes again and cleared his mind. He tried to imagine his own body from the inside, and feel the magic inside him. It was much sooner he felt the strange bubbling of magic inside him, but rather than jolting him alert again, he tried to focus on how the magic went around him.

His eyes flew open when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"You were working much too hard there; you were ready to collapse," Minerva told him, but she looked please. "You are performing beyond the expected rate for a first time, but I suppose if you are already adept at clearing your mind you have saved time on the first step. I shall see you tomorrow, Potter."

Harry could have sworn he saw her smile as he left.

He was ready for smiling himself; despite feeling drained from searching his core, he felt excited that he was apparently on track. He had heard how his dad and Sirius had become Animagi to help Remus when they had discovered he was a werewolf, which was where he had gotten the idea from. He knew Draco would like to have company while he was a wolf, plus it was always something he had wanted to do, but never really had a reason to do before.

He was feeling quite content with things until a chill ran through him.

The corridor he was in was deserted, but Harry didn't feel alone. He shook his head to rid himself of those thoughts; Hogwarts was full of ghosts and hidden things, of course there was some other entity than him around.

But dread seemed to fill him as he moved forward, each footstep feeling like lead as he got closer to the next corridor.

He jumped when he saw a face at the window; wait, no, there was no way that could have been a face; they were on the seventh floor for goodness sake.

Mustering up all the courage he hadn't realised he needed, he turned the corner and stopped dead in his tracks.

His eyes widened and he heard a faraway scream; it must have been his.

The last thing he saw before he fainted was the dangling corpse of Fenrir Greyback, and gleaming red words on the wall behind him.

'I'm your servant, my immortal.'

X

Chapter End Notes
Okay, so last line there is from the song 'Horror of our Love' which is by Ludo, not me.

Oh, and what type of animal do you think Harry should be in his Animagus form? I'm after a normal animal that suits his personality. I can't be doing with magical creatures and rare and powerful things that I see so much; I just want a normal animal that is at least a little bit cute.
Chapter Notes

What a lot of you have been waiting for is finally here. So warning for a lemon at the end of this chapter.

**X**

Harry snapped his eyes open and shot up with a start. His heart was thumping heavily in his chest, and he was aware of people around him.

"Are you okay? What happened?" he heard somebody ask; Slughorn.

Greyback was covered up by a shimmery black mist that Harry presumed Dumbledore had put up.

The headmaster, Slughorn, McGonagall and Snape were the teachers who had come to his aid; McGonagall must have heard him shout considering she was nearest, and then gathered the others.

"Harry?" Slughorn said gently, placing a hand on Harry's shoulder. The others had turned to look at him as well.

"I was just walking and I saw him," he answered softly, trying to blink out the image of the bloodied corpse from his mind.

Harry was suddenly all too aware that his fingers were shaking uncontrollably and his head was starting to spin. It wasn't that he was upset about Greyback's death; far from it, but the sight of the body and the mangled state it was in was incredibly disturbing.

"I just don't understand Albus," McGonagall told Dumbledore, glancing at Harry with concern. "Why here of all places? He was basically a Death Eater, and no matter how hated he was, no Order member, or any one on the Light side for that matter, would do this to a man and leave him in a school. And surely no Death Eater could get him here either."

"Greyback was a big asset to the Dark Lord," Snape commented, his eyes not leaving Harry. "They had no reason to kill him, but like Minerva said, no Light wizard would be capable of this."

"Moody and Tonks will be here soon, we'll discuss it with them," McGonagall stated, throwing another glance at Harry as if she didn't want him to hear too much.

There was a rustling of robes and then Snape was handing him a vial.

"It's a Calming Drought," the man said, and Harry could feel his presence in his mind and after a few moments he seemed satisfied Harry hadn't had anything to do with the murder. Harry drank the potion gratefully and almost instantly he felt a comforting warmth rush over him, and the shaking started to stop. He had to admit Snape was a very good Potions maker, even if he was a jerk at times.

"Do you have any idea what the message could mean, Harry?" Dumbledore asked gently, and each pair of eyes flickered over to the abstract message on the wall.
Harry shook his head.

"Very well," the old man continued, "we can pass on what you know to the Aurors; you should go and get some rest. I recommend it would be wise to keep this to yourself, unless there is anyone in particular you think should know."

The look on Dumbledore's face, though seemingly innocent, told Harry that he knew exactly what had happened between Greyback and Draco. Whether he heard the rumours from Slytherins, used Legilimency on Harry or just saw the signs on Malfoy, he did not know. Harry was just glad Dumbledore had no prejudice against werewolves and wasn't going to kick the Slytherin out of the school.

Harry cast one more look at the dripping red words, determinedly avoiding looking at the shimmering cover, before leaving as fast as he could.

He was thankful that the Calming Draught worked as a Sleeping Potion too, and he managed to get through the night with no nightmares of what he had seen.

X

Harry was desperate to tell Draco what had happened, but he hadn't got a chance to speak to him all day. Harry and Heather had received another letter from home saying Dudley's funeral was on Thursday and their parents wanted them to go, so he would prefer to talk to Malfoy as soon as he could. The blond seemed to have vanished from the Great Hall at breakfast, lunch and dinner, however, and he came late to the classes that they shared and ran off as soon as it ended.

The boy was definitely keeping to himself; normally he was flanked by Crabbe and Goyle in the few classes they had managed to get accepted to, and otherwise Blaise and Pansy would accompany him at the very least, but the other Slytherins were all huddled together away from Draco, throwing glances at him every so often. They were at least good enough to not tell anybody else what they knew.

The Marauder's Map told Harry that Malfoy was in the Room of Hidden Things, presumably working on the Cabinet. Luna was with him too; he didn't feel offended at that; it was highly likely Luna found Draco rather than the other way round.

He made his way to the room, making sure the coast was clear before he went inside.

Draco and Luna both looked up when they heard him come in; Luna was lying on her stomach, poking at the Cabinet with her wand, while Draco looked on, resting his chin in the palm of his hands.

"How's it coming on?" Harry asked, pointing at the Vanishing Cabinet.

"Luna thinks she's onto something," Draco said, jerking his head at her. "I'm not sure what though."

He rubbed at his bite mark gingerly.

"How is it today?" Harry questioned, not distracted by Luna's 'oo'ing and 'ahh'ing as she examined the Cabinet.

"It doesn't hurt much, but my arm is useless at the moment," Draco scowled, clenching his fingers.

"So, did you hear what happened last night?" Harry asked slowly, tracing his fingers along random knick-knacks that were piled up. None of them felt like they held Horcruxes, fortunately.
Draco shook his head, and Luna stopped what she was doing to look at Harry expectantly.

"Greyback was killed," he admitted, and Malfoy was suddenly attentive. Even Luna looked surprised.

"What do you mean he was killed?" Draco hissed, making Harry roll his eyes.

"Exactly what it sounds like. I was walking down a corridor to go back to my dorm, and he was strung up; looked pretty gory," Harry told them, and Luna looked thoughtful. Draco, on the other hand, looked like he was ready to dance around the room had his Pure-blood upbringing not been engrained into him.

"Dumbledore seemed pretty sure it was nothing to do with his people," Harry added with a shrug as Luna turned her attention back onto the Cabinet. "But apparently he didn't do anything to annoy Voldemort." He ignored Draco's flinch.

"Could it be—you know?" Draco asked cautiously, and Harry shrugged again. Truth be told, one of his first thoughts was that Marvolo was involved, but he couldn't have said anything in front of Dumbledore or else he'd have to reveal everything to explain how he knew. He just couldn't understand how anyone other than one of Dumbledore's supporters could get into the school though; even Draco hadn't worked it out for the Death Eaters yet.

"I think I've found something," Luna stated, bringing the boy's focus to her. "It's the magic on the inside that's broken; you won't be able to tell just by looking at it."

"How can you tell then?" Draco asked, standing beside Luna and staring down at the Cabinet. He hesitated for a moment before dropping to his knees to look. Harry followed suit.

"I can feel it on the inside," Luna explained, taking hold of Draco's hands and placing it on the bottom of the cabinet. "Focus on the magic and you'll be able to feel it isn't working properly."

Draco pulled away after a minute and nodded.

"You have a try too, Harry," Luna sang, taking Harry's hand and putting it where Draco's had been.

He focused on the magic of the Cabinet, and a strange, somewhat warm feeling started to emanate from it. It kept on stopping however, and sometimes pulsed stronger or weaker.

"How do we fix it then?" Draco said, standing up again and opening the door of the object.

"You'll have to look at the inside and go from there, I guess," Harry offered, looking at Luna who nodded in agreement.

"You would have found out soon enough, even without us," Luna told Draco seriously. "People normally don't tend to look beyond what they can see until they have to."

X

There was no mention of Greyback over the week, and Draco had immersed himself into fixing the Vanishing Cabinet using Luna's advice. Her and Harry would sit with him while he worked; Harry took it upon himself to do Draco's Ancient Runes work and Transfiguration, while Luna decided to do his Charms work for him, singing as she did so.

His Animagus lessons had been going successfully, apparently. He didn't think he had made any progress but McGonagall seemed pleased with him. It was rather fascinating focusing on inner
magic; he was starting to feel the streams of his magic throughout his body, but to successfully transform he needed to be confident in every single strand so he could manipulate them all at the same time, otherwise there could be disastrous effects. With each lesson he felt more and more, but there were multitudes of magical streams in a wizard's body. McGonagall also now insisted on walking him back to Gryffindor Tower after lessons.

It was Thursday now, however, and he and Heather had been excused from lessons so they could attend Dudley's funeral. After checking with his parents, Harry had asked Luna to accompany him and she had agreed much to Heather's displeasure, worsened by the fact she wasn't allowed to bring anyone.

Harry, Heather, Luna and James had stood together in silence throughout the ceremony, while Lily comforted her sister. Harry's Uncle Vernon had put his hatred of them aside for the time being, while his own sister, who was called Marge if Harry remembered correctly, stood by him.

After the service had ended, there was a reception in the community hall. Petunia and Vernon had chosen to keep the funeral low-key and aimed at family and close friends, but the reception was open for those who wanted to say goodbye to Dudley, even if they hadn't been especially close.

A lot of school boys had turned up, and teachers too. Somebody was telling everyone that the Potters were family members so a number of strangers were coming to them to offer their condolences.

An old lady was making her way towards them now, looking unsuitably smiley considering she was at a funeral reception.

"Ah, Arabella; lovely to see you," James greeted the woman, who smiled. "This is Mrs Figg," he explained to the teenagers. "She's a friend of ours."

"How you holding up, James?" Mrs Figg asked, taking hold of the man's hands.

"After all the funerals I've had to attend in my time, I'm used to all of this now," James said, running a hand through his hair.

"I'm sorry I couldn't be there for Sirius'," Arabella said sadly. James looked strangled.

"It's okay," he said gently after he composed himself. "Would you like to say hello to Lily?"

The woman nodded and the adults walked off, leaving the three students together.

"Who was she?" Heather wondered aloud. "I've never seen her around."

"She's a Squib," Luna answered. "I don't think they like being too close to the Magical World. It must be horrid knowing about it all and not being able to do any of it."

"How can you tell she's a Squib?" Heather questioned, looking at Luna incredulously.

"You can tell if you pay enough attention," the blonde told her, smiling.

"Right, well I'm going to go get a drink, Harry. If Mum actually comes to talk to you instead of ignoring us like she's done all day, tell her I want to go home now," Heather stated, huffing after she spoke. She stalked off hurriedly, darting around Luna as if she was poisonous.

"Hello," a boy greeted. He was tall and slim, with straggly blond hair. He looked a combination between Luna and Draco.
Harry gave the boy a small smile before turning to look at the floor and mess with the buttons on his coat.

A quick glance up told him the boy was smirking.

"Hello, Tom. I didn't expect to see you here," Luna said to the strange boy; making Harry whip his head up.

"I'm glad to see my disguise fooled you, Harry," the boy; Tom, said with amusement.

"Why are you at a Muggle gathering in disguise?" Harry asked quietly, though he probably didn't need to be; though dressed all in black, Luna's dress was unusual with it's extreme poof, dangling beads and excess of lace; people seemed to want to avoid her.

"I don't want Slytherin trying anything on you," Tom told him, patting his wand in his pocket. "I shall be glad to be rid of this disguise though; it's sickening to even have the body of a Muggle. You do owe me greatly for this."

"Fine, but, err, did you hear about Greyback?" Harry asked, and Tom's eyes narrowed.

"Greyback has been missing for days, but we've had no knowledge of him since his disappearance. Has Dumbledore done something to him?"

"I don't think so, no. But Greyback's dead. I found his body in a corridor at Hogwarts," Harry explained, heart sinking as he realised the evidence for Marvolo committing the crime was increasing. "There was a message too, on the walls. It said 'I'm your servant, my immortal.' I don't know what that can mean."

Tom answered his mouth to say something, but he shut it as James re-appeared.

"Harry, Luna; are you okay? Who are you?" he said, turning to Tom suspiciously.

"My name's Derek Reid, sir," Tom said, holding his hand out to shake James'. "I'm sorry about your nephew. I went to school with Dudley; I was a couple of years older than he was, but I remember him well enough. It's been a terrible shock; we're such a small school that our community is very close, and we've never had anything so tragic happen. I can't believe how cruel somebody has to be to murder a young boy with his whole life ahead of him." Here Tom wiped his bone-dry eyes. James bought it all completely though.

"There are some sick people in this world," James growled, but his expression softened as he watched Tom supposedly trying to keep his tears in. "It's okay to cry sometimes; it doesn't make you any less of a man."

"Thank you, Sir," Tom said shyly. "Boys school culture, you know?"

James nodded. "Well, Harry, we're going to be getting off soon. Give us about ten more minutes? Good, I need to go find your sister."

Harry nodded and James went off to find Heather.

"I can't believe you just played my dad," he told Tom, who was now smirking once more, all signs of the pretend sadness wiped off his face.

"He's not exactly difficult to fool," the older boy stated. His eyes narrowed. "I believe your friend has just arrived."
"What? Where?" Harry said, whipping his head around in each direction.

"By the door," Luna pointed out, as a hooded figure walked into the room.

The form stopped and surveyed the room, until glowing red eyes landed on them.

Tom shifted to stand in front of Harry, dropping his glamour and drawing his own hood up, while the younger threw his hands out frantically so Luna would get the hint to move.

Marvolo walked towards them as Tom drew his wand, shifting it up his sleeve as to not draw any Muggle's attention. Not that Tom would mind harming Muggles, Harry thought, but for his own protection.

"Hello Harry Potter," Marvolo greeted when he reached them, both his hands in the air as a gesture of greeting and showing he was unarmed, though that was almost certainly not the case. "And Tom; a pleasure to meet you at last."

"I'm afraid I can't say the same to you; I don't like people to touch what is mine," Tom snarled.

"There's no need to be possessive; we're one in the same after all," Marvolo said, smiling darkly. "Did you like the gift I sent you, Harry? Wasn't it just so nasty of them to infect your friend like that? Killing Greyback was meant to be a nice gesture, and you never even sent me a thank you note."

"You didn't kill him; you mutated him," Harry spat, thrusting a hand to clutch at Tom's robes for support.

"I ought to do the same to you for going anywhere near Harry," Tom said dangerously, eyes starting to glow.

"But why kill me when I can help you kill Voldemort? Besides, I don't want to kill you, otherwise little Harry there would be a wreck, and I don't find it very enjoyable forcing myself upon someone who is already a wreck. Plus I'd have to kill him before you'd die anyway, which defeats the point. It would suit me much better to share, you see, but if you disagree I'll have to win him over myself. It's not like you can be rid of me either; I have my own Horcrux now after all; I just had to come and say thank you to the very considerate Dudley."

Tom growled warningly, holding his ground. "I do not share, so allow yourself a respectable defeat, without longing for something you cannot have."

"Harry? Are you ready to go now?" Heather's voice came through, and Harry saw Marvolo's eyes light up as his sister came into view. He had ignored Luna, who was stood on the side with her hand by her wand, but he was all too interested in Heather.

Harry jumped at her just as Marvolo reached his wand, and he managed to pull her to the floor as a green light flew above their heads.

"What the-?" Heather started, but a flash of blue and red stopped her as Tom and Marvolo both fired at each other; ironically enough neither of them casting the Killing Curse.

James and Lily were beside them in an instant, and Luna too.

Tom and Marvolo were not visible amongst the flashes, but that didn't stop James trying to aim at whoever he could hit.
A spell aimed at the roof sent part of it crashing down onto the mass of Muggles below, which was when the panic started.

Lily grasped Harry's and Heather's wrist, and James took Luna's, before Disapparating back to the Potter residence.

"Both of you; upstairs – now!" Lily shouted at her children, and she turned to Luna. "Stay with them, Luna. We'll be back soon."

Lily and James Apparated out again, and Heather started to cry softly.

"Will they be okay?" she sobbed, biting her nails; a habit she had kicked years ago.

"They'll be fine," Harry said gently, trying to convince himself of the same.

"You saved my life," Heather stated, turning to Harry as her tears started to fall heavier. She leapt at Harry, wrapping her arms around his neck.

Harry held onto her tightly, unable to stop his own tears from falling, as he held onto hope for both his parents and for Tom.

X

The Potters had returned home safely, though when they had arrived back at the reception, even though they had been gone only a few moments, another mass of Muggles had been killed, but the two men responsible were both gone.

Harry had received a note from Tom telling him that both he and Marvolo had escaped relatively unscathed, much to Tom's displeasure, but he would tell him more at the weekend at Malfoy Manor.

Lily hadn't wanted Harry and Heather to return to Hogwarts, and she had also spent an hour apologising tearfully to Luna about what had happened, and even insisted on calling her dad round to apologise to him too. She hadn't stopped even when Xenophilius had told her she had no reason to blame herself and she couldn't have overseen what would happen.

Marge Dursley had been one of the thirty killed at the reception, and Vernon was in hospital with serious injuries. Petunia had completely turned on Lily this time, which had shook the woman up even more. She didn't even protest when after an hour or two of twitching, James returned to his alcohol cabinet for the first time in weeks.

Heather had fallen asleep curled against Harry that night, while Luna sat beside the pair, stroking Harry's hair as he sobbed into his sister's.

They had insisted on returning to school on the Saturday afternoon, as a compromise to their mother, and of course the first thing Harry did upon his return was find Draco so he could see Tom. This proved difficult however, as Heather had becoming increasingly clingy.

"You'll be fine, Heather. Nobody is going to hurt you here," he tried to tell the girl, but she refused to listen.

"There are rumours that a body was found here the other day," she admitted tearfully. "What if they aren't telling us just so there's no panic?"

"I doubt that's true," Harry lied. "Remember in my second year? They nearly shut the school down
just because students were being petrified. I'm sure if anyone was murdered they wouldn't waste
time." Harry felt a twinge of guilt remembering it was his fault those children had been petrified in
the first place. "How about you go and talk to Seamus, or one of your friends?"

"They won't listen," Heather muttered. "They never do if it's anything important; I wish I could
have a friend like you have Luna." Harry didn't bother to correct her.

When he finally managed to get rid of Heather, by sending her to Snape's office, he rushed down to
meet Draco, who was talking in hushed tones with the man himself.

"What are you doing down here?" the man snarled as he eyed Harry.

"I came to see Draco," he answered truthfully, and the man's eyes narrowed.

"Why?" he questioned, and Harry and Draco both rolled their eyes.

"He's my friend," Draco answered, taking both Harry and Snape aback. "I didn't realise it was
wrong for me to befriend somebody who isn't in Slytherin."

"It isn't. Dumbledore would be most supportive in fact," Severus replied. The way he hesitated
before he said Dumbledore, and the tone he said it in made Harry wonder if Snape knew what
was planned for the old man.

"Good for him," Draco muttered, keeping his eyes downcast.

"Professor, Heather needs to talk to you," Harry told Snape so he'd leave. "She's still shaken by
what happened Thursday."

Snape nodded, a look of concern crossing his face, and walked off, robes billowing around him as
he walked as quick as he could without running.

Harry looked at Draco questionably.

"It doesn't matter," Draco told him with a shrug. "He's sticking his nose where it doesn't belong,
but I'm not telling him anything."

"So, err, you really class me as a friend?" Harry asked, half mockingly, half worried Draco would
take it back. It seemed to hurt him considering Draco might have lied.

"The sad thing is, you're probably my best friend at the moment, and you irritate me at the best of
times," Malfoy answered. Harry didn't know whether to be offended or feel complimented. "Shall
we go? Snape almost made us late, although I don't think the Dark Lord can throw anything worse
at me than he already has."

They Portkeyed to the Manor, where this time Narcissa wasn't waiting for them as she normally
did. Harry saw Draco's face fall as he realised the same thing, but he masked it soon after. Harry
gave him a sympathetic smile, and they made their way to the normal meeting room. Tom wasn't
there, leaving Harry and Draco on their own with Voldemort, and that seemed terrifying. Harry
instinctively marked any possible exits from the room; the only two being the door and the
window.

"Ah, Draco," Voldemort greeted coldly. "How are you adjusting into your new lifestyle?"

The question was entirely mocking, with no genuine concern or empathy. The Dark Lord was
smiling cruelly, and Harry felt Malfoy shiver.
"I am managing, my Lord," Draco answered, bowing his head.

"Nott was punished for revealing your new condition to his son, after I requested for my Death Eaters to keep the knowledge to themselves, but at least those poor children know what monster they have to live with now," Voldemort continued, his eyes not leaving Draco.

Clearly the man didn't care about teenagers having to share a room with a werewolf; his main goal was clearly to mock and anger Draco, and it was working. The blond was shaking with rage, his face contorted as he tried not to show it on his face.

Harry placed a hand on his shoulder gently to try and bring him back to reality, but it didn't seem to work, as the Slytherin shook him off violently, clenching his fists as he glared at the Dark wizard.

Voldemort smiled; a horrifying sight.

"We found out how to fix the Cabinet," Harry said quickly, before Draco could say or do anything he'd regret. "And Draco has a good method to kill Dumbledore without raising any attention."

"Is that so?" Voldemort asked, turning to face Harry with sadistic interest, before looking at Draco again. "Pity you needed a whore to help you achieve anything worthwhile. Now leave my sight; you're both disgraces."

The boys didn't need to be told twice as they hurried from the room. Harry was seething over being called a whore; he was a virgin, for crying out loud. Draco was clearly affected by Voldemort's words too; it was awful that the Dark Lord didn't even need a wand to hurt people. The sooner Tom could be rid of him the better.

Draco stayed silent until they reached his room, where he slammed the door shut, and Harry could hear him smashing things up inside.

Now he was alone, he quickly made his way to Tom's room, where the man was waiting outside for him.

He eyed Harry critically as he met him.

"He didn't curse you then, I see," Tom stated as he looked Harry over, before gesturing for him to go inside.

"No, he just mocked Draco for being bitten and called me a whore," Harry explained, sitting down on the bed in a huff.

"Why does it bother you being called a whore?" Tom questioned, sitting on his knees in front of Harry. He folded his arms across Harry's lap and rested his head on them, and Harry's stomach fluttered at the sight.

"It just makes me feel, I don't know," he answered with a shrug.

"Trust me, my dear, if you were simply a whore to me I'd have bent you over and had my way with you long ago, then thrown you into the cold afterwards," Tom murmured, looking up at Harry through thick lashes. Harry was sure Tom must be able to hear his heart thumping.

"Oh, what happened with you and Marvolo? My parents said you'd both disappeared and they were only gone a minute," Harry asked, making Tom smirk. He pushed himself up and sat beside Harry on the bed.
"With the state the building was in we'd have likely been crushed ourselves so we made a mutual decision to Apparate out and away for the time being," Tom told him, placing his hand over Harry's.

"Thirty people died," Harry muttered. That was just a small duel between two wizards; a full blown war would see casualties far higher than that.

"They are only Muggles," Tom said dismissively, ignoring Harry's scowl.

"What's going to happen with Marvolo?" Harry pressed on, putting Tom's comment aside. "I don't want to be with him; I don't want to be shared either. What if he keeps sending me mutilated corpses?" Admitting his worries about Slytherin hadn't cleared his spirits as much as he hoped it would.

"Do you really believe I would allow him to get his hands on you?" the older boy asked with slight amusement, tracing circles on the top of Harry's hand. "You can accept the corpses to show you your foolishness in bringing him back, but he shan't ever touch you."

Harry nodded slightly, leaning to rest against Tom's side. Tom wrapped an arm around Harry's shoulder to bring him closer. Tom's fingers were dancing across Harry's skin, even through the fabric of his clothing, and if Harry were a cat he'd be purring.

Without a word of warning, Tom had pushed Harry down onto the bed, clambering over him to rest with his legs either side of Harry's hips, before crushing their lips together in a possessive kiss. Once again, Tom took all the control, fighting off every attempt made by Harry to gain even just a bit of dominance.

Tom left his assault on Harry's lips and trailed his mouth downwards to Harry's neck. Harry found himself instinctively pushing upwards to thrust against Tom as he sucked on a particularly sensitive bit. Noticing Harry's reaction, Tom bit down on the spot, making Harry tug hard at Tom's hair which he had grabbed hold of.

One of Tom's hands had travelled underneath his shirt, and he was trailing the cold fingers up and down his torso.

"You are so much more to me than a common whore," Tom whispered against his lips. "You are mine entirely. I want to explore every part of you; I want to know you from the inside out. Will you let me, darling? Let me be inside you."

Harry knew he wanted to. It would be impossible to say no to Tom when he was making Harry feel so good using just his fingers and tongue, and despite the desperation he felt to feel Tom even closer, he could still feel nerves attacking him at the very back of his mind.

"I've not been with anyone before," Harry admitted quietly. "What if-?"

Tom hushed him. "That makes you perfect," he countered, brushing Harry's hair away from his face with his free hand, gently resting it. "I want your innocence; nobody else will ever get a chance to. I will be the only person who knows you this way. You're ready for me."

Harry nodded, and Tom needed no further confirmation.

Tom moved both his hands under Harry's shirt, lifting the fabric upwards. Harry shifted to allow Tom to pull the material away, tossing it to the floor. Tom's lips instantly worked their way down to his bare chest.
Harry threaded his hands through Tom’s hair as he nipped at the skin lightly. He cried out when Tom took a nipple into his mouth and bit down hard, then sucked at the swollen nub. He repeated the process on the other side, using his fingers to toy.

Tom returned his attention to his neck as he reached his hands down to push Harry’s trousers away. A hand slipped beneath his boxers, taking his achingly hard cock into a cold grip. Tom growled warningly whenever Harry tried to move his hands away from Tom’s hair, so he was left open to Tom’s ruthless assault.

Tom grabbed his wand and removed Harry’s remaining clothes with a simple spell, the man seemingly losing patience.

He caught Harry’s lips in a vicious kiss as a finger circled his entrance. He sucked Harry’s tongue into his mouth, swallowing his whimper as he bit down on the muscle at the same time as he pushed a lubed finger inside him.

One of Harry’s hands fell from Tom’s head to clutch at his back as another finger pushed inside him, scissoring with the other one to stretch him open.

“You can take one more for me, can’t you, dear?” Tom panted, pushing another digit inside before Harry could answer. The Gryffindor bit down on his lip as he was fucked mercilessly by Tom’s fingers.

He groaned as the fingers left him, leaving him feeling empty.

Tom shifted above him, using his hands to lift Harry’s legs to wrap loosely around his waist.

Harry stiffened slightly as he heard Tom push down his own trousers, allowing the now free erection to press against his hole.

Tom pressed forwards, and Harry couldn’t help but wince as he felt the burn from being stretched. He shut his eyes, feeling wetness behind his eyelids as Tom pushed himself in more; he had expected pain but that didn’t make it hurt any less. He could feel a pleasant warmth in his veins, but the pain was overriding that for the time being.

“Open your eyes,” Tom ordered, pushing in a bit more. “Let me see those pretty emeralds.”

Harry reluctantly opened an eye, then the other. He felt a tear fall from his eyes as Tom pushed in all the way. The man paused for a moment, a look of intense bliss on his face; his eyes had fallen shut and Harry thought he looked like nothing less than Adonis.

Tom pulled out and thrust back in roughly, making Harry cry out as more tears unwillingly fell.

“It won’t hurt for long, my innocent,” Tom said soothingly, kissing his cheeks.

Tom started to thrust in rhythm, kissing away the tears which were falling less as Harry started to become accustomed to the pain.

Tom was being rough, Harry could tell, and each thrust brought a new wave of a burning pain, though each time it became more bearable.

Then Tom hit that special spot inside of him, making Harry cry out as Tom rotated his hips, causing jolts of pleasure to go coursing through him.

Harry crossed his legs over at the small of Tom’s back, drawing him in deeper as he clawed at his
back with each thrust and hit on his prostate. Tom’s hands were gripping his hips hard enough to bruise, and Tom’s zip was scratching against his thigh as Tom moved with vigour.

Tom reached a hand between them to grip Harry’s cock, stroking him in time with each push inside him. He started to bite at Harry’s neck, bruising him and marking him as his.

“You fit me perfectly,” Tom hissed in his ear, biting down on the lobe. “Your body is going to be shaped for me, so whenever I want you, you’ll be ready for me.”

It didn’t take long for Harry to come as Tom made sure to hit all his special spots, and he released over Tom’s fingers with a cry. Tom finished not long after, biting down on Harry’s collar bone as he flooded Harry’s insides with his seed.

Warmth seemed to travel throughout his body, sending a new wave of pleasure through him as Tom filled him, and even Tom seemed shocked by the feeling, shutting his eyes once more and biting down on his lip as he rode out his orgasm.

Tom remained inside him, and he kissed Harry deeply.

"You are my nightmare," Tom murmured against Harry's mouth. "You do things to me nobody has ever done before; you are the piece of me I didn't realise I as missing. You haunt me yet I crave for you, so. I can't understand what you're doing to me, but I don't want it to stop." Tom dropped his face into Harry's shoulder, as the boy stroked his thick hair. "You can't ever leave me; I won't let you. Please, stay my fallen angel."

X
Seventeen

Chapter Notes

This chapter is going to start off carrying on from the last scene of the previous chapter, but then I'm skipping forward a few weeks. It will be made obvious in the text too, but just to give you a pre-warning

Warning - there is some mild smut at the start of this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

X

Harry awoke in the morning wrapped in Tom's embrace, his head pressing against his chest with arms wrapped tightly around his back.

Harry was clothed now; he didn't remember re-dressing but he supposed everything else from that night was more vivid.

He shifted away from Tom's grip, wincing as he felt pain in his backside; Tom had been rough and his body had definitely felt it. He turned onto his back; Tom was already awake, and a book was hovering in the air just above Harry.

"Ah, you're awake," Tom commented, waving his hand and causing the book to fall with a slight thud. Harry sat up; taking in Tom's appearance which he realised was immaculate. Not a single strand of hair was out of place, he was wearing fresh clothes and his cologne smelt so good that Harry would be quite happy to bury his face in Tom's skin and breathe him in.

"Have you been awake long?" Harry asked, though he knew the answer already; looking that good took time.

"Quite a while, yes," Tom answered, taking hold of Harry's hand and pressing a kiss to the top of it. Harry felt his heart flutter.

"Come to think of it, I've never seen you sleep," Harry muttered sleepily, leaning against Tom's shoulder. He had had a good night's rest, but he had no objections to sleeping some more, as long as he had Tom to cuddle up to.

"I don't particularly enjoy sleeping; I never have done," Tom told him before smirking. "You, on the other hand, seem to sleep a lot of the time. Even now, after hours of rest, you'd be quite content to stay in bed all day."

"Well this bed is so comfy it makes Hogwarts beds feel like straw, and they're nice beds at Hogwarts," Harry pointed out, smiling to himself.

"Pity how we aren't staying here all day," Tom stated, pushing the covers away from him and climbing off the bed, before he cast a Freshening Spell over himself. Harry simply fell face forward into the soft sheets, and he breathed in deeply; he had no intention of leaving just yet. Tom wasn't too pleased with Harry's decision though, and a spell soon had Harry yanked from the bed and onto the floor.
Harry scowled as he stood up, shifting uncomfortably as he felt some pain again.

"It still hurts you know," Harry muttered, glaring at Tom when he smirked.

"Good," the older boy said looking all too pleased. His expression darkened with lust and he pulled Harry closer. "I want you to remember what I did to you. I want you to feel me until I have you again." He pushed Harry away gently, turning to the door. "The Dark Lord wants me; he was rather pleased believing that I alone killed those Muggles at your cousin's funeral."

"So he wants you to do it again," Harry added bitterly, biting down on his lip.

Tom turned to him with unreadable features. "Though I long to know everything about you, you are not required to feel the same. If you prefer to know nothing of my life as a Dark wizard, then I will strive to keep the information from you."

"I know what you do, even if you don't tell me. I just try and ignore it," Harry told Tom sadly, but he offered the man a small smile.

Tom tilted Harry's head up and moved so they were nearly touching. "I still have some time before I leave," Tom murmured against his lips. His hands had trailed down to grip at Harry's waist.

"I still hurt," Harry muttered quietly, trying not to go red as he spoke. He could feel Tom smirking at him.

"That was never part of my plan; my, you are dirty-minded, Harry, my dear," Tom said and this time Harry did blush.

"Oh, I didn't mean-" Harry started, but Tom's predatory gaze cut him off.

"That isn't to say I have no plans for you; that isn't the case at all," Tom continued, pulling Harry over to the side of the room. "I doubt you'll be able to make yourself look presentable anyway, but just in case you manage it, I want to make sure everyone who looks at you knows you belong to another."

Harry started to say something but his voice changed into a yelp when Tom lifted him and pressed him against the wall.

"Put your legs around my waist," Tom ordered into Harry's neck as he began to suck on a part he had not got to before.

Harry was all too happy to oblige, the positioning making Tom's erection press against Harry's rapidly growing one.

Tom trailed his lips across Harry's skin until they reached his mouth, and as they kissed Tom began to grind against Harry; the older boy had all the control, not that Harry minded. Even through the fabric of their clothing Harry could still feel the strong sensations flowing through him as Tom rubbed against him.

He found himself bucking up slightly, trying to move against Tom, who would push into him even heavier with each of Harry's attempts. Harry's hands had found their way into Tom's hair, holding him as they kissed with intense fury.

Harry took a chance and bit down on Tom's lips as the man often did to him, and to his relief Tom actually moaned slightly into their kiss, grinding harder against Harry.
He could feel himself getting closer to the edge, and the closer he got the more he fought Tom's control, moving in sync with Tom's movements. Tom didn't seem to mind much this time however, as he was far too involved with Harry's lips and neck.

Harry came with a cry into Tom's mouth, and felt Tom shudder just moments later. The Dark wizard grabbed hold of his wand; Harry tightened the grip his legs had on Tom to feel safe, and with a quick spell they were cleaned.

Neither seemed willing to move from their position; Harry didn't know about Tom, but he found it very comforting to be pressed between Tom and a wall. He buried his face into the crook of Tom's neck.

"I really do like your cologne," Harry commented, and he heard Tom laugh, or rather he felt it; he didn't laugh loud enough for it to be picked up by ear.

"Is that why you were breathing in bed sheets earlier?" Tom asked, and Harry could hear the amusement in his voice. He probably wasn't so much amused at finding the situation funny, as finding Harry's quirks peculiar.

"I don't want to go back to Hogwarts," Harry mused aloud. "I want to go somewhere, maybe Egypt, and the two of us can live there in peace. Then we can bring Draco and Luna over and they might finally realise they're perfect for each other, and Draco won't have to be judged anymore and it will be lovely."

"That's very sentimental of you. I'm rather glad you're not a woman, otherwise you'd be begging me to impregnate you, no doubt," Tom said with a shudder; Harry wasn't surprised Tom didn't care for sentiment or children.

"Even if I was a woman and you got me pregnant, my mum would murder me anyway so you wouldn't have to worry about the baby," Harry pointed out, only half-joking. "You know in your vision of the world; would you really get rid of my mother?"

"She's a Mudblood," Tom stated, though both he and Harry knew that already.

"Yes, but she's more talented than a lot of Pure-blood wizards and witches I know; plus she can be kind of scary at times," Harry said, removing his head from Tom's neck. "You should do some sort of test for Muggle-borns, and if they're talented and skilled you should keep them in the magical world or else just Obliviate and exile them; that works better in the long-run than by murdering them all."

"Well if the Dark Lord ever got into power, I can assure you he wouldn't care what happens in the long run; the more Mud-bloods he has to kill the better," Tom said with a dark look.

"What about you?" Harry pressed, and Tom moved so Harry's legs fell back down to the floor, and he kissed Harry deeply once more, and only gave Harry a strange answer.

"I'll leave you a lily."

X

Harry and Draco had returned to Hogwarts early Sunday; neither had reason to stay at the Manor as Tom had been called away and Draco was still either being avoided by, or avoiding, his mother. The Slytherin was quiet the entire time and his eyes were bloodshot. The blond hadn't even raised an eyebrow at Harry's still ruffled appearance; no matter how hard he tried his just-shagged hair would not change.
On his way back to the Common Room, he ran into Lavender Brown; he had never been more grateful for owning scarves; his neck was covered in marks, courtesy of one Tom Riddle. Tom had wanted Harry to return to Hogwarts looking like he'd been in multiple gang-bangs over the weekend. Though his hair suggested that, and no matter how hard he tried that wouldn't change, he could at least hide the rest of the evidence.

"Hey, Harry. That's a cute scarf; where did you get it?" Lavender asked him excitedly, referring to the black scarf with skulls on wrapped carefully around his neck. The one thing that irritated Harry most about Lavender was that she treated him like a stereotypical gay man; effeminate, into fashion and camp, even though that was not the case in the slightest. True, he did have a great love for Julie Andrews, but Lavender wouldn't even know who that was, considering she was a Pure-blood. Harry realised though, he could use Lavender's beliefs to get at Ron and Hermione, and in the long-run, Neville.

"Hey Lavender," he smiled. "I got it from a Muggle designer shop." That was a lie; he had bought it from a stall in Camden Market, but he certainly got Lavender's attention.

"Oh, I didn't realise Muggles could make such good things," the girl squealed, reaching out to touch the scarf; Harry pulled back, not wanting to reveal his neck to the girl, because she was sure to gossip.

"Do you mind if I ask you something?" Harry said, changing the subject. He had made the tone of his voice slightly higher to please Lavender, and it had succeeded in getting her full focus. When she shook her head, Harry continued. "Do you have a thing for Ron?"

Lavender looked around before nodding and giggling. "He's just so cute; and so funny too! I just wish he'd ask me out already; you know, I've seen him looking at me too, but that Hermione stops him I bet; it's no secret she's been pining after him for years."

"Hmm, well I was reading a Muggle magazine the other day, and there was this article about getting a boyfriend," Harry lied; Lavender looked intrigued. "And do you know what it said the best thing to do was?"

"No; what? Go on, you have to tell me," Lavender begged, almost bouncing on the balls of her feet.

"It said that guys like independence in a girl, and that a girl who asks them out has the highest probability of getting a lasting relationship." Harry made all that up completely, of course, but Lavender bought it entirely.

"Really? Oh I'll have to give that a try; thanks, Harry. I'm going to go get Parvati to help me do my hair," the girl sang before literally skipping away.

X

On Monday, Neville Longbottom approached him; Harry was sat in the library on his own, with Hermione lagging behind him. The girl looked rather miserable, even though she seemed to be trying to hide it.

"Hi Harry," Neville greeted, smiling at Harry, who faked a smile back. "We heard about what happened at your cousin's funeral. It's awful; they kill him and won't even let him rest in peace."

"Oh, yeah; my uncle was injured badly in the attack too," Harry murmured, feigning sadness. He was sad about the Muggles that had died, but he had only seen his Uncle twice that he could remember, and both times the man had been nothing but cruel to him. Neville and Hermione both
looked sympathetic.

"Will he be okay?" Hermione questioned, sitting down beside Harry and pulling out her own homework.

"Who knows?" Harry answered with a shrug. He lowered his voice as he leaned in towards Neville. "So what's going on with the You-Know-Who situation? Even when it involves my family my parents still won't tell me anything."

"Dumbledore seems to know what he's doing; everything will work out fine," Neville said, nodding. "To be honest, even I don't know what he's got planned yet. He's never here though, so he must be working on something."

"You don't know where he's going then?" Harry asked, not caring for the blatant questioning; he'd just look nosy.

Neville shook his head. "No, sorry."

Harry supposed Neville really didn't know anything; how was this boy meant to defeat the Dark Lord when he left everything to Dumbledore?

"Where's Ron?" Harry asked, aiming his question more at Hermione.

"No doubt making out with his new girlfriend," the girl answered sharply. She seemed to compose herself after realizing thanks to Neville's irritatingly goofy smile. "Ron and Lavender are dating now and can't seem to keep their hands off each other; really, it's N.E. ; they should be focusing on their exams and not each other."

"He's just enjoying himself," Neville suggested, but that seemed to infuriate Hermione.

"How can he when it's all he does constantly?" Hermione snapped, slamming her book shut and pushing it into her bag. "I'm going to study in my room."

Neville glanced at Harry before running after Hermione, shouting his apologies and ignoring Madame Pince's warnings.

He noticed Hermione had left behind her copy of the Daily Prophet. There had been an attack in a seaside town in Yorkshire, leaving fifty Muggles dead after a whole cliff had crumbled away without warning. It would have been declared natural causes had the Dark Mark not been spotted in the sky above the area.

The picture flashed the horrific scene, but in the very corner of the picture shone a pure white lily.

X

The next month seemed to pass by in a blur, as each day seemed to play out the same way.

His lessons became more intensive each week, so in his free time he was either doing homework or assisting Draco with the Cabinet. They had been made to work on non-verbal spells a lot now. Harry noticed Tom used non-verbal spells a lot of the time, and when he asked him about it, the older boy had told him in fights it was a highly valuable advantage because it's harder for an opponent to defend, and after a while it becomes habitual.

Harry had also noticed Tom would very occasionally use wandless magic; the only other wizard who did such was Dumbledore, but there was no mention of it in lessons. Harry supposed his
Ancient Magic was wandless, but not in the same way. He had been working on those skills too, trying to control more of what he could do. He, unfortunately by practice, knew a lot on defensive skills but not so much on attack; not that he planned to attack anyone, but it was always useful to know.

His Animagus lessons were continuing at a good pace, and Professor McGonagall had told him he was on target for finishing in the next month. If he carried on with no mishaps and perhaps even pushed over the time boundary, he would be sure to be able to join Draco in his animagus form on the next Full Moon. He was used to finding his magic now, but the Animagus part came from manipulating that magic which was a lot harder, so he could only hope he managed that part well too. He hadn't told Tom he was practicing it yet; he wanted to wait to surprise him with whatever animal he was.

Weekends were still spent at Malfoy Manor, and each time he'd come away with more love-bites and a sore behind.

There were bad points of the month, of course. Harry had been receiving unusual gifts; he supposed he could call them that. A bouquet of wilting roses had been left on his bed, and nobody had claimed responsibility for them. He had woken up in the middle of the night once, to discover the window by his bed open; when he pulled it shut he found love hearts scrawled on the outside which looked like it had been written in blood. Another day he found bones in his trunk, though animal or human he didn't know; he didn't keep them long enough to study. The worst discovery had been the basket of kitten heads left on his pillow. After seeing that he had thrown up, cried, thrown up again and cried some more, shaking in his bed instead of sleeping.

Tom hadn't made much reaction when Harry had told him; sometimes he would just smile darkly, while other times he would frown or look thoughtful; it was the latter times that Tom would fuck Harry, almost like he would suddenly become very possessive. The most reaction he had got out of Tom was when he told him tearfully about the kittens; Orion, who was much bigger than he had been before, now had a new friend, a beautiful Birman kitten who Harry named Bast.

Draco had acted strangely throughout the month. He would sometimes be very cheerful; generally when the Vanishing Cabinet co-operated with his attempts to fix it. He would also go very quiet at times and appear to be lost in thoughts.

Draco and Luna had become a lot closer as the time went on. Draco was one of the only people, besides Harry, who would actually listen to Luna and pay attention to what she had to say, even if sometimes what she was saying really was far out there. Luna seemed to make Draco smile genuinely. It was clear to Harry that Draco had a crush on Luna, but whether he was afraid of what people might think of him if he dated her, or if his Lycanthropy made him feel inadequate, Harry didn't know, but something was preventing their relationship going any further. Luna definitely liked Draco, as she told Harry on multiple occasions that he was dreamy, but he knew Luna would be happy with or without him.

Draco had just had his first Full Moon, and in the days leading up to it he had been very restless and quick to anger. The pull of the moon was more intense for new werewolves, so Harry had heard, which made Draco's emotions stronger.
The date of the Hogsmede weekend was after the Full Moon, and Draco was determined to go, no matter how bad he felt. He insisted on Harry and Luna joining him; Luna couldn't because the conditions were just right for finding Dabberblimps.

"The cold weather brings them to the surface," she had said.

Draco rarely spoke to the other Slytherins anymore, and when they did it was mainly to keep up their image. Nobody else other than Harry and Luna realised it was all false. Blaise and Pansy would sometimes talk to Draco, but they seemed to leave abruptly, and one time Harry thought he had spotted Pansy crying as she walked away from Malfoy. They seemed to be trying to fight their prejudices, but having it engrained in them for so long made it difficult. The fact they were trying told Harry they were good friends for Draco.

Harry strolled down towards the Entrance Hall to meet Malfoy; he was easy to spot. His blond hair wasn't in it's usual, immaculate state; instead it was matted and flowing freely about his face, while his skin looked grey and his eyes tired. Even his clothing wasn't his usual style, instead wearing loose fitting trousers and a jumper one size too big. Most of his clothes were fitted and styled to perfection.

"How are you feeling?" Harry asked with concern as he met the Slytherin.

"Rough," Draco answered simply, his voice hoarse. "I have a lot to do; we need to get going."

Harry nodded and followed Draco from the school. As they hurried down the snowy path to the village, they walked past a giggling Lavender who was tugging Ron to Madame Puddifoot's Tea Shop.

"I can't think of a much more perfect couple than those two irritating twats," Draco commented, disgust on his face as he watched the pair disappear inside. "At least if they breed together all the stupidity can be contained to one family. We just need to set up Longbottom and Granger and we're set, and hopefully they'll be taken care of before they can bring any chubby buck-toothed babies into the world."

"This relationship stuff is breaking up the Golden Trio," Harry said with a smirk. He wiped it off his face once he realised; he had been spending far too much time around Slytherins. "Hermione is really jealous about Ron dating Lavender, but Neville is too dim-witted to see that so he's defending Ron which makes Hermione even angrier. It's sort of funny to watch in a way."

Draco had led them to the outskirts of Hogwarts, near to the Shrieking Shack. Draco looked at the building and grimaced.

"Did you spend the night there?" Harry asked, noticing the other's discomfort.

"Yeah; Lupin told me about it and how to get there. He also said I'm lucky to get the Wolfsbane, but the transformation hurt plenty anyway," Draco answered, rubbing at his wrist. "He suggested I go a month without the potion so I'll appreciate it more; I can't understand why he thinks I'd willingly put myself through the pain and let my mind become monstrous too."

"He has a point," Harry cut in. "What if you were without Wolfsbane without notice or something?"

"I'm not going to, alright!" Draco snapped, and he sounded so vicious Harry couldn't help but take a step back. It was the Lycanthropy talking though; Remus was often snappy around the Full Moon, and he was already used to the transformation and it's effects by the time Harry was old enough to
"Okay, so what's the plan for here then?" Harry asked softly, stepping closer to Malfoy again.

"I don't know if you remember, but I found that book at Grimmauld Place about a curse that makes any object deadly to the touch," Draco told him, and Harry nodded; he remembered very well. "Well I've found the perfect object." He pulled out a dark green box wrapped in light blue paper. "It's an ordinary pair of gloves, nothing Dark about them, apart from the Curse I put on, of course. One touch of the fabric and Dumbledore'll be dead."

"How are you going to get it to Dumbledore?" Harry enquired with interest; if Draco had to kill somebody, at least doing it this way rather than face to face would save Draco's humanity somewhat.

"I'm going to cast Imperius on Madame Rosmerta," Draco explained, casting his eyes to the blurry form of the Three Broomsticks in the distance. "I'll get her to use the same curse on whichever girl she finds first; she'll take it to Dumbledore and even if they managed to trace it, it would all go back to Rosmerta. Here." Draco rapped his wand over Harry, casting the Disillusionment Spell. "Your Invisibility Cloak would have been useful."

"It wasn't my choice to have a psychotic Dark Lord steal it," Harry murmured under his breath. "Are you still sure this is the best idea? I can see a few ways it could go wrong."

"How?" Draco hissed.

"Well for one thing, Dumbledore might have a spell to check for curses before he opens anything." "The book said it was undetectable," Draco said through gritted teeth, angrily barging around the crowds as they arrived in the village centre.

"It's Dumbledore we're talking about," Harry pointed out.

Malfoy ignored him as he pushed the door to the Three Broomsticks open and headed towards the store room.

They slipped inside and the door closed on them, casting them into darkness.

"What if Rosmerta's spell doesn't work as well because she's already under your influence? I've not heard of anybody used Imperio to make another person cast Imperio."

"Why shouldn't they? That Moody imposter made Longbottom do incredible gymnastics, and we all know on a normal day he can't even bend down to touch his toes."

Harry opened his mouth to respond, but the door creaked open, revealing the curvaceous figure of Madame Rosmerta.

" Imperio," Draco whispered, and the spell washed over the woman. She swayed for a moment as her eyes glazed over. She dropped the boxes she was holding and calmly walked away as if there was nothing wrong.

"I still think this is a bad idea," Harry muttered, and he winced as Draco pushed him roughly against a wall.

"Will you stop doubting me for one second?" the boy growled, spit hitting Harry's face. "Believe it or not I am capable."
He pushed Harry away, and the Gryffindor quickly followed him as he saw the door open by invisible force.

As he went after Draco he barged straight into Katie Bell, causing her to drop a box she had been carrying; it fell to the ground with a smash. Harry stood frozen as Katie stared straight through him.

"Are you okay, Katie?" Harry heard another girl call.

"I'm fine, Leanne," Katie answered, her eyes still looking around in confusion. "I smashed my perfume though. Do you mind if we head back to replace it?"

"No, do you still want to use the bathroom first?" Leanne asked, and Katie shook her head.

"I can hold it," she said with a grin, linking her arms with Leanne's. She cast a Cleaning Spell over the mess and left the pub with her friend.

Harry followed quickly after them, where Draco was waiting outside, the spell now worn off.

"Can you get rid of mine?" he asked, and Draco nodded, indicating for him to follow him round the back so Harry wouldn't appear out of thin air. "Listen, it's not that I doubt you," Harry explained once he was visible again. "I just don't want anything to go wrong; I'd rather you just finish Dumbledore off easily and quickly."

"This will be easy and quick," Draco stated, though he looked unsure. "We should go back to the castle now, I suppose." Harry nodded in agreement; it was rather cold out.

They headed back up the path to Hogwarts which was almost deserted, save for Cho Chang and her friend Marietta Edgecombe, who were walking slightly ahead of them.

They seemed to be arguing, Harry noticed, as their voices got louder and louder. Marietta was tugging at something in Cho's hand; the box.

"Draco," Harry muttered, pulling on the boy's sleeve to draw his attention. The Slytherin's eyes widened as he realised.

Harry noticed they had both sped up, but they were too late.

As the girls tugged at the box, Cho pulled so hard that she tumbled backwards, slipping on the ice. As she fell, the lid flew off the box, allowing the gloves to fall, settling vibrantly against the snow.

The Ravenclaw reached out to push herself up with her bare hands, and her fingers just brushed the fabric of the gloves. She fell back to the floor and then she was still; too still.

Harry and Draco had frozen too, Harry tightening his grip on Draco's sleeve. Marietta was the only one who was moving; screaming as she collapsed at Cho's side.

"Draco," Harry muttered, ice running through his veins. "What have you done?"

Chapter End Notes
Kudos to Ulquiarr for giving me the idea of kitten heads. I'll tell you all now, that was Marvolo; even Tom wouldn't be so cruel towards kittens.
Harry sprang into action with a start, running towards the hysterical Marietta. He crouched down to be on eye level with her. "What's wrong? What's happened?" he asked, though he knew already. He was trying hard not to throw up and/or cry as he glanced down at Cho's still form. Her fingers were still ghosting above the gloves.

"Oh Merlin, she's dead. Please don't be dead, Cho," the Ravenclaw begged, tugging at Cho's cloak. Draco had come to stand behind Harry; his eyes were wide and fixed on the body, while his muscles were visibly tensed.

Harry took hold of Cho's wrist, though he knew it was pointless, and moved his fingers to press where the pulse should have been; of course there was nothing there. He swallowed the lump in his throat. Marietta was looked at him with desperation, her eyes pleading for him to say there was a sign of life.

"I'm sorry," he whispered, biting down on his lip hard to stop the tears spilling from his eyes. Marietta screamed and laid her head down on Cho's chest. Harry realised she was listening for breathing, having to confirm the death for herself.

"What happened?" Marietta sobbed. "I knew I should have been suspicious about that box; I bet it was cursed, and I made her fall victim to it."

"What box?" Harry asked gently, and Marietta jerked her head at the familiar object scattered on the ground. "Where did she buy it from?" He knew it hadn't been bought from any shop; Marietta didn't know Harry knew that.

"I don't know-she didn't buy it. She came out of the bathroom of the Three Broomsticks with it and said she had to deliver it to Dumbledore." Marietta paused for a moment, her eyes widening as she realised something. "She was Imperiused and I didn't know. This is my entire fault." The girl was wailing now, and Harry awkwardly placed a hand on her shoulder.

"It's not your fault, Marietta," he said gently. Draco was still standing, frozen in the same position. Really, though Draco was to blame, he was as equally innocent at the same time; he hadn't planned for Cho to die, and he certainly hadn't wanted her to, but his plan hadn't been thought out well enough. Harry knew Malfoy would blame himself either way. "We'll go and send for help," Harry continued. Marietta nodded, but she was too focused on Cho to really have understood. Harry grabbed hold of Draco's wrist and pulled him forwards, the blond easily moving with him.

"I didn't want that to happen," Draco said quietly, almost so much so that Harry would not have heard him had he not been so aware of him.

"I know," Harry answered, quickening their pace.

"She had so much life ahead of her; she hadn't even done anything wrong," Draco continued. Harry stopped and turned to the Slytherin.

"It wasn't your fault, Draco," he said firmly. Yes, Draco was to blame, but he didn't need to hear that. He genuinely was distraught at what had happened, and Harry didn't think accusing him
would have any good effect. "You understand? It was a horrible accident, but nothing more."

Harry tried to wipe away the tears before Draco could see but it was too late, and the blond pulled Harry into a tight embrace.

"I'm sorry," Draco whispered, "I'm sorry. You've been pulled into the part of my life neither of us wanted you to see."

They stood together for a few moments, taking in the comfort from one another.

"We need to go and see Snape," Draco muttered. "He knows about everything; he'll know what to do."

Harry nodded and they made their way back to the castle again, where Harry flagged down Hagrid as he was the first adult they saw. Hagrid's face dropped when Harry explained a girl had died, and the half-giant took off towards Hogsmeade without a second thought.

"Are you sure you want to see Snape?" Harry asked Draco gently, who nodded.

"My mother made him take a Vow to protect me; he could die if he turns me in, depending on how the bond would take it," the Slytherin stated with determination blazing in his eyes.

Harry frowned at that knowledge; Snape really was a Death Eater then? He couldn't be loyal to Dumbledore if he hadn't made any move to work around the Unbreakable Vow to inform the elderly headmaster. James would have a field day if he found out.

"Why did she tell him?" Harry questioned, dropping his voice as they entered the main school; most students were at Hogsmeade, but there was still the possibility of being overheard by the younger students or, even worse, a professor.

"She trusts him," Draco answered with a wave of his hand, "as does the Dark Lord."

"I didn't realise he was loyal to the Dark Side," Harry muttered, more to himself than Malfoy.

"I doubt he is," the blond answered, his werewolf hearing enabling to hear Harry easily. "But I doubt he's loyal to Dumbledore either."

"Funny, Tom said the same thing," Harry said, wincing as he realised what he had said.

"Tom?" Draco asked, picking up on Harry's slip.

"Lord Riddle; I can't call him that when we're alone, and I don't like the name Marvolo, in fact, I hate it even more now that Slytherin is using the name too."

"Why Tom? Is that some odd Muggle thing? I suppose I should be surprised you can get away with calling him that, but then again, I doubt he'd kill you for anything." Malfoy froze after he finished speaking; talking of murder must have reminded him of what had happened.

They had reached Snape's door, and Draco knocked on it loudly. The professor answered soon after, and he frowned as he saw them, before ushering them inside.

"Can I help-?" Snape started, but Draco interrupted him.

"I've messed up," the boy said, frantically tugging at his hair. "I've made the worst mistake of my life; I had a plan to kill Dumbledore easily, but I got the wrong person."
Snape's eyes widened and he couldn't disguise the horror that crossed over his face before he managed to control his features.

"What do you mean you got the wrong person?" the professor asked, glancing at Harry.

"I put a curse on a gift, and was going to have it delivered to Dumbledore, but a girl accidentally opened it and it killed her instead," Malfoy said quietly; his fists were so clenched that blood was dripping slowly from his palms where his nails were digging into them.

"What girl?" Snape asked slowly, his voice not giving any of his emotions away.

"Cho Chang," Harry answered, keeping his eyes on the floor. "We sent Hagrid down to bring her back."

"Do they have any way of tracing it back to either of you?" Snape pressed on, and the boys shook their head.

"Harry didn't even have anything to do with it; he would be charged with being an accomplice at worst, but there's no way of knowing who was involved," Draco explained quietly, and to Harry's surprise Snape looked somewhat satisfied.

"Good; I do not even want to know why you're involved in this, Harry," Snape drawled as he turned to the brunette. "Your mother would be disappointed if she knew."

"I could say the same about you," Harry muttered, making the Potion's Master frown, and the man did not respond to his comment.

"I will cover for the both of you if I have to," he said instead, "but next time, Draco, do not be so foolish."

X

That evening Harry and Draco went to Malfoy Manor as normal. Snape had agreed to say they were with him if anyone asked, claiming they had been traumatised at witnessing the death. The professor hadn't permitted them to leave his office, but apparently the news of Cho's demise had quickly been spread throughout the school.

The students had been requested to immediately return to Hogwarts from the village, and made to stay in their common rooms until further notice.

Two Aurors had been to see them; Tonks, who Harry had met before, and Mad-Eye Moody, who Harry thought he had met before until they all learnt it had been an imposter.

"It just kind of happened," Draco told them when they were asked to recount what had happened. "We were walking a bit behind them; the girls were arguing, then Cho fell and she started to sit up but then she just fell back down and wouldn't move."

Malfoy sounded convincingly innocent, using enough pain in his voice to suggest that he was upset but trying to hold it in because of his aristocratic status. The Aurors looked at them sympathetically, Tonks even pulling Harry into a hug when he broke down in tears again; his eyes were starting to feel sore from it now.

They were left with no further questions, because considering the nature of the curse, nobody would have even considered two sixteen year olds to be involved.
"I wonder how Voldemort will take it," Harry mused as Draco readied the Portkey. The Slytherin stiffened at the question.

"It's hard to say," Malfoy shrugged, a look of concern crossing his face.

He held up the Portkey, and Harry grabbed hold, allowing the spell to take them away.

When they arrived, Narcissa Malfoy was waiting for them.

She had been considerably more sociable over time, but she still didn't seem to say much. She still hadn't been able to look Draco in the eyes.

She looked incredibly pale, and her eyes were swollen red. Harry wondered if she knew what had happened.

She went to say something, and then stopped. She raised her hand and with a sharp slap her hand connected with Draco's face; Harry didn't have time to see if it had caused a mark, because then Malfoy was pulled into his mother's embrace.

Harry waited awkwardly as Narcissa sobbed into her son, and after a few minutes, Harry was trying to raise the courage to interrupt when a hand landed on his shoulder, making him jump.

He cast his wide eyes back, feeling the tension lift when he saw Tom. Their eyes met for just a second until Tom moved his gaze onto Draco and Narcissa. His expression looked rigid and cold, and he indicated for Harry to follow him without another word.

"Draco is to be joining the main meeting tonight," Tom explained to him once they were at their room. "You shan't want to watch."

"Why; what's going to happen?" Harry asked warily, frowning when Tom's eyes flashed red.

"We soon heard of Draco's failure today," Tom explained airily. "He will suffer the usual punishment for displeasing the Dark Lord, however, at the same time he has, though indirectly, committed his first kill."

"I don't really think he meant to kill her," Harry cut in quietly. He gestured for Tom to continue when the boy threw him a warning look.

"No matter the case, the Dark Lord likes to reward his followers for their first time," Tom continued, and he eyed Harry carefully.

"What does he reward them with?" Harry asked, but Tom smirked at him.

"If I told you, you may as well go and watch. I'll cast a Silencing Spell on the room."

Tom seemed pleased at his decision and left. Harry still wondered what was going on; he didn't have any desire to listen, of course, but Voldemort's idea of a reward was probably not really a good thing.

It was obvious that Draco was no killer, and Voldemort would be able to tell; the so called reward would probably work on Draco's discomfort. Although, considering last time Draco had been involved in something at the Manor it ended up with him a werewolf, Harry didn't think it could possibly be any worse than that, in Draco's eyes at least.

He sighed and settled down into a chair with a book; both cats jumped up onto his lap instantly,
nuzzling against him. They both purred loudly, and Harry tossed the book onto the floor, knowing he wouldn't be able to read it.

He gently pushed the cats off him and stood up, creating a make-shift string from material he could find in the room. The animals happily chased after the item, viciously sinking their fangs into the fabric whenever Harry let them catch it.

The animals allowed his mind to rest, and he smiled at their antics. He wondered if that would be how he'd feel when he mastered the Animagus transformation; care free and lively.

He scowled when Orion scratched him suddenly, and before he could tell the cat off; not that it would have any effect obviously, both the felines were hissing, their backs arched as they stared at the window.

Harry slowly reached for his wand, ignoring his pet's growling as he edged towards the window. It was pitch black, and he couldn't see a thing out. He cast a spell to turn off the light, to see if he could see better without the light reflecting.

As he focused on trying to adjust his vision to the dark, a pair of red eyes appeared in the window. He span around, expecting to see Tom standing there with a questioning expression on his face, perhaps, but there was nobody there.

"Tom?" he whispered into the vast darkness of the room. He was met with silence.

He froze as he heard the window behind him starting to rattle slightly, despite the fact there were no gusts of wind.

His skin started to feel clammy, and his heart raced. Harry swore he stopped breathing when the light began to swing violently.

'This must be something to with Voldemort,' Harry thought desperately, sinking to the floor; both the cats were hiding underneath a chair. 'This has to be what Tom didn't want me to know about.' Harry knew that made no sense.

Something cold touched his hands, and he looked down, paling when he saw blood on his fingers, dripping from below the window. He jumped up with a start, wiping his hands on his trousers frantically. Whispering passed through his ears, yet no words were distinguishable.

He stopped his motions as he suddenly felt a chill; he knew he wasn't alone anymore.

He bravely moved his eyes upwards, and immediately wished he hadn't. A tall, slender figure draped in dark cloth was watching him; it moved it's head up enough for Harry to see it's face. The boy gasped in horror.

"Holy fuck," he whispered, clutching his hand over his mouth. This figure, though it was hard to tell, was not anyone he had seen before. The reason it was hard to tell though, was because it had nothing on it's face whatsoever; no eyes, no nose, no mouth. Instead, a cross had been stitched where both the eyes should have been, and a smile was made in a criss-cross style. Blood was still freshly stained around the stitches.

The figure took a step forwards; Harry took one back. The figure was slowly coming over to him, not even flinching when Harry cast Stupefy at it. Every spell he used, whether Ancient or Modern, had no effect on it, so he bolted for the door.

He desperately tugged at the handle, but the door refused to open.
"Alohomora," he shouted, but still, nothing happened.

The figure was nearly to him now, and a cold hand was reaching out towards him, making Harry flee backwards until his legs hit the bed, and he fell onto the soft quilt that was no longer comforting.

He shuffled up the bed, fear coursing through his veins as he realised he was at a dead end.

A strange force pushed him to lie flat, and then long, rusty nails were poking around him, trapping him on the bed.

He looked up, trying to stop himself hyperventilating as the figure stood still, doing nothing more than staring at him.

Then it was gone. Harry looked around, trying to find any sign of it, but there was none. The nails were still around him though, and the air will still cold.

He shut his eyes, trying to find just a moment on peace, and he threw his head back onto the pillow.

Something cold dropped onto his forehead.

His eyes snapped open and his heart stopped.

The figure was above him; it was sprawled across the ceiling, with it's head dropped so he could see each horrifying stitch. Time seemed to stop. The stitches across the mouth began to move, changing into a large 'O' shape, and the skin inside began to disintegrate into rotting flesh, and it started to emit a high pitched scream.

Harry's scream probably matched it.

An arm left the ceiling and reached out towards Harry, claws bursting through in a bloody mess on the fingertips, when all of a sudden everything was gone and the room was light.

"What is going on?" he heard Tom hiss, and all Harry could do was sob in relief; he may have been sobbing beforehand anyway. "Did you have a nightmare?"

Harry knew it must have looked that way at first glance; Harry was in bed, with every other sign vanishing as soon as the door had opened. He knew it wasn't a dream though, because his hand was clammy around his wand, the cats were still shaking under a chair, and there were blood stains on the ceiling. Wait, what?

Harry found himself staring up at the bloody handprints above him, and Tom's eyes travelled to the same spot.

Tom frowned, then composed himself and moved over to Harry to stare into his eyes. The Gryffindor willingly allowed Tom access to his mind, because Harry knew he would have no way to explain any of what just happened. The worst part of that however, was watching confusion make it's way onto Tom's face; Harry had never seen him look that way before, as Tom normally could control his facial expressions.

Harry gave up on allowing Tom to search his mind, and he reached out to grab Tom's shirt, pulling him forward to bury his head in the soft material. He could feel Tom's body reacting to the trembling from him, and his fingers shook as he clutched at Tom's shirt.

"You have no idea what it is either, do you?" Harry said softly, finally pulling back from Tom once
his breathing had calmed.

"I can theorise," Tom answered. "I know it wasn't here to hurt you."

"It didn't seem that way—oh God, it was him, wasn't it?" Him, of course, being Marvolo Slytherin.

"Not Marvolo, exactly. I personally made sure he cannot enter the Manor or the grounds, but that can't stop him sending in things like this creation," Tom explained, and Harry frowned again.

"A creation?" he repeated, and Tom nodded.

"I haven't heard of anything like it before, and one trait that we three all share is the need to create."

"Will it come back?" Harry asked; Tom shook his head.

"I doubt it; it either left because of me or the light; we can sleep with the light on if you'd like," Tom offered.

Harry chose not to nod, instead he asked, "what if it comes at Hogwarts?"

"Have you never read Hogwarts: a History?" Tom said, with a look of surprise. "As well as having passwords, each common room is protected by two charms; one for students and one for whatever house you were sorted in. Marvolo and I would be able to enter Slytherin house, but no other. You would be able to enter any house at the moment, providing you have the password, but once you graduate you would only be able to enter Gryffindor. Any other entity is cast away; why do you think you've only ever seen your house ghost in the common room? Now, everywhere else in the school is a weak point, but stay with others and don't travel in the dark, then you'll be fine. I'll start some research very soon."

"I wish you could just find out what his Horcrux is and destroy it," Harry muttered as Tom crawled onto the bed beside him. He stiffened for a split second at Harry's question, and Harry only noticed because he was so used to Tom by now. "What?"

"Nothing," Tom said faintly.

"It doesn't seem like nothing; do you know what it is?" Harry asked; Tom sighed.

"You should go to sleep; I can stay awake and keep a watch for you," Tom said, purposely ignoring Harry's comment. He pulled Harry into his chest and wrapped his arms around him, which made it very difficult for Harry to think about anything but Tom.

X

Although he did hate them, Harry did appreciate Tom's Sleeping Charms at the same time; they would knock him out almost instantly and leave his nights dream and nightmare free. He recognised them well enough now, and he had cast another at Harry last night, probably knowing he would have never slept otherwise, considering his head was filled with murdered girls, creepy monsters, and Tom.

"Was Draco okay last night?" Harry asked Tom as they ate lunch together. Tom had somewhere in the last fortnight become a foodie, not that Harry would ever dare say such a Muggle expression to his face, but the man seemed eager to explain new cuisines, although everything was prepared and cooked by House-Elves.
"Why wouldn't he be?" Tom replied, as his nimble fingers made quick work of the strange shelled concoction he was eating. Harry was happy to stick to the colourful macaroons; Remus had probably been the cause of his life-long sweet tooth.

"Well you said what was involved last night wasn't very nice, and Draco is a bit, err, fragile at the moment, I guess, maybe," Harry said awkwardly, shrugging.

"I hadn't noticed," Tom said simply, and then grabbed hold of the macaroon in Harry's hand. "Why is it every time you are presented with new food you're too afraid to try anything but the sweet?"

"I like my sugar," Harry stated, picking up an éclair. "Besides, there's nothing better than something simple like a cheese burger." Cheese burgers were not a Wizarding World food, so it was always a treat for him to go to the nearest Fast-Food joint when he went home for the summer.

"That sounds very Muggle, which means it sounds disgusting," Tom decided, and Harry rolled his eyes. He found himself blushing slightly as Tom watched him bite into the éclair; he nervously licked his lips as he placed the dessert down.

Tom smirked and leant forwards, pressing his lips to Harry's.

"It's no wonder you always taste so sweet," Tom mused as he pulled away, leaving Harry feeling light-headed. "And, of course, I would trade in all the foot in the world to taste you instead."

For a moment Harry decided Tom was rather strange, but then their lips were connected again, and as Tom pushed him to the floor, all other thoughts left his head.

X

Once again, the time seemed to pass by in a blur. The last fortnight had been an awkward and painful but predictable time.

News of Cho's death and the circumstances surrounding it had spread quickly, and, especially at first, many students had been on edge. One memorable moment had been when a third year Hufflepuff ran screaming from the Great Hall when the girl next to her had knocked her glass to the floor with a smash.

As time passed, and the Aurors released a statement saying they were at no risk, did the students begin to relax again. The Auror presence in the castle probably helped too. They weren't there all the time; just at weekends and in the early mornings and evenings when the professors were resting or busy.

Neville had approached Harry not long after the Hogsmede incident. He was on his own, so Harry questioned this.

"Where are Ron and Hermione?" he'd asked, and Neville had shrugged.

"Ron's with Lavender, and I'm kind of losing track of Hermione," had been the sheepish answer. Then Neville had questioned him.

"You've been working with Draco Malfoy a lot this year; has anything about him seemed suspicious to you?" Neville had asked, so Harry had been quick to defend the blond Slytherin.

"Just because his father was a Death Eater doesn't make him one," Harry had argued; lying through his teeth. "All we ever seem to do is study; he wouldn't have time to be a Death Eater, trust me."
Neville had believed him, even if he had been a bit sceptical at first.

There had been no further incidents with Marvolo or with peculiar figures, though he had received another letter from home, telling him and Heather to prepare for the fact they might spend Christmas away from home because a high number of Muggles had been murdered by Death Eaters there.

The one place Harry felt able to escape from all the talk of Death Eaters and murders and psychopaths was in his Animagus lessons.

He had taken to doing all his other homework during his free periods and in the early mornings so that he could really focus on his transformation in the evenings.

He was very comfortable in understanding his own magic now; when he focused he could feel every strand of magic travelling through his body, and feel how each of them connected. He could even feel how much power each strand held, although that was a bit harder and used a lot more energy. It wasn't necessary for the transformation, but it would make things easier. McGonagall had made sure to teach Harry everything he would possibly need to know.

He was attending what he hoped what be his last lesson; Minerva had told him he was right on track, and he just needed to learn to manipulate the magic inside him to change. The first transformation was the hardest, because nobody knew what animal they were until they changed for the first time. Once a person knew their Animagus form, they could very easily tell their magic what to change into and it was very basic.

"Concentrate on your magic," McGonagall said calmly, as Harry sat with his eyes shut. "Make sure you have every strand that you house. You need to will those strands to change into an animal; be willing to change."

That was easier said than done.

He could feel a strange bubbling sensation in his magic as he willed himself to change, but a burst of pain caused his focus to drop and his eyes to snap open.

He rubbed at his wrist where a pain was shooting up and down his arm from.

"You need to tune in to your magic even more," McGonagall stated. "Clear your mind of all but the magic."

Harry glanced at the mirror that Professor McGonagall had set up; he longed to be able to look into it later and see an animal staring back.

Harry shut his eyes, and shut his mind off. He visualised his magic strands in his mind, and pictured them bending to his will.

He opened his eyes again as he felt a strange sensation inside of him, almost like he was shaking from within. He explained the sensation to the Transfiguration professor.

"You were almost there; you just had to push a bit further," the woman said, making Harry feel guilty for giving up. "Perhaps we should continue tomorrow; you're looking tired and I wouldn't recommend attempting the transformation with lower energy. Remember you'll still need enough to change back."

"I can go once more," Harry said with fierce determination; Professor McGonagall looked proud.
He once again cleared his mind, visualising his magic core inside himself. He pictured each strand vividly, and drew all his energy into twisting them.

This time he ignored the shaking sensation, even when he felt like his blood was going to burst through his skin. He ignored the feeling of his limbs being stretched out impossibly long, and then shrivelling into nothing.

He did open his eyes when all the feelings stopped, and he suddenly felt smaller. His head, though still his own thoughts, felt clearer and void of complicated emotions. A quick glance down told him he was much nearer the floor than he used to be, and a glance up gave him a view of a beaming McGonagall. He had done it!

He ran over to the mirror; or rather he tried to. He now had four legs, and at his first attempt at moving he fell over. After he regained his feet movement seemed to come naturally however.

He excitedly bounded up to the mirror and gazed in. Returning his gaze was a green eyed black fox.

X
There is a lemon at the end of this chapter. Warning – It may be **dub-con**, depending on how you interpret it.

Also, a warning for underage drinking.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Harry jumped in front of the mirror to make sure it was really him, and he inwardly smiled, causing his small but sharp teeth to show. He found himself particularly in love with his long fangs.

He willed himself to change back, and his magic instantly complied; it seemed so much easier compared to before.

He turned to Professor McGonagall with a grin. The woman actually had a small smile on her face, and she looked fiercely proud.

"Well done, Potter," the Transfiguration professor congratulated.

"Thank you for teaching me," Harry replied, still grinning. "I couldn't have done it without your help."

McGonagall nodded. "We do have one last matter to discuss; about registering."

Harry's grin faltered; he didn't really want to register. The Ministry not knowing would be advantageous.

"Now, I discussed your training with Professor Dumbledore before," the woman continued. "He believes that, considering the delicate state the Ministry of Magic is in, it would be unwise for you to register at this time. I disagree, but the headmaster is very adamant, so I am willing to make a compromise. I shall allow you to defer registration for now, but once You-Know-Who has been defeated and the Ministry is back under definite Light control, you shall be round to the Animagus Registration office at once."

"Okay; that's fine," Harry said, smiling again.

McGonagall clasped a hand on his shoulder.

"You've done me proud, Harry," she smiled. "I expect to see this same level of determination in your N.E. ."

Luna found Harry the next day; or rather she ambushed him after the last class of the day. He had just left a difficult Charms class when the girl grabbed his arm and pulled him down the corridors
until they were in a deserted classroom.

"Is something wrong?" Harry asked, and Luna shook her head and smiled.

"Oh, no; not at all," she sang, plonking herself on the floor. Harry joined her. "I just needed to ask you a couple of things. It was meant to be just one thing, but there are always new questions to be asked."

"Sure, go ahead," Harry offered, smiling at Luna encouragingly; not that she needed it.

"You've become an Animagus?" the Ravenclaw questioned. For a brief moment Harry wondered how she knew, but it was Luna they were talking about. "Your Aura is different; animalistic, even."

Harry glanced around instinctively before answering. "Yes, I've been training with Professor McGonagall," he told the girl. "I wanted to do it for Draco."

"Like your dad and Sirius did for Mr. Lupin?"

Harry nodded.

"Can I see what you are?" Luna asked, her tone suggesting she was quite excited.

"Sure; oh, how about you see if you can guess what I am?" Harry answered, and Luna hummed.

"I think either a cat of some sort, a fox, or a bear. You're not entirely innocent but you can be rather cuddly too," the girl said after a moment.

"Yes, I'm a fox," Harry said dejectedly. "The Sorting Hat really did make a good choice putting you in Ravenclaw-wait, I'm not cuddly."

"Maybe not all the time," Luna shrugged, "but you certainly are with Tom."

Harry choked.

"There's nothing wrong with that," Luna said gently as she patted Harry on the back. "I think you're lovely together."

"Um, thank you," Harry spluttered, trying to regain his composure.

"That's linked to what I wanted to ask you," Luna continued, and Harry nodded to show he was listening. "I rather like Draco, but I don't know what to do."

Harry was taken aback; not that Luna liked Draco, but that she wasn't sure how to deal with it. Luna always seemed to have everything under control.

"Well I'm pretty sure he likes you too," Harry told Luna. "I think he's just too stubborn to admit it."

"Really?" Luna asked, sounded very taken aback. "Surely he's just being polite because the two of you are friends."

"Of course that isn't the case; he's hardly the type to be polite and hide his dislike for people, is he?" Harry grinned, and Luna smiled.

"I suppose not; I know he's done some very bad things, but I can see how it's breaking him. Do you think he'd let me try and hold him together?"
"I'm very sure he would," Harry said, and Luna fell back onto the floor, her eyes staring at the ceiling.

"Perhaps I should send him a Cupid; do you think he'd like that?" the Ravenclaw wondered aloud; Harry could just imagine Draco's reaction.

"Err, probably not," he answered sheepishly. "He tries to imagine himself as quite macho, even if he isn't. Please don't tell him I said that."

"Hmm, macho; I can work with that. Thank you, Harry," Luna said dreamily, jumping up and skipping from the room. Harry thought she wouldn't have been out of place in a meadow.

X

Harry found he was a bit nervous about telling Draco that he had mastered the Animagus transformation and would be able to keep him company on the next full moon; he wasn't sure if the Slytherin would be pleased or angry for whatever reason.

It was another couple of weeks until the next full moon, so he figured he should talk to Draco sooner rather than later.

Luna seemed to realise he needed to speak to the blond boy alone, so she left them together with the Cabinet, claiming she had heard the cry of a Flying Crup and wanted to investigate.

Harry watched Draco as he worked, waiting for a good opportunity. He had learnt the other's body language when working with the Vanishing Cabinet; a scowl and taut muscles when something wasn't successful, and relaxed with a slight smile when something worked.

He didn't want to mention anything while Draco was in a bad mood, but the good moods weren't lasting long enough for him to speak.

"Is there something you need to tell me?" Draco asked, taking Harry off-hand.

"What?" he said dumbly, squirming under the scrutinising glare Draco was giving him.

"You can't take your eyes off me, you look like you'll have a panic attack if I was to drop a pin, and I can smell your fear," Draco drawled, counting on his fingers.

"I'm not fearful of anything," Harry defended himself; sure he was nervous, but fear was going to the extreme. Draco rolled his eyes.

"Not that sort of fear," the Slytherin muttered; the word 'idiot' went left unsaid. "That's just a general term; whether someone is anxious, nervous, scared or terrified, it all comes under a very similar smell; Remus just referred to it as smelling fear and said it's easier that way."

Harry liked that Draco called Remus by his first name.

He noticed the blond was still looking at him expectantly.

"Err, you know the last full moon?" he asked; he inwardly flinched as Draco tensed. "Were you okay on your own?"

"Well I have to be, don't I? Not like Hogwarts is full of werewolves," Draco scowled.

"I can keep you company," Harry blurted out, wanting to get his bit said and done.
"I know you're obsessed with treating werewolves as people, but I don't think spending time with me as a wolf would be a good idea. Even with the Wolfsbane there's a risk the scent of your blood could drive me into a frenzy, and then Riddle would gauge out my eyes, skin me alive and hang my body up for the birds to peck at," Draco muttered, and he seemed to pale at the image he had created.

"That's rather, ah, creative," Harry answered awkwardly, frowning when Draco shook his head.

"It's not creative, not on my part at least; Riddle told me he'd do that if anything happened to you under my watch," the Slytherin said quietly.

"Oh; I'll ask him not to," Harry said with an attempt at humour; he was aware it failed horribly. "Well, I don't have to keep you company as a human."

"Are you asking me to bite you? I guess you missed the part about your psycho boyfriend skinning me alive?"

"I'm an Animagus, you dimwit," Harry announced, and he watched Draco freeze.

"What do you mean you're an Animagus?" he asked stupidly, making Harry roll his eyes.

"I wanted to keep you company at the full moon, so I asked if Professor McGonagall would train me; watch," he said before transforming. He looked up and felt joy inside him as he noticed Draco smile very faintly. He changed back and waited for Draco's reaction.

To his surprise Draco began to laugh.

"I admit my change wasn't by choice, but at least I get to be all big and vicious; you're one of the cutest carnivores I've ever seen," Draco mocked, but Harry didn't detect any malice.

"Foxes can be vicious," he added, feigning hurt.

"Please; you're so fluffy you'll choke over a hair ball before you hurt anyone," Draco scoffed. "Don't act so horrified; wolves are far superior to foxes; I'll prove it you next full moon."

Harry's heart skipped a beat. "Really?" He tried to stop the joy showing in his face.

"How else can I prove I'm the better animal? Besides, it would be rude for me to not let you test out your form after you worked so hard at it," the Slytherin said.

"Not like you to care about not being rude," Harry said jokingly; Draco smirked. "I'll see you soon," Harry said as he turned to leave.

He swore he heard Malfoy whisper "Merci," as he neared the door.

"Did you just thank me in French?" Harry asked bewildered, turning around, but Draco was staring determinedly at the Cabinet and ignoring him completely.

Harry smiled and went on his way.

X

Tom was the last person he needed to tell, so he asked Draco if he could visit him during the week. He was excited about Tom's reaction, and he liked that he would have actually proven that he could do something successfully which didn't involve releasing soul fragments into the world.
He knocked on Tom's door, awaiting an answer; he wasn't sure if Tom knew he was coming.

If he hadn't known, he didn't show any surprise when he opened the door, and allowed Harry to enter without any questioning looks.

"Guess what I've done!" Harry said before Tom could ask.

"What?" Tom asked warily, seeming unimpressed by Harry's excitement.

"I became an Animagus," he grinned, smiling further when a look of surprise, and then praise washed over Tom's face for not even a second.

"If you had asked me, I could have found you a suitable tutor," Tom muttered.

"Professor McGonagall was great," Harry retorted, and Tom's expression didn't change.

"Should I know who she is?" he asked.

"She's the Transfiguration professor, and head of Gryffindor. She's an Animagus too," Harry said and Tom scoffed.

"I would hope so considering she taught you the transformation," Tom scowled, and Harry's smile faltered. "Let me see what you are then," Tom added, noting Harry's mood change.

Harry transformed, and like with Draco, he saw a faint smile cross over Tom's face.

Tom surveyed him as he returned to his human form.

"You perform the transformation well," he commented, "and your form is rather suitable. You must have been working hard at it."

"Yes, but I still managed to help Draco, and infiltrate Neville's group," Harry said proudly, feeling even better when Tom smiled.

"You've kept that quiet; the Dark Lord would have your head if he knew you were keeping information from him," Tom said with a slight warning tone.

"It's nothing important yet; it's still a work in progress. But the girl he's friends with, Hermione, is in love with Ron, so I set up Ron with another girl which has made Hermione jealous and Neville is too stupid to realise so he's annoyed Hermione by being insensitive," Harry explained, even though it was clear Tom wasn't really listening.

"So you are basically manipulating the hormonal phases all you teenagers seem to be in nowadays," Tom summarised, and Harry nodded. "Lovely; and to prove I'm right, I'll show you how I can manipulate you," Tom smirked, and he pulled Harry into his warm embrace.

X

"Eugh; why did I choose to accept Blaise's invitation," Harry complained as he, Luna and Ginny waited in a room in the Potions corridor.

It was Hallowe'en, and Blaise Zabini had kept true to his promise of inviting Harry and Luna to his mother's ball. Ginny had been invited too, and she had made Harry swear not to mention her whereabouts to her brother.

"It will be fun," Ginny grinned, flattening her skirt.
"I heard that the ghosts of each of Armida Zabini's husbands are locked away in a special room where they can't escape," Luna commented, playing with the cork that was dangling from her neck.

"How do you lock a ghost somewhere?" Ginny asked with interest.

"It's a rather complicated spell; for it to work she'll have had to stay pure with them before-" Luna started, but Ginny cut her off with a wave of her hand.

"I'd prefer not to hear about the sex lives of old people," the red-head said with a grin.

"Well that's the thing; they didn't really have one," Luna continued, not fazed by the topic in the slightest. Ginny grimaced.

"How come you don't want to go, Harry?" she asked, changing the topic.

"I can just imagine it being packed with loads of older people we don't know and it will be awkward," Harry explained, subconsciously swinging his legs as he sat on the table.

"We'll make sure you have a nice time," Luna said with a smile.

"Yeah," Ginny agreed enthusiastically. "Blaise was telling me it's really good; apparently they have great music and an exotic buffet. Plus one of his cousins from Italy is coming, and he models for a fashion company. Oh, maybe I should change; their whole family is beautiful and I look like a scuff."

"You look lovely, Ginny," Harry complimented as the girl jumped up and twirled around, staring down at her outfit.

"Very fine, indeed," came a new voice. Blaise was eyeing Ginny up and down lustfully, his eyes lingering on her pale thighs that were visible beneath her short skirt. Draco, Theodore Nott and Pansy Parkinson were standing behind Zabini. Only Pansy was looking at Ginny too; Draco had eyes only for Luna and Theo had his nose buried in a book.

"We just have to wait for Millie, Crabbe and Goyle," Pansy stated, taking a seat beside Harry.

"I have something for you," Draco said after he managed to get his attention off Luna. He handed Harry a letter; the scrawl on the envelope was Tom's.

The ball was on a Saturday, and though Ms Zabini was not a Death Eater, she approved their cause whole-heartedly, and being a socialite, she was friends with many Death Eaters and their families, and so Voldemort had permitted them to attend, and so only Draco had been called in for a short meeting.

He opened the letter and read.

"I visited Ms Zabini earlier and put up Protection Charms around her manor, so you shall be safe from Slytherin providing you do not leave the manor. I may attend in the later evening, but do not expect me."

"He's so blunt," Harry muttered aloud, catching Pansy's attention.

"Who is?" she asked, trying to glance at his letter to spot a name.

"Nobody," he answered lamely.

"Ah, so you're dating somebody who's out of Hogwarts? I knew Anderson was lying when he said
He's been shagging you down by the lake every night."

"He said what?" Harry spluttered; half talking, half coughing.

"Don't worry; I can soon change you for his best friend's girlfriend," Pansy said with a smirk.

"Sorry; we aren't late, are we?" Millicent Bulstrode asked as she pushed the door open forcibly. Millicent, or Millie as she preferred to be called, was a big, tough looking girl who had a lot of aggression in her movements, however, personality wise she was lovely, though still an obvious Slytherin.

"Not at all," Blaise said. "Ready for the Portkey?"

They all nodded and gathered around, transporting themselves to Zabini Manor.

They landed by in a marble entrance hall, dominated by a grand staircase which had been polished to perfection.

A beautiful woman was waiting for them; she had high cheekbones and full lips, her hair was flowing and her curves were shown off by the high quality dress she was wearing. She looked much like Blaise, and when she moved forward to kiss him on both cheeks, Harry knew it was his mother.

"Blaise, darling; it's so lovely to see you," she greeted warmly. She pulled back and surveyed the rest of the group with a small smile. She kept her gaze on Harry, Luna and Ginny. "Hello; I'm Blaise's mother, Armida. You must be Harry, Luna and Ginny; I've heard a lot about you." Harry noticed her eyes lingered on Ginny when she said that. "I must dash off to greet some other guests, but do enjoy yourselves."

"Is William attending?" Blaise asked, and his mother shook her head, gaining a smirk from both mother and son.

"I'm afraid he's a bit tied up at the moment," Armida answered casually; Harry had spent enough time around Slytherins to know when something had a double meaning.

Blaise led them though a large set of doors and into a crowded room.

The walls were decorated stylishly, yet it was subtle at the same time. A long table was stretched along the back with plates full of food. Music was echoing throughout the room; loud enough for it to be heard, but not so loud that they would have to shout to hear each other.

Many adults were dancing already, wine glasses held firmly in their hands. Others were standing around, talking animatedly.

The Slytherins seemed to split up instantly; Pansy went with Blaise to see what looked like more family, Crabbe, Goyle and Millicent headed straight to the buffet table, Theo found a chair and brought his book out, leaving Harry, Draco, Luna and Ginny by themselves.

A House-Elf appeared next to them, a tray of drinks balanced on it's small hand.

"Would you like a drink, sirs and misses?" the creature asked; Draco took one straight away and downed it.

"Is this alcoholic?" Harry asked as he picked one up slowly.
Don't worry, darling, you won't be chastised for drinking here," came the voice of Ms Zabini. She smiled encouragingly at him, so he chugged the drink back as Draco had done. It burnt the back of his throat, and he tried not to pull a face at the taste.

"You get used to it," Draco shrugged.

"I hope so," Ginny muttered, pursing her lips as she got the taste. Luna had declined and was watching them with amusement.

They stood awkwardly for a few minutes, and when the House-Elf walked by with a tray again, both Harry and Ginny took another two.

"Be careful how much of that you have," Luna said thoughtfully, "the Carnivorous Dringbing is attracted to the smell of blood and alcohol."

Having downed their third drinks, Harry and Ginny now found that rather funny.

"Oh, I need to get Blaise's attention," Ginny stated. "I even wore a short skirt and he's just ignoring me," she pouted.

"What about you and Dean?" Harry asked; Ginny moved her mouth to his ear

"I dumped him last night," she said, and the two of them started to giggle again.

"Wow, those drinks were really strong," Harry heard Draco say to Luna.

"Can we dance? He'll get jealous if was dance," Ginny asked, and Harry hesitated for a moment; there were a lot of people on the dance floor.

Another glass soon solved that problem, and he happily allowed Ginny to pull him into the crowds.

The music was upbeat, and so they danced against each other, hands occasionally connecting with the other's body and they kept to mostly grinding motions.

"You know, if I was straight, I reckon we'd have made a good couple," Harry mused. "We would have got married, had three kids with cheesy names and had some happily ever after."

"Who needs happily ever after?" Ginny retorted with a grin; Harry grinned back.

Time seemed to pass by in a blur of dancing and drinking, but still there was no sign of Blaise.

"We-we need to go find him," Ginny said, pointing away from the dance floor. Harry nodded and followed her out, trying not to walk into any of the enthusiastic dancers.

They found their group around a table; Blaise was squirming and looked rather uncomfortable, and his eyes refused to look at Ginny. Draco and Luna were sat rather close, so Harry ran over to their side of the table and pulled the both into a hug.

"I want you both to be happy," he announced with a dramatic nod. "You both like each other; just make out already."

He grinned as Draco paled, but Luna smiled back before pulling Draco towards her and pushing her lips against his.

Harry gave a slight applause when they pulled away and hugged them once more.
"Are you having a good time?" Pansy asked, tearing her wide eyes away from Draco and Luna who were now snogging without a care in the world.

Harry nodded. "Can we go dance again? All of you come, please," he begged, bouncing on the balls of his feet. Ginny basically dragged Blaise up. Pansy, Theo and Millie came too, clearly all wanting to leave the new couple alone; Crabbe and Goyle always liked an opportunity to visit the buffet table.

They all had another drink on the way to the dance floor, and even the shy Theodore was swaying to the beat.

A sudden warmth ran through Harry, and he immediately knew Tom had arrived.

"He's here," he announced to the group excitedly, and he ran away to try and find him, leaving the others in confusion.

He felt like he had run around the room twice before he saw him, talking to Draco and Luna; they were standing in a corner away from everyone else.

He ran toward them, flinging his arms around Tom.

"You're drunk," Tom stated; his tone didn't give away how he felt about that. "How much have you had?"

"Not much at all," Harry answered, and he pulled back, saved from tumbling over by Tom's hand. "Well maybe a little bit more than not much," Harry said at Tom's 'don't-lie-to-me' look, and he held his thumb and finger a little bit apart to try and prove his point.

"It certainly doesn't seem that way," Tom answered coldly, and Harry followed his glare to Draco.

"It wasn't his fault," Harry added, moving his hand about until it landed on Tom's chest. "He told me you said you'd gauge his eyes out and skin him if he was bad. Please don't skin him; I like him."

He didn't notice Draco flinch.

"Is that so?" Tom said, lip curling.

"Yes, and Luna was good too, because she told me not to drink, because I'd be eaten by a Carn-voro-carnvo foo dingbat," he continued.

"Carnivorous Dringbing," Luna corrected. "They've been known to stalk parties like these."

"Harry, are you okay?" Ginny's voice filtered through, and he turned to see her being followed by the others.

For a second her image blurred and separated before merging back into one.

"Ginny; there was two of you for a minute," he laughed, holding up two fingers. Tom's hand covered his to hold up another one.

"That makes two, my dear," the older man said, and Harry grinned as the four blurred into two.

"Ah, so you must be Harry's beau then," Pansy said, putting two and two together.

"He's a million times better than that Anderson bloke," Millicent giggled.
"Anderson?" Tom questioned; his grip on Harry's arm tightened.

"He's a student who's been telling everyone he's sleeping with Harry," Pansy explained, and the grip tightened further.

"Oh; well Mr Anderson will be hearing from me very soon," Tom said threateningly.

All of the Slytherins smirked.

"I wanna go dance again," Harry announced, trying to yank himself from Tom's hold.

"I think you've had enough fun here for one night," the Dark wizard stated as he snapped his fingers.

The House-Elf appeared, looking scared as it eyed Tom.

"Are you the Elf in charge of service?" he hissed, and the House-Elf nodded. "Well, I hope you enjoy your last night in service, because I will be having a word with Ms Zabini and telling her that her Elf is a pathetic, useless creature and she can do much better."

"Sir-" the House-Elf started, but Tom silenced it with a glare.

"I cannot even fathom how something that prides itself on good service can provide a boy with alcohol despite the clear signs he has had too much, or is the safety of your guests not a concern?" Tom snarled, and the creature's eyes began to fill with tears.

Blaise bent down to pull a shoe and sock off, and then threw the sock at the creature.

"You're no longer a House-Elf for the Zabini family, Tilby; leave now," Blaise ordered, and the sobbing House-Elf disappeared with a pop. "I'm sorry he displeased you."

"Blaise Zabini, isn't it? You have a good attitude; you'll go far with the right people in power," Tom said, making Blaise look pleased. "Harry, we're leaving now."

"But I don't wanna go," Harry protested as Tom pulled him along. "Please, Tom, let me stay;" Tom ignored him. "Don't be a spoilsport, Tommy."

He heard Draco emit a horrified gasp, and Tom froze and turned to look at him with a look so vicious it made Harry want to cry.

"Sorry," he whispered pitifully, and allowed Tom to pull him along, sadly waving goodbye to the others.

"Going so soon?" Armida sang as she saw them nearing the door.

"I wanted to come to collect him now anyway, but given the state he's in I'll have to rush off without speaking to any of the prestigious guests," Tom said, and Armida looked on with concern.

"Poor thing," she cooed. "Always the same way when you first drink; don't know when to stop. He'll feel it tomorrow; that's punishment enough."

"Thank you for providing a wonderful ball, Armida," Tom added pleasantly. "Though I must complain the hallway by the staircase was ever so slippery; I do hope your husband, William, is careful up there."

A wicked smile crossed Armida's face. "It would be ever so tragic if he were to fall; I better go and
call for him to warn him."

The pair exchanged a cruel smirk before going their separate ways.

Once they were clear of the room, Tom Apparated, pulling Harry along with him.

Harry fell to the floor after they landed, the side-along Apparition making his head spin.

"I quite like the name, Tommy," Harry commented from the floor. "It sounds cute."

"Am I cute?" Tom asked, and Harry nodded.

"Yes, and you're sexy, but kind of hideous too because you're mean to the poor little House-Elves, but you're pretty to look at," Harry rambled, and Tom smirked.

"You should be careful who you call pretty," he warned, crouching down on the floor by Harry.

They gazed at each other for a moment, and then Harry pushed himself from the ground and kissed Tom deeply, wrapping his arms around his neck. The weight of Tom from that angle made Harry fall back to the floor, keeping Tom with him.

"I really want to fuck," Harry breathed against Tom's neck. "Can we?"

He had never initiated anything before, but his mind didn't care about staying quiet anymore.

Tom's growl and lips against his neck told Harry his answer was a yes.

Tom waved his wand and within seconds Harry was stripped of his all clothing; he shivered as the cold air hit him.

"Wait; I don't-I don't wanna do it like this," Harry said, not quite sure what he was saying, and Tom looked at him. "I wanna go on top; not like, on top, on top, or anything," he said, making a gesture with a finger and his fist, but-"

"Do you want to ride me, dear?" Tom finished for him.

Harry nodded; once again, not quite sure why. He had never even considered it before; he liked being underneath Tom, and letting him take all the control.

The older boy stood up and sat in an armchair, and with a quick movement his erection was freed.

"Do we have any lube?" Harry questioned, and Tom shook his head with a smirk.

"Use your imagination," he suggested, lip curled.

Harry attempted to stand but found his legs were too shaky, so he crawled over to Tom, and something was telling him to suck him, so he covered Tom’s hardness with his mouth, taking the cock in as deep as he could take it.

He hollowed his cheeks, sucking and licking each bit he could reach.

‘Deepthroat it’ something called to him, so he adjusted his head, moving down until all of Tom was in his mouth. Tom’s hand was buried in his hair, pushing him deeper as he thrust up, ignoring Harry’s slight gagging.

“Don’t forget about you,” he heard Tom say from above him, and his hand trailed down his body
on it’s own accord, and he pushed a dry finger inside of him, adding another and scissoring them. He awkwardly pushed them in and out of himself, stopping as Tom yanked his head back and pulled him up to his lap.

He hovered over Tom’s lap, allowing the other boy to push him down onto the erection. He winced as it was pushed in almost dry, but Tom continued to push him onto it all the way.

Once Harry was positioned, he began to rock his hips, allowing his body to take over for him. Tom thrust up, keeping the dominating position, and hit Harry’s prostate almost straight away, making Harry cry out.

Tom’s hands were digging into his hip and the back of his thigh, and they pushed Harry to move.

“I want more,” Harry whispered, resting his face against Tom’s neck. “Give me more.”

He didn’t know what he wanted more of, but Tom did, and the hand that had been on Harry’s hip began to move lower, pressing against Harry’s hole. Tom pulled his cock out slightly, and pressed his finger above it, pushing them both in at the same time.

Harry sobbed into Tom’s shoulder as the finger assaulted him at the same time as Tom’s cock; it wasn’t anything big, but it still managed to stretch him even further, but still he had to keep on rocking over Tom’s cock, and push himself down each time Tom thrust up.

“Come for me, darling,” a voice said, and he released over Tom’s stomach, as he was filled with Tom’s seed on the inside.

Tom pulled Harry down into a kiss, remaining inside of him.

Harry pulled away, though Tom wouldn’t allow him to move off him. His eyes trailed towards the windows, where a pair of red eyes were watching him from the night.

X

Chapter End Notes

I can explain the dub-con thing a bit better now; I know, in law, if a person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they cannot give consent. Tom, being Tom, had no qualms taking advantage of Harry, even though Harry wouldn’t have denied him anyway. And if you hadn’t realised, Harry was also under the influence of the Imperius Curse there, though only after he said he wanted to (which is why I made it dub-con instead of non-con) but whether Tom or Marvolo cast it is up to you. And yes, Tom did know Marvolo was watching. I had considered having Marvolo in disguise as Tom, but I couldn’t do that to Harry, so I compromised by having Marvolo watch instead. I do wonder what is wrong with me at times LOL
Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

X

A face with a smirk seemed to flash into Harry's view; he blinked and the odd sight disappeared completely.

"Tom?" Harry whispered; Tom ignored him and focused instead on sucking his neck. "Tommy?" he whined, resulting in a harsh bite. "Oww; why'd you do that? But look; there's red eyes outside." Never mind the fact they had disappeared now, Harry was still annoyed when Tom shook his head.

"No there isn't," the older man said, not even looking around.

Harry pointed this out. "You didn't even look," he said, affronted, but Tom just shifted himself so that he was free from Harry's body, and then gave Harry a slight push, sending the teenager to the floor.

Harry pouted at Tom, who smirked down at him. "You're out of your head, darling; I can assure you anything you're seeing is a product of your own intoxicated mind."

"But-" Harry started to protest, stopped by Tom crouching down in front of him and placing a finger over his lips. Tom waved his wand with his free hand, and suddenly Harry was clothed in soft pyjamas.

"I love magic!" Harry grinned, jumping to his feet and narrowly missing head-butting Tom in the face.

"You're going to bed now," Tom stated, grabbing Harry by the arm and dragging him over to the bed.

"I'd much rather both of us go to bed," Harry said in what he thought was a lustful way. The look Tom gave him suggested otherwise.

"It's not even been five minutes," Tom said sourly; he was looking deeply into Harry's eyes as if searching for something, and had a look of mild surprise on his face when he had finished. He muttered something that sounded like "overly hormonal teenagers," which made Harry pull a face.

"I can't help it if I'm young and full of energy," Harry protested. "But I guess techn- really you are quite old-.

Harry suddenly found a wand pointing at his face.

"Stupefy," Tom said, and the last thing Harry saw was a flash of red.

X

When Harry woke up some time later, he paid no attention to the fact that he was cold and on the floor, and jumped up, sprinting towards the bathroom.

He crouched over the toilet and heaved, falling back on his sore behind when he was finished. He
wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and drew his knees to his chest, leaning his forehead on
them.

His head was pounding and he felt sick to his stomach. He tried to think back to the night before,
but found he couldn't remember much at all; he vaguely recalled dancing with Ginny, and images
of Tom flashed in his mind. Then he got a vivid picture of a red-eyed, smirking face; he pondered
for a moment over it, then he became more aware of the fact his arse was still burning, and he
pieced the two together; someone had watched him and Tom shagging, and given the red-eyes,
Harry knew it could only be Voldemort or Marvolo, and his bets were on the latter.

Whether from the realisation of that, or the hangover, Harry didn't know, but he hurried forwards
as he threw up once more.

He shakily clambered to his feet, running the cold water and splashing it over his face. He gazed
into the mirror and sighed; he looked completely dishevelled; he had bags under his eyes, and his
hair—well even his father would be horrified at the sight of it, and that was saying something.
Dobby, or so he presumed, had left him some clothes out, so he changed from the thin pyjamas and
into a much warmer outfit.

He slouched out of the bathroom, throwing his hands in front of his face when he opened the door,
only to be confronted with bright sunlight; he hated October weather; how could it be sunny but
freezing at the same time?

He groaned and collapsed face first onto the bed.

"I'm glad to see you're looking well this morning," Tom said cheerfully from above him. Harry
scowled into the bed sheets. He tensed when he felt the other man lay across him, breathing down
his ear. "Next time, beware of how you talk to me," Tom added menacingly, pushing Harry's head
deeper into the bed before standing up straight.

"How can I beware when I don't remember how I spoke to you?" Harry questioned, turning over
and immediately wishing he hadn't; he shook his head to try and stop the spinning.

"That's your problem," Tom said coldly, making Harry frown. "Here; take this," he continued, his
tone sounding softer. He held out a potion vial with a murky green mixture inside.

"What is it?" Harry asked warily; if he had said something to offend Tom, he didn't want to
automatically drink a potion he had given him. Not that Tom couldn't lie about what it was, but
still.

"Hangover Remedy," Tom answered briskly, so Harry downed it gratefully.

Almost straight away his head stopped pounding and his nausea seemed to vanish away. It was
worth the disgusting taste and texture of the potion.

"Thank you," Harry said, a wide smile on his face. Tom raised an eyebrow at him.

"Pity you won't get your memory back," the older boy said thoughtfully, running a hand through
his hair.

"Was it really that bad?" Harry asked with concern, and to his surprise Tom laughed.

"Just another thing that makes you unique, my dear," Tom answered vaguely, so Harry decided to
change the subject.
"I remember there were a pair of eyes watching us last night and-" he started, as another memory came back to him. "You wouldn't believe me!" he accused; Tom watched him blankly.

"I can't understand why it would have been an issue anyway; I was with you, and I don't intend any harm to befall you when you are in my protection," Tom said, and Harry felt guilty for a moment. "I admit that, yes, Slytherin may be able to get past some of the wards, but if he ever entered the Manor he would soon be apprehended; we don't take kindly to strangers here."

That didn't make Harry feel any better.

"Well yes," he agreed for Tom's sake, "but what about at Hogwarts? I can't avoid being alone forever; not that I'm scared of him or anything," Harry pressed on hastily.

"Well don't be alone," Tom stated, as if that was the answer to everything. "I see you've gathered yourself quite the acquaintance group now, and with rather suitable people too."

"I didn't choose to spend time with them just because they're Pure-blood," Harry muttered awkwardly.

"Not consciously anyway," Tom argued.

"Did you do that at school? Did your friends know you were Half-blood?" Harry questioned, and he saw Tom tense as he did every time his blood purity came up; it was clear he tried to pretend he was Pure-blood.

"I didn't have friends; the other students had unbearable personalities," Tom corrected. "Of course, they presumed we were friends, and as that was to my benefit I allowed them to continue thinking that way. It also allowed me to experiment when I wanted to, but I was very firm in making sure they didn't take that with any deeper meaning."

"Like experimental lovers?" Harry questioned, fighting off the hurt feeling inside. He knew Tom must have taken other bed partners before; he was too talented not to have, but this was the first time Tom had mentioned it.

"Hmm, lovers is a strange word, isn't it? It seems to suggest there must at least be some form of attachment involved," Tom mused. "But yes, I did partake in male and female partners; don't look so scorned, Harry, it was purely to sate my curiosity and give me knowledge. You're the only one who's ever shared my bed, and you're also the only one I've been able to face while doing it so-"

Harry cut him off by kissing him deeply, though Tom, being Tom, soon took control of it.

They were drawn from their passionate kissing by a knock on the door.

Tom pulled away from Harry, smirking as he eyed the bulge in Harry's trousers, and went to open the door at such an angle that neither Harry nor the knocker could see each other.

"Draco told me Harry would be here; I need to talk to him," he heard Remus say frantically, and Harry ran to the door before Tom could say no.

"Remus? Is everything okay?" he asked, and he saw Remus' eyes dart from Harry to Tom, and a look of confusion quickly changed to one of realisation. He remembered himself after a moment and shrugged, stepping into the room at Harry's gesture; he saw Tom scowl.

"Can we talk privately?" the werewolf asked, and Harry looked to Tom who shook his head.
"Anything you want to say to Harry, you can say in front of me," Tom answered sharply, a look of mad danger in his eyes.

"Maybe I'll send you a letter instead," Remus tried, only causing Tom to tut loudly.

"You're clearly trying to hide something, so why would I be so stupid as to let you leave without hearing what you have to say?" Tom said almost politely. Almost.

"I'm leaving," Remus said after a moment. "My ties to the pack were with Greyback, and now he's dead, that makes me a free wolf. I've stayed because I've been trying to help the pack while they fought over who would be the next Alpha, but a man named Ulric came out on top. He is far more brutal than Greyback ever was, and he has no preference for who he hunts."

"I've heard of no Ulric," Tom cut in, and Remus turned to him with a sorrowful look.

"You wouldn't have done," Lupin answered. "He was sneaky; he kept to himself, making himself out to be the lowest of the pack, when really he was a monster biding his time. Greyback wasn't particularly loyal to the Dark Lord, but he would work with him as long as Voldemort fed the pack well. Ulric has found a new partner."

"Who?" Harry and Tom asked at the same time. They shared a glance that Remus seemed to miss.

"I don't think Ulric knows himself. He won't give any details away, but they're planning an uprising. I want no part of that; Greyback understood my presence was purely for academic assistance, but Ulric knows how to read and write, so he doesn't want me for that; he expects me to be a crazed beast like him."

"I shall pass the information onto the Dark Lord at once; we shall not have beasts believing themselves to be better than us," Tom stated. Harry noticed Remus sigh; he was used to the names and prejudice.

"I'll make sure Draco is no part of Ulric's pack either. He is my wolf-brother, as we shared the same Sire, so his wolf side will allow his distance. Do you think your parents will welcome me back, Harry?" Remus asked, and Harry nodded.

"I know they miss you terribly. I reckon they'll be mad at first, but they'll soon welcome you back," Harry smiled, and Remus nodded.

"Yes, yes; how touching," Tom interrupted scathingly. "Harry, go and find Draco; I need to talk to Lupin alone."

Harry wasn't sure if he imagined screaming as he hurried down the hall.

X

Draco looked surprised when Harry knocked on his door.

"I got sent here," Harry explained, and Draco nodded in understanding and let him in.

"I'm surprised Riddle let you stay the night with him, considering how you spoke to him last night," Draco said, and Harry cringed.

"What exactly did I say?" Harry asked, partially dreading the answer.

"Well aside from acting like a general drunken fool; something I don't think he's fond of, you tried
to defy him in front of all of us, and then you called him Tommy," Draco explained, and Harry winced. "I'm surprised he didn't Crucio you right there for that; if I even called him Tom he's probably torture me."

"I got punished enough," Harry muttered subconsciously rubbing his hip. Tom was a particularly rough bed partner anyway, but he really had shown it last night, or so Harry presumed from the aches and the marks on his body.

Draco seemed to get what Harry was thinking because he scowled.

"I don't want to know what goes on in your sex life," the blond complained. "Or anyone's for that matter, especially when I don't have one; I don't think making out with Luna counts."

"And you never will, because I refuse to think of you and Luna in a sexual way," Harry said with a smile. His memory got flashes of Draco and Luna kissing at the ball, and he was glad something had finally happened between the pair.

Draco flipped the finger at Harry, but then a goofy smile crossed over his face until he realised Harry could see him.

"Do you really think she'll want to be my girlfriend, knowing what I am? I'd be a health risk if we ever moved in together or had children," Draco whispered, and Harry couldn't help but laugh.

"You kissed her for the first time yesterday and you're already planning marriage and children?" Harry questioned, and Draco took on a slight pink tone.

"Well, Father always said I should only date with the intention to marry and produce an heir," Draco muttered, "though I suppose the bite means none of that matters anymore."

"It shouldn't have done anyway," Harry added. "Just enjoy your life the way you want to."

Draco was about to respond, when Dobby appeared with a letter in his hand.

It was a message telling him unless he wished to join a werewolf pack wanted by the Order of the Phoenix, the Ministry, and the Dark Lord, then he was to return to Hogwarts with Harry immediately.

"What's going on?" Draco asked as he hurried to ready the Portkey.

"I'm not sure," Harry said with a shrug. "I heard Greyback's pack got a new Alpha who is revolting against Voldemort, and I think he's just found out about it, so he won't be happy."

"Remus said he was afraid something like this might happen," Draco sighed. He held out the Portkey for Harry, and muttered the enchantment to take them back. "I'll tell you if he sends me a letter about it as soon as I get one," Draco told him once they were back in the cold dungeon corridor.

They walked together to the Slytherin Common Room, where Blaise and Ginny were waiting outside, looking very close indeed.

Draco cleared his throat and they both jumped.

"Hello," Ginny said cheerfully, though she was blushing so much her skin was beginning to clash with her hair. "How are you both?"
"Let's just say thank goodness for Hangover Potions," Harry joked and Ginny nodded enthusiastically.

"I know; Hermione spotted me this morning and knew straight away I was hungover. Luckily she gave me the cure and promised not to tell Ron, or worse, my parents," Ginny responded, moving away from Blaise. "Our Mums seem pretty similar; imagine if they got together to punish us."

Harry shuddered at the thought.

"I don't get why your mothers are so strict," Draco commented.

"Ours would let us get away with murder," Blaise agreed, and Harry found his choice of words ironic; Draco must have thought so too, because he shivered.

"Come on, Blaise; I need to ask Pansy something," Draco declared, signalling he wanted Ginny and Harry to return to Gryffindor tower. Blaise and Ginny both looked reluctant but made no complaint, and they all bid their goodbyes.

"Can I ask you something?" Ginny asked soon after they began their walk.

"Sure," Harry smiled, making Ginny smile back, though she looked nervous.

"I err, don't remember much of last night, but I remember meeting Tom; he's your boyfriend, right?" she asked, and Harry nodded, even though Tom would definitely not refer to himself as Harry's boyfriend. "He isn't, err, I mean, I might just be remembering wrong, but he seemed pretty possessive and-" she froze, trying to find the right words; Harry looked at her expectantly. "He doesn't, you know, abuse you, does he?" she finally finished quietly, looking as if she expected Harry to hit her.

"Of course not, where did you get that idea?" Harry assured her.

"I don't know; he just seemed one of those obsessively jealous types, you know? Like I say, maybe I just invented something in place of the real memory," Ginny laughed.

"No, don't get me wrong, he's a bit possessive, but not in a maniacal sort of way," Harry added, and Ginny grinned further.

"Good; we have enough maniacs around here."

X

On Wednesday, Harry realised he had very much lied to Ginny.

Or he thought he had; he couldn't be sure, but the fact he doubted himself suggested he understood Tom could easily be maniacal.

Jonathan Anderson had been found hanged from a beam in the Clock Tower; Aurors had found no sign of foul play, and with a note left simply saying 'I'm sorry', the Aurors concluded that it was suicide. Harry found this suspicious after Draco mentioned it was peculiar how Tom found out about the rumours Anderson had started about Harry, and now the Ravenclaw was dead.

Draco knew as well as Harry that it was a very unlikely coincidence.

No matter how much Harry denied that he and Anderson had been a couple, nobody but the people who knew about Tom believed him.
Some students were offering him their condolences, and randomly hugging him as they sobbed, while the meaner ones made comments that that was two boyfriends Harry had killed. Surprisingly, though it was younger Slytherin students who were mostly saying that, the sixth year Slytherins and Snape himself had jumped to Harry's defence.

Snape seemed to be the only professor who believed Harry had no connections to Anderson; other professors had told him he was welcome to take time off lessons if he needed it, and even McGonagall said she would excuse him from the next assignment.

He found this all rather frustrating, especially considering the more intelligent students had concluded to the rest of the school that he was simply still in denial, which is why he wasn't acting as upset as people expected him to be.

He half wanted to write a letter to Tom complaining, but he hated to think what Tom's reaction would be, especially considering he had no proof that Tom did have anything to do with it.

He sighed; he spent too much of his time in the dark nowadays.

The school itself was in a state; all through the term students had been on edge, and many students had left the school after deaths and disappearances of family members, but now two students had died within the Hogwarts area, and it scared a lot of people, even if one had supposedly been suicide.

Ravenclaw house was in complete tatters, and the seventh year students were excused from all their lessons, having lost two of their close friends in such a short space of time. They were the ones who gravitated towards Harry the most, particularly Marietta who remembered Harry from Cho's death.

The worst part was, though the school was slowly being destroyed from the inside, the one man who could stop it; Dumbledore, wasn't around to save it.

X

"Hey, Harry, can I talk to you in private?" Neville asked him Saturday as Harry did his homework in the dormitory.

The weather outside was stormy; the sky was dark and the atmosphere dreary; Harry found it quite relaxing, even if he did need light to see what he was reading despite it being early afternoon.

"Err, sure," Harry answered awkwardly, looking towards Dean and Seamus who were looking at a Muggle magazine filled with pictures of scantily clad women.

"I thought we could go for a walk," Neville supplied, smiling brightly.

Harry looked at Longbottom as though he was stupid. "It's raining," he stated, and Neville blushed. Dean and Seamus sniggered.

"I meant around the castle; it's kind of important," Neville said quietly, still feeling embarrassed by what Harry had said; Harry found it difficult not to roll his eyes.

"Fine," Harry answered shortly, standing up. He knew he had taken the other boys aback by his attitude, and as he and Neville left, he heard Dean mutter "think he's going into the anger stage now." Like he'd move on through the grief stages that quickly if Anderson really had been the love of his life.
"How are you holding up, Harry?" Neville asked as they walked down an empty corridor.

"Good," he answered, and Neville looked at him like he was sure he was lying. "I mean, it's sad about what happened with Anderson, but I hardly knew him, despite what everyone else thinks."

"Mnhmm," Neville said; he didn't believe Harry at all. "Anyway, I need to ask you about a couple of things."

"Go ahead," Harry said, faking a smile; he had to control his anger around the boy.

"I don't really know which to start with, " Neville said with an irritating laugh. "I guess I'll go for the nicer stuff first; you're friends with Ginny, right?"

Harry nodded. "Yes, why?"

"Well, um," Neville started, pausing as he began to blush. "I kind of have a crush on her, and she's broken up with Dean now..."

"Why are you telling me this?" Harry questioned sharply. "Why not Hermione or someone?"

He knew full well Ron would probably kill anyone if they asked for dating advice on his sister, but Hermione would surely be more open-minded.

"She already knows, and she said I should just be myself and ask her out," Neville sighed. Harry could understand why; if Neville was himself he would never get a date.

"I don't know; you'll have to figure it out yourself," he replied. He was kind of narked that Longbottom had drawn him away from the comfort of the dorm room just to ask for dating advice.

"No, no; that wasn't everything," Neville protested with a squeak as Harry turned away. "I've had some more lessons with Dumbledore."

That certainly caught Harry's attention.

"We've been looking at You-Know-Who's past," Neville explained quietly. They were on a deserted fifth floor corridor; there was really no need to be so sneaky.

"What did you find out?" Harry asked, using a louder tone of voice.

"Well, not much, to be honest. But did you know back when he was little he grew up in an orphanage? Gran used to threaten to send me to one when I was naughty, and I can see why I was so afraid; it looked horrible," Neville said.

"How horrible?" Harry asked, feeling sadness as he imagined Tom growing up in an awful place.

"It looked pretty dingy and depressing, and Dumbledore said he didn't think the orphanage workers paid attention to any of the children. You-Know-Who still managed to be a creep though, even as a kid," Neville said darkly. Harry just wondered what Tom might have looked like as a child.

They carried on walking, passing the Grand Staircase as they went; although it was Saturday, most students seemed to be relaxing in their own common rooms, and it was basically deserted, bar a few students running about on the ground floor near the Great Hall, having had a late lunch.

"I just thought you might want to know," Neville muttered after a few minutes of an uncomfortable silence. "You know, because he possessed you through that diary, Dumbledore said; he thought you might like to learn more about him and he gave me permission to tell you."
"That was oddly thoughtful of him," Harry mused, wondering why the elderly headmaster would consider such a thing; once again he thought the man knew more than he let on.

They both turned as they heard footsteps running against the stone floor, and Hermione appeared, panting.

"Neville; you need to come quick! It's about Hagrid's-you know," Hermione said secretively, grabbing Neville's hand and pulling him with her. "Bye, Harry," she called as they disappeared from view.

Harry felt nerves start to claw at him; he had been left alone, something Tom had been adamant should never happen. The corridor he was in had only small windows, and it was dark, lit only by torches manacled onto the walls. He was on the third floor corridor which had been banned in his first year, and as the place was still taboo, and the third floor in general didn't house any dormitories, it was completely deserted.

As if responding to his fears, the candles on the wall began to flicker, and Harry felt his heart start to race.

He brought his wand out, trying to steady his shaky hand.

"Hermione?" he called softly; no matter his predicament, he would not call for Longbottom.

Nobody answered, but the sound of someone salivating was behind him, and he spun around, seeing nothing.

'You're just being paranoid,' he told himself, but then he heard crazed laughter, and a figure slammed him against the wall.

He tried not to scream as the faceless figure from before came into his vision.

The sowed mouth was open and rotting, and saliva was dripping down the manufactured mouth. At this close range, Harry could see makings of sharp teeth trying to make their way through the skin.

"In-Incendio," he muttered, and the creature shrieked, stepping back as it tried to fan it's flaming body, and it collapsed to the floor.

Harry took the opportunity to run, but he had taken only a few steps when the figure grabbed his ankles and pulled him to the floor.

Harry yelped in shock, dropping his wand as the creature dragged him down. He reached desperately for it, using one hand to try and grip at the hardened floor as the figure seemed intent on yanking him towards it.

He grabbed desperately for his wand, managing to grip hold of it, and he sent a quick Incendio at the figure again, this time aiming it at it's face. It screamed in agony, holding it's hands around it's head.

Harry jumped up, intent on running far away, but he ending up spinning into Marvolo Slytherin.

"I must thank Lupin for telling your werewolf friend about the entrance to Hogsmeade through the Whomping Willow," Marvolo said casually, gripping hold of Harry's wrists. "Oh, would you look what you've done? You've killed my lovely creation."

He gestured to the figure that had collapsed on the floor; Harry struggled harder to get out of the
tight grip.

"Why are you here?" Harry hissed.

"To check up on you, of course. I had sent my friend there to give you a message, but I sensed he was in trouble and how right I was; looks like Tom is teaching you the murderous way," Marvolo said with a cruel smile. He waved his wand and the figure's body disappeared. "I'll have to create a new one now; how would you like me to make it?"

"Not at all," Harry answered, finally freeing himself from Slytherin's grip.

Harry raised his wand, and he scowled when Marvolo laughed.

"You really think you'd stand a chance fighting me, my Harry?"

"You said you didn't want to hurt me," Harry pointed out, shivering at the look Marvolo gave him.

"I said I didn't want to kill you; I don't mind hurting you if I need to," the Dark wizard smirked.

"Expelliarmus!"

Harry's wand flew out of his grip and into Tom's waiting hand.

"Oh, dear," Marvolo said mockingly.

Harry glanced fearfully at the man for one second before deciding to flee.

"You can't run from me forever," he heard Marvolo hiss.

Just before he reached the door another creature jumped in front of him; this one was similarly dressed in dark cloth that swamped the body, but this one had facial features, only there weren't human; fully red eyes, with trails of blood underneath, and a mouth filled with sharp fangs. Even the finger nails had been pushed away in a bloody mess and replaced with claws.

"I lied; I always have a backup," Slytherin said, and Harry could feel the smirk in his voice.

The creature lunged at Harry, spinning him around and pressing him into the wall harshly.

A clawed hand reached around him, slowly going lower on his body. The hand tried to work it's way under Harry's trouser, and as he realised the intent of this creature, Harry kicked his leg up, hitting the creature in the spot he had been trying to molest Harry.

It backed away in pain, and Harry sprinted to the door.

He heard Marvolo scream "get him!" and a curse flew over his head.

He wrenched the door open and ran out onto the staircase. He could feel the creature right behind him, and then something heavy filtered through the air above him; it had jumped over him, and stood at the entrance to the stairs he was about to go up.

He saw Marvolo watching them from the doorway, and Harry slowly backed up. He felt his foot leave the platform; there was no staircase that side of the platform, and it was a long way down.

He brought his foot back, trying not to tumble off the edge.

The creature stared at him, and he stared straight back.
Below them he heard a loud sound, and something heavy walking about. Harry quickly glanced down, taken aback as he saw what looked like a giant beneath them.

The figure looked down too, looking fearful, and then it fled, jumping over Harry's head to the window above him.

The jump created a gust of strong wind above him, and then he was falling towards the ground.

X

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter you're in for a treat. I'm splitting it in two, so they'll be shorter chapters, but it works better that way (I'll upload them at the same time though, or maybe a day in between.) The first part will be done in Draco and Tom's POV (and maybe Luna's too), and the second will be my Hallowe'en chapter, so make sure you're ready for the 31st. See you then.
Chapter Notes

I've decided to give you this half of the chapter early (be aware though, that I'm naming them as separate chapters so they match up with the number of chapters xD) I hope you enjoy it.

X

Draco's POV

X

Draco was seething as he picked himself up from the floor with shaky legs.

He could feel the primal rage bubbling inside him, and his nails drew blood as they dug into his palms as he clenched his fists too tight.

Voldemort smirked at him, and he knew his eyes must have flashed the bright amber that shone whenever his emotions were too volatile. Luna had mentioned it during their secret rendezvous' at night, though she rather liked it. Draco didn't because it was just another reminder of the cursed life he now led.

The amber would flash, no matter how he tried to disguise his eyes. Though he would never tell a soul, Harry's suggestion of Muggle contact lenses had been the best solution for the general hiding of them; of course as far as everyone else knew he used a Glamour charm.

He scowled as he thought of Harry again; it was all his fault he had spent the last fifteen minutes under the Cruciatus Curse.

The boy hadn't turned up to their usual meeting place, and Draco had waited, but still nothing happened; not even a message was sent. That pointless waiting made him two minutes late; five seconds late was too late for the Dark Lord, and he had paid the price for it. He was further tortured for not having killed Dumbledore yet, some more for not having found the Death Eaters a way into Hogwarts, and a lot more torture simply for the fact Voldemort was a sadistic bastard.

He took one glance at Riddle, and saw that his torture was not over yet.

"Get out of my sight, beast," the Dark Lord hissed menacingly, and Draco scrambled from the room as fast as he could on shaky limbs.

He could scent Riddle walking behind him, but he said nothing, knowing the Dark wizard wouldn't respond well to it.

Draco pulled the door to his room open, and then an elegant hand slammed it shut.

Draco turned slowly, not surprised to see a vicious Tom Riddle standing before him. Draco wondered faintly if Riddle knew Harry had told Draco his real name, but even if he did, Harry wouldn't be punished for it, at least not publically. Remembering the Gryffindor made his anger
rage again, especially knowing that Harry was the only reason Riddle was here.

"Aren't you going to invite me inside?" Riddle asked politely, but Draco could hear the cold, menacing tone in the voice.

Draco opened his door and gestured for Tom to step inside. He shut the door and opened his mouth to tell Riddle he had no idea of Harry's whereabouts, but he was writhing on the floor in pain before he had a chance.

"Where is he?" Riddle demanded, standing over Draco with his wand still shooting red sparks.

"I-I don't know," Draco stammered, and Tom cast Cruciatius again; Draco had to bite down on his fist to stop from screaming.

"Go and find him, you worthless animal," Riddle hissed, bringing Draco to his feet with a wave of his hand. "I don't know what Harry sees in you, but remember, dear Draco," Tom mocked, his eyes flashing as red as the torturous curse, "you could be chopped to bits and thrown in the River Thames, and Harry would believe whatever I tell him; the cowardly werewolf who chose to run away from his worthless life, perhaps."

Draco shuddered, because he knew that Riddle was right; Harry would believe whatever Tom told him, and strangely, Draco didn't pity him.

X

Draco landed back at Hogwarts, for once having a shaky landing, though he knew if he hadn't been tortured so much he'd have stayed presentable, but it wasn't like anyone saw.

He sighed; he had no idea where to start looking for Harry. Once he found him, he was going to release all his anger on the boy, and then drag him to Riddle.

As he neared the Slytherin common rooms, he heard a screech and then Pansy was upon him.

"Draco? What are you doing back?" the girl asked, grabbing hold of his arm and dragging him towards the staircase which would take them to the higher levels of the castle. "Guess what happened?"

"How can I guess? I've not been here," Draco replied shortly; he wasn't in the mood for gossip.

"I'll tell you the least interesting thing first," Pansy continued, not deterred in the slightest by Draco's lack of enthusiasm. "You know that oaf Hagrid? Apparently he has a brother who's full giant, and Longbottom and Granger accidently released him, and he came storming into the castle."

"Hopefully he'll finally get the sack then; Father was furious when he was allowed to stay after that hideous creature of his nearly killed me," Draco scowled, thinking back to the incident with the Hippogriff in his third year; the animal had been slaughtered though, which was some consolation.

"But that's not the main thing that happened," Pansy said, dragging him over towards a group of students who were watching Filch scrub at the floor frantically. Draco's nose turned up as he eyed the Squib, but then his nose caught scent of something…was that blood?

He looked down at the ground, and Filch was indeed scrubbing away at blood stains on the floor. The students were all standing around, gossiping with each other and pointing up at the staircase above them, where Aurors were marching about; they had been at Hogwarts far too much lately.
"You know Harry? Harry Potter?" Pansy asked.

Draco frowned; of course he knew who Harry was—wait, what did he have to do with anything? He felt his blood freeze as his eyes zoned in on the red stains on the stone floor.

"He fell from the staircase; third floor people are saying," Pansy told him, a serious look now on her face.

"What?" Draco questioned, his brain not quite processing what Pansy had said; surely Harry hadn't fallen. "What's happened? Is he-?"

"He's alive," Pansy finished for him, but she looked grim. "I can't imagine he'll be in much of a state though; heard he's in the Hospital Wing."

Draco suddenly felt sick, and all the rage he felt towards Harry seemed to disintegrate.

"Draco?" he heard Pansy's voice say, sounding strangely distant. She repeated it, clearer. "Draco? Are you alright? You've gone really pale."

"I need to-" Draco started, but he was running before he could tell Pansy what he was doing, and he ignored her calling after him.

He sprinted down to the dungeons, and as he fiddled with readying the Portkey doubts started to kick in.

If he told Riddle, there was a chance the sociopath would blame him and torture him for what happened, or likely do worse. But he couldn't hide from Riddle forever, and doing that would also involve avoiding the Dark Lord, which definitely wouldn't end well, plus Riddle would do worse to him if he hid what he knew. Either way it didn't look good.

He took a deep breath before activating the Portkey, and when he landed he ran to Riddle's room before he could change his mind.

He hesitated for only a moment before knocking; even if Riddle reacted badly, he knew wasting time would cause a worse reaction.

Riddle answered and looked at Draco impatiently, narrowing his eyes when he saw Draco was alone.

"Well?" Riddle snarled, making Draco shiver, and he realised he didn't dare tell this terrifying man in front of him, but his Occlumency shields would never stand against Riddle, no matter how surprisingly good a teacher Aunt Bellatrix was.

"He's in the Hospital Wing," Draco blurted out before he chickened out. Riddle's expression darkened. "He-fell from the Grand Staircase," he stammered, flinching as Riddle immediately had a wand pressed against his throat.

"That's not possible," Riddle hissed. "There are wards preventing people from falling."

"I don't know, but there's Aurors all over the place and blood on the floor and-" he yelped as Riddle hit him with his wand, but the pain he expected never happened. Draco opened the eyes he hadn't realised he had shut, just in time to see Tom wave his wand over himself, morphing into Draco.

"Stay in your room until I return," Riddle demanded.
Draco was more than happy to comply.

X

Tom's POV

X

Tom grabbed the Portkey Draco had left him, focusing his magic on the Horcrux inside of Harry so the wards would become confused and allow him entry to Hogwarts.

He wasn't surprised when it worked and he had a gentle landing in the dungeon corridor of Hogwarts.

He headed straight for the first floor; that was where the Hospital Wing had been during his time at Hogwarts, and he doubted that had changed.

He was curious as to whether the Malfoy boy had been telling the truth, or if he had just been listening to the mindless gossip that pleased the simple minds of the students. If Harry had been involved in a fall, however, he found it peculiar he was able to fall through the wards; they must have been removed before hand, which would have made the fall intentional, either on Harry's or another's part; he was certain it was the latter.

He blew a strand of blond hair from his eyes, and made sure to straighten his posture as he prepared to enter the Hospital Wing.

He had taken no more than a step inside when the matron seemed to descend on him, a scowl across her face.

"I must ask that you leave, Mr. Malfoy," she said sharply, "unless you are having a medical emergency."

Tom scowled back. "I'd like to see Harry," he told the woman. "I'm his friend; surely I'm entitled to?"

"He is with family," the matron said in a dangerous tone; if only she knew who she was really talking to.

"He's okay to come and see him, thank you, Madame Pomfrey," a small voice said, and the pair looked to see Harry's sister watching them with red eyes. She sniffed, rubbing her nose with the back of her hand; Tom found her rather disgusting.

"Very well," Madame Pomphrey agreed, "but if I hear one snide comment from you, Mr. Malfoy, then you're out."

Tom decided she wasn't going to be working at Hogwarts much longer; who was this woman to think she could talk to him that way? If she was any sort of real Healer, she'd be working at St. Mungo's, not a school.

"Thank you for coming to see him," the girl muttered to him as they walked over to Harry's bed; he believed her name was Heather, but he didn't particularly care. "It's nice to know he has a friend who cares."

Tom made a 'hmm'ing noise, brushing aside the curtain surrounding Harry's bed impatiently and looking at the boy in the bed, paying no attention to those standing around him, though he could
sense their questioning looks. He heard Heather explaining who he supposedly was to them.

Harry's body was covered by the thick blankets up to his collar bone, but even so he still managed to look so small in the hospital bed. He was asleep, or perhaps unconscious, and his head was bruised, with large patches of murky green and brown across his face.

The matron had admittedly done a good job cleaning Harry up, but Tom wished he could have seen how the boy looked when he had first fallen; he longed to understand Harry completely; understand how his mind ticked, and how his body worked too.

He shifted as he imagined slicing the bruising on Harry's face open; watch the blood mar the stained skin, trailing down his soft features. Perhaps it would pool on Harry's lips, feeding the boy with his own life.

He shifted again, making sure his trousers were arranged suitably so he didn't gain unnecessary attention. He wanted to curse Harry for making him react in these unusual ways, if only he didn't need Harry to understand why, and he had to understand. He understood everything apart from Harry.

Tom knew what being attractive was; he was aware of his own looks, after all. He knew too well that every girl swooned over him while he was at school, and the boys who were gay or bisexual, even if lying about their sexuality to avoid hatred, liked him too. He had classically handsome looks that struck a chord with everyone, and he didn't mind; an attractive face made it easier for him to manipulate people, but he just never found that attraction in other people; until he met Harry.

Of course, Harry wasn't as attractive as he was; Harry wasn't short, but he wasn't tall either. His hair was a mess and his features weren't chiseled enough, while he was slim but not toned. However he was attractive to Tom; perhaps it was because despite the differences in their looks, they were still so similar, yet despite that, Harry was still so innocent and corruptible. He seemed to be just begging to be violated, manipulated and torn open from the inside, and Tom wanted desperately to do that to him.

And Harry's eyes; they were like his mother's, but hers were tainted with motherly determination, whereas Harry's were free and open, and most importantly they were blinded to Tom's darkest side, which made gaining control so much easier. Tom had a theory their colour matched the colour of emerald exactly. He had been so convinced, he was certain he could remove Harry's eyes and replace them with the green gem, and nobody would be able to tell the difference. He had even sat one night when Harry was sleeping, with the cold tip of a blade resting on Harry's face, an emerald clutched in the other hand, as he contemplated digging the knife in and carrying out his thought. In the end he had decided blindness was not a trait he wanted in a person who was carrying part of his soul, and had thrown the blade down.

That wasn't the first time he had sat by Harry with a knife in his hand however, and most of his ideas would cause less permanent damage. He just wanted to see inside Harry; he longed to slice his skin open and watch the blood drip. He would become unbearably aroused at those thoughts, and he soon discovered that fucking Harry helped him explore his urges, as he could be inside of Harry; feel what it was like.

He licked his lips, clearing his mind so he wouldn't give away his reaction to Harry's family.

He finally tore his eyes away from the teenager, glancing at the parents.

James Potter, the pathetic alcohol addict; it was worse that he was a Pure-blood, was trembling,
and his eyes never left his son. Lily Potter, the woman Tom would have gladly had on his side had she not been a Mudblood, was red-eyed, but she looked fierce too, and she had been able to get control over her emotions; Tom had to admit that was a surprise. Weren't mothers supposed to be weepy, useless things? His own mother certainly had been; she couldn't even give birth without messing it up.

The door to the Hospital Wing swung open, and then a man was running inside; if Tom hadn't needed use of Draco Malfoy, he would have cursed Remus Lupin right there, and it was probably Malfoy who had told Remus what had happened.

Tom and Voldemort had both insisted Lupin stay behind, and spy on the rogue werewolves from a distance. They had both forbidden him from leaving, and as he had nowhere else to go he had no choice but to stay, but he had clearly found a reason to fight now.

"Remus?" he heard James say in shock, his voice a mixture of anger and joy.

"Is Harry ok? I came as soon as I heard," the werewolf muttered, running and collapsing onto his knees by Harry's bed.

"You're alive? Where have you been? Why haven't you been in touch?" James questioned, and the anger rose with each word.

"James!" Lily hissed warningly, keeping her eyes firmly on Harry. "I'm glad you're here, Remus; Harry needs you."

Remus had only just noticed him, and he visibly gulped as he realised who this Draco really was.

"Can I talk to you in private?" Madame Pomfrey asked, coming over to the group and gesturing to James, Lily and Remus, who nodded and left to the matron's office, albeit reluctantly.

As they left, Luna came running in; she smiled at Tom, and he knew she knew exactly who he was, but then she turned her focus to Harry. She reached a hand out to gently stroke his face.

"Poor thing," she cooed, and Heather started to cry again. Luna gathered her in her arms, allowing the younger girl to sob into her shoulder. Luna threw a look at Tom and he smirked at her.

Harry made a small noise, and the three of them turned their attention back to the boy.

He seemed to be dreaming; his hands were twitching violently beneath the covers, and his eyelids were fluttering. He groaned again, and suddenly the adults were rushing back to Harry's bedside.

"What's wrong with him?" James demanded to know, as he and Remus tried to hold the now thrashing boy down.

Madame Pomfrey and Lily, a Healer herself, both Muggle and Magical, looked perplexed. Tom presumed Harry must be having a vision of some sort, though very likely unwillingly, and he had a fairly good idea of who had caused it, but he would prefer Harry to stay trapped longer, so he had more information to work out how Slytherin had worked it.

What none of them expected was for Harry to jerk upwards, his eyes snapping open.

X
Here's the second half of the chapter. It's nothing more than a fun chapter (well not 'fun' fun, but you know what I mean) because I think the story has been very plotty lately.

Warning for slight/implied sexual content, attempted non-con, and unintentional self-injury.

X

Falling was a strange feeling.

It was oddly satisfying; the feeling of being free. It was like you were just there, completely weightless and away from the world.

It was also terrifying, knowing gravity was there to pull you back to reality. It was worse not knowing when the ground was coming; all Harry could see beyond his flailing arms was the ceiling and staircase getting further and further away, and no matter how much he reached he couldn't get close enough to hold on.

Marvolo Slytherin's head swam into view high above him, there was white flash and then he felt a split second of excruciating pain before his mind went blank.

X

Harry blinked his eyes a number of times as he tried to bring himself back into full consciousness.

He remembered falling far onto the bottom floor of Hogwarts, but the ground beneath him was not the cold, stone floor he expected; it was soft, but rough and prickly, and there was sky above his head, rather than the upper areas of the old castle.

He frowned, pushing himself from the ground with ease, feeling no pain as he went. He had fallen four floors; surely he would have sustained some injury. He wondered if he had perhaps imagined it, but that still didn't give him an explanation for how he got to where he was now.

Wherever he was, it was very bleak, though oddly beautiful at the same time. There were rolling hills and fields as far as he could see, and there was a low covering of plants, maybe ferns, that had turned brown and brittle. There were sharp, dramatic rocks and he could hear the sound of a ferocious river nearby. The cold chill in the air, and the frosty patches suggested it was somewhere more northerly.

The area seemed familiar; he vaguely recalled going on family camping holidays when he was very young; they had stopped going when Harry was five after he managed to lose his family and nearly drowned. He had never been near a river since, and the only holidays they took were in hotels and he was closely guarded.

He patted down his body for his wand, but he couldn't find it on him, and a search in the nearby
area turned up hopeless too. His mind seemed unable to focus on Ancient Magic, leaving him completely defenceless.

He always felt defenceless without a wand, so he wrapped his arms around himself, both for comfort and warmth, and decided he would have to find a way out of where ever he was.

He headed up a steep hill, his legs brushing against the dying plants, and the ground crunching beneath his feet.

He stopped as he heard shouting; there had been no other signs of life until then, but the shouting sounded like somebody was in danger.

He ran towards the direction of the shouting, and when he reached the top of the hill he could see what was below.

It steered into a deep valley, with large, leafless trees dotted about, with a powerful river running across it and up the slopes on the other side.

He hurried down the hill, still hearing the shouting, and it sounded like that of a small child's, but he was unable to see anyone.

As he got closer to the bottom, he heard frantic splashing; his blood froze as he eyed the river, horrified at the thought that a child may have fallen in.

Harry caught sight of a small hand poking up from the river slightly to the side of him, and a small head appeared with enough time to shout before it was back under the coursing stream.

He looked around, desperate to find anything to throw to the child to grab onto, but he saw nothing that would be of any use; he wanted to throw himself on the floor and cry, but he knew that wouldn't save anyone.

He edged towards the river, jumping back as he saw how rough the flow really was. He shook his head; he couldn't be scared; a child's life was at stake.

He crouched down near the edge, reaching a hand forward to grab towards the kid.

"Take my hand," he shouted when the head appeared again. He pressed slightly more forwards, keeping his other hand firmly against the ground to steady himself.

A small, wet hand grabbed hold of his, and he pulled the child towards the river bank.

Suddenly the child stopped moving forwards, and it became very still in the water, with it's head forwards so only a mop of dark hair was visible.

Harry felt sick at the thought he might have been too late, but then he heard laughter coming from the child; but it was not a child's laughter at all; no, it was much too menacing.

The head titled back, and Harry would have let go had the kid's grip not been like a vice on his hand.

The child was him.

He was Harry exactly as he had been when he was five, except Harry didn't ever hold the expression of a psychotic maniac on his face, and his eyes had certainly never glowed red.

The alternate-Harry grinned evilly, showing a mouth full of sharp, blood-stained teeth, before it
yanked, pulling Harry cleanly into the water.

He only had enough time to realise the child had disappeared before panic overtook him as the water rushed over him.

He had developed a fear of deep water after the incident as a child, and though Lily had tried to make him have swimming lessons to help, he had done nothing but scream at the swimming pool and his parents eventually gave up. At the time he had been pleased, but now he regretted that decision greatly.

He tried desperately to kick his legs so he could swim to the side, but the current was too strong, and water poured over his head, each time making his heart race more and giving him an even stronger sense of panic.

He felt like he couldn't breathe, and he was hyperventilating, flailing his arms wildly as he tried to hold onto anything that could save him.

The current pulled him down the river, and he was starting to send more time submerged than not. He knew the water on his face was partly due to tears, as he reached the intense conclusion he would drown very soon, and the river would be his undiscovered grave.

He moved his limbs violently, thrashing as he felt the water seemingly getting heavier above his head.

He was grateful when he finally blacked out.

X

Harry awoke face down, still soaking wet but breathing, on a hard wooden floor.

He coughed, water spilling from his mouth and onto the floor, and he shakily pushed himself up.

The river was behind him, still flowing angrily, but he had washed up into a house, the back wall of the building completely gone and open to the water.

It looked oddly like Grimmauld Place, but that was nowhere near a river.

"I'm glad to see you're finally awake," a voice said from nowhere, causing Harry to jump, though he knew exactly who was speaking. "Your mind is truly a fascinating place, Harry," Marvolo stated once Harry had located him; standing in a darkened corner. "Those memories you locked deep away are fun to re-invent."

"What do you mean re-invent my memories?" Harry asked darkly, and Marvolo smirked.

"We're inside your mind right now," Marvolo told him, with a tone of annoyance, like it should have been obvious. "Only, I took it upon myself to make some changes. Don't fret though; you can die as many times as you like and you'll just wake up again here, which is lovely because drowning victims don't leave pretty corpses."

"We're inside my mind?" How have you-? What-?" Harry attempted to ask all of his questions, but he found the words were getting lost in his mouth; he had so much to try and understand, and Marvolo was not the sort of man who would patiently explain everything.

"I've taken your memories and added some different creations," the Dark wizard expanded. "The memory only leaves a fragment for you to experience again with the different elements, so you
won't be reliving your memories; rather you'll be at the same place, and experience my changes. It's intriguing to see your reaction; you're my little experiment, you see; if this works well then I can use the spell as a weapon."

Then he vanished with a pop.

Harry growled, kicking out at a random chair which flew across the room with a loud clatter. In reaction to the noise, heavy footsteps sounded above; Harry felt his heart beating fast. Who knew what Marvolo had done up there?

If he had used Harry's memories to create situations, they were likely in Grimmauld Place, and that house was dangerous enough without a madman adding stuff in.

He jumped when water splashed at his feet. He turned, eyes widening as he took in the sight of a large, round figure emerging from, and made from the water. As it grew in height, it pushed more water into the open house.

It roared, bringing it's head down and crashing just beside Harry, and he had no choice but to run from the room.

The doorway led into the main hall, with it's rotten wooden floors, old creaky doors and rickety staircase.

He made for the front door, but he jumped back as a wall of flames appeared, blocking every possible exit aside from the staircase, where he could still hear the floorboards creaking on the floor it led to.

With each step, more fire sprung up behind him, and it forced him to go to one room in particular; the one with the slow footsteps inside.

Beyond the door he could hear low, guttural sounds and something dripping.

He could feel the heat getting stronger, and deciding whatever was in the room would be the least bad of the two options, he pushed the door open forcefully and stepped inside, bracing himself for what he would find, but the room was empty of anyone but him.

It was a bedroom, with a dark wooden bed, and a desk and a set of drawers made from the same wood that the bed was made of. A thick layer of dust covered everything in the room, and the window was covered with a murky green, slime type substance.

He cautiously moved over to the desk; the top was empty, bar a battered old diary lying on top. He picked it up and opened to the front page, where neatly written in the corner were the words 'property of Regulus Black'.

Regulus; that had been Sirius' brother. Sirius hadn't mentioned him much, only that he had been a Death Eater but killed for chickening out. He had seen a picture of the brothers once, and they looked very alike, except Regulus kept his appearance smart and well-groomed, while Sirius tried to rebel against his families values, even with his image.

Harry placed the diary down and opened the top drawer, and swore outloud as he saw the golden, gleaming locket that housed a Horcrux. Had Regulus had it all along, or did Kreacher just hide it in his room? Or was it Marvolo who put it somewhere Harry would find?

He slammed the drawer shut, not wanting to create another human form of Voldemort, when he heard the shuffling of feet behind him, and then someone was panting in his ear, breathing hot
breath on him.

Harry froze, not even daring to breathe as a pale blue hand reached in front of him; the fingernails were blackened, and skin was worn away so much in places that Harry could see the bone beneath.

The hand grabbed hold of the drawer handle and pulled it open, reaching in and pulling out the locket. It stopped for a moment, then threw the locket aside, moving to the second drawer and producing a sharp silver blade.

Harry ducked and jumped to the side just as the knife hit the air where his neck had been.

Harry turned to look at who was there, and immediately wished he hadn't.

It was hard to tell, but Harry knew instantly it was Regulus Black, only, he didn't look like he had when he had been human. No, this Regulus had skin that was tainted blue, with long, lank dark hair hanging in strands from his head. One eyeball was dangling from a red band from the eye socket, and patches of skin were open and rotten.

Harry would have said it looked like a zombie, but Regulus was a wizard, and witches and wizards didn't know what zombies were; instead they had Inferi. Harry had never seen one before, but he pretty sure he was looking at one now.

He jumped out of the way again as the blade swung once more, and he pulled the door to the room open, almost crying in relief as he saw the way was now clear of flames.

The knife splintered the wood in the door frame by his head, so he ran, stopped only when a clammy hand gripped his ankle and pulled him to the floor. The Inferi pulled Harry's body towards him with surprising strength, and Harry could hear the teeth clenching, biting down as though he longed to eat Harry's flesh.

He desperately pulled for his leg to come free, and he jumped up when he had managed it, and with a daring leap he jumped over the banister and onto the floor below, just so he could save a bit of time running away.

He landed roughly, scraping his hands, arms and legs and he felt a searing pain across his forehead. He forced himself up, limping to the front door. He broke into a run when Regulus burst through the floorboards, unexplainably, and clawed at his face.

He covered the bleeding wounds with one hand, pressing his other against the door to push it open. He tripped over seemingly nothing as he passed through the doorway, and fell face first onto a soft carpet, that was definitely not part of a typical London street.

He couldn't hear the sounds of an Inferi any longer; instead he heard the sounds of flesh slapping against flesh, and heavy panting.

He didn't particularly want to get up, feeling his face flush from what he was hearing, despite the pain he was in, but after a couple of minutes he realised he couldn't handle it anymore.

He nervously pushed himself to his feet, and blanched at the sight.

It was him, on a bed on his hands and knees, with thick chains wrapped around his wrists and ankles tying him to the bedposts. A blindfold was across his eyes, and a ball gag was shoved in his mouth, but the worst part was the figure of Marvolo behind the other-him, thrusting hard into the
Marvolo winked at him, making Harry cast his eyes down to the floor in disgust.

"Get off him-me," Harry said through gritted teeth, and he was answered with a shallow laugh.

"Why would I do that? I'm rather enjoying myself," Marvolo told him, and Harry could hear his smirk. "Being inside someone else's mind has some rather enjoyable opportunities," the man continued mockingly, his words interrupted by shallow moans and sounds of pleasure, which made Harry feel sick to his stomach.

He eyes caught sight of a foot dangling at an odd angle at the side of the bed. He moved slightly so he could see what it was, and Marvolo laughed cruelly as Harry exclaimed. It was Tom, or had been; now the body was bent at impossible angles, and the face had been beaten so hard it was barely recognisable. Even though Harry knew this was simply a Tom from his memories, he felt tears fill his eyes anyway, and he blinked them away.

He jolted when a cold hand gripped his arm, and Marvolo forced him to look at him. The man had a mad gleam in his eyes, and he was holding tightly onto a thick piece of rope.

"It's your turn now," Marvolo stated, dragging Harry over to the bed.

With a snap of his fingers the other Harry was gone, leaving room for Marvolo to settle himself in a seating position on the bed, pulling Harry between his legs. A strong arm wrapped around Harry's chest, and a hand yanked his head back to rest on Marvolo's shoulder.

Harry fought against the grip desperately, but Marvolo was much stronger than he was.

With another snap, the ropes had bound Harry's hands behind his back, while his legs were trapped in the grip of Marvolo's own, leaving the sociopath's hands free reign to abuse the rest of his body.

Cold hands worked their way under his shirt, and sharp nails dug into his skin, trailing from his stomach up to his chest, and then going back down.

Another hand moved down his body and under his trousers, and Harry squirmed frantically, only stopping when Marvolo squeezed him hard; too hard, causing him to cease his struggles and whimper.

Harry shut his eyes, wishing he could be far, far away from there.

His eyes snapped open as suddenly he wasn't, and the tight, terrifying grip of Marvolo had vanished, ropes were no longer digging into his skin, and the area he was in was no longer a bedroom, but a room filled with mirrors.

The walls were like that of a fun fair, and the ground was a wild design of multi-coloured shapes. Mirrors lined the walls, some creating distorted reflections.

It was a typical fun-house that Harry had been in plenty of during his childhood; they had gone to the fair every time it came to their area, after all.

His ears perked up when he heard strange cackling echoing throughout the room, but the only person he saw was himself, reflected a number of times.

He found himself drawn to one mirror in particular, because something seemed off about it.
He waved his arm, and the reflection waved back.

He stared straight at his reflection, and it stared straight back. But as he stared forwards, the reflection's eyes darted to the side, and it smirked.

Harry nearly jumped out of his skin.

Everything started to spin, and he felt the room closing in on him. He sunk to the floor, holding his hands out to try and stop the walls and mirrors from crushing him to death.

Then it stopped, and Harry was left in a tiny room, all four walls being mirrors. He stood very still, watching his reflection pace from mirror to mirror, eyeing him critically.

It paused, looking at Harry with an evil glint in it's eyes, and then it slammed it's head against the mirror.

Harry felt a force make him do the same, and his head collided with a mirror. He heard a sickening smack, and he felt a warm liquid pouring down his face.

His reflection grinned, producing a knife from his pocket and dragging it across his wrist.

Harry's hand started to move to his own pocket of it's own accord, and his other hand stayed firmly in front of him, despite his desperation to move it, and he flinched as the blade slashed across his wrist.

'Take me away from here,' he thought longingly, but this time nothing happened, and he yelped in pain as his other wrist received the same treatment.

His reflection was now carving something in his arm, and his eyes stayed firmly shut as his hand wrote a word into his arm.

Blood poured down the limb, coupled with searing pain.

His opened his teary eyes, wiping the blood away to reveal the word 'freak' carved into his arm.

He started as a crash sounded from within the mirror, and he watched as a clown appeared by his reflection.

The clown was dressed in cheerful clothes, with colourful make-up, but the clothes were torn and bloody, the hair was matted and the make-up was smeared. The teeth were sharp and the fingers were clawed, and it leapt at his reflection, and as it fell, so did Harry, and he felt invisible claws ripping across his chest.

He screamed, punching the air as he fought what was technically nothing.

He turned his head to watch the mirror, flinching as the clown grabbed his reflections' head and smashed it into the group. His own head copied, and his world dizzied at the collision.

His eyes rolled back in his head, and then the clown and the other Harry were in front of his eyes, the clown tearing at the reflected Harry's skin, ripping open the self-inflicted cuts on his arms, and slashing his torso.

Harry felt his arms try and fight the crazed clown off, and he fought frenziedly, blinking as he tried to fight the image from his head.

He brought his hands up to his face, clawing at his eyes to try and stop the bloody images and
make the pain stop.

He felt Marvolo's presence leave his mind, and everything started to shatter.

Then everything stopped completely, and he felt hands holding him down, he heard somebody crying, and his eyes snapped open, bringing him back to reality.

X
Twenty Three

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

X

At first, Harry didn't recognise where he was; the room was bright white and hurt his eyes.

As the memories came flooding back, and he became aware of his whole body aching, he realised he was in the Hospital Wing, surrounded by people.

"Harry?" he heard someone exclaim; his mother.

James and Remus were directly in front of them—since when had they been back together? They tried to gently push Harry to lie back down, but the movement jolted a reaction in him.

"There are monsters in the school," he cried out without thinking, waving his arms wildly which sent intense pain jolting through them, one of them hurting much more than the other.

He felt something wet on his sleeve, but he ignored it as he felt questioning glances.

"What do you mean monsters? The giant that was in the school?" James asked, not noticing the cause for the wetness; Lily did however.

"You're bleeding, Harry!" she shrieked, shoving James out of the way to roll up Harry's sleeve, despite Madame Pomfrey's protest.

"No," Harry continued, trying to shove his mother away. "It attacked me and made me fall." He never considered it might be a bad idea to tell them this.

Lily had managed to get his sleeve up, and she cried out at the sight, causing Madame Pomfrey to rush forwards.

"It must have been under a complex Glamour or Concealment charm," the Matron muttered, more to herself as she brandished her wand. "This changes things completely."

"Oh, sweetheart, what have you done to yourself?" Lily said tearfully, gently placing a hand on his face. Harry had no idea what she meant, and neither did his father.

"What do you mean, Lily?" the man asked, and a cold look came over her face.

"I told you Harry was having difficulties and you never believed me, and now the proof is right in front of you and you still can't see it," the red-head snapped, clearly not caring who was in the room to overhear.

James shuffled back in to the closely formed group, peering down over at Harry's arm, and he visibly paled.

Madame Pomfrey stepped back with a frown, leaving him with a cold feeling across his arm. He was finally able to look down, and he shivered at the sight; the word 'freak' was still carved into his arm, now scarred thanks to the Matron's work, and he instantly knew the conclusion his parents must have reached.
"I didn't do that," he said quietly, but his voice carried through the whole room.

In the long silence that followed, he took an opportunity to survey the room. His parents were on one side of his bed with Madame Pomfrey, while on the other were his sister, Remus, Luna, and Draco, but considering the body posture and facial expressions, he suspected it was Tom in Draco's body.

"You didn't do that to yourself?" Lily said finally, eyeing him with concern. "Is somebody hurting you? I want you to give me names straight away."

"Well, I did do it myself, but I didn't want to do it," Harry muttered, feeling he had got himself stuck in a hole, and everything he said just dug him deeper.

"Why did you do it if you didn't want to?" Madame Pomfrey asked gently, and Harry decided to stay silent. True, it wouldn't help the image they must be getting, but it was the better option than explaining everything about Marvolo.

The Matron made a small noise, and gathered Lily and James over to a corner where they spoke in hushed tones.

He looked over to the rest of his visitors; Remus gave him a small smile.

"How are you feeling?" he asked with a hoarse voice. "When I heard what had happened, well, I had quite the fright."

"Everywhere hurts," he answered simply, and Remus nodded with an understanding look.

"I'm sure it will. I got a quick recap while you were still unconscious; Madame Pomfrey had managed to mend the broken bones, stop the serious bleeding and check for signs of internal damage too. You had suffered internal bleeding but she fixed that too."

"It's fortunate you're a wizard," the body of Draco said; Harry knew it had to be Tom now. "Without Magical medicine you would be dead; Muggles would never be able to cure the injuries you suffered this well."

Harry glanced into the blond's eyes nervously, relieved when he saw there was no sign of anger.

"I didn't jump," Harry blurted out, as he noticed Remus and Heather both seemed to look particularly distressed. "I know that's what they think," he muttered, gesturing to his parents.

"You can't deny the reasons for their suspicions," Remus said calmly. "Having that said, I don't think you did try to commit suicide, but I'm not sure about this monster you've mentioned; I know for a fact Professor Dumbledore strengthened the wards around the castle as soon as he heard of Voldemort's return, so there's no way anyone could have got past them."

"There's other ways into the castle," Harry said, his heart sinking as he reached a horrifying realisation. "It's easy enough to spy on the castle, and there are so many passageways into it. Only one person has to be seen using one and then it's simple."

Remus seemed to understand Harry perfectly; Draco had used the tunnel under the Whomping Willow to get to the Shrieking Shack; Marvolo must have seen him.

"I'll get word to Dumbledore; tell him all the secret passages we know so he can shut them down; I can't believe we didn't think of this sooner," the man muttered, pinching the bridge of his nose.
"Don't some people need them though?" Heather said quietly, and they all turned to look at her. "I mean, I know there's Wolfsbane," she continued, turning to 'Draco', "but you can't stay in the castle; what if someone saw you? They'd drive you out of the school for sure."

"How did you figure that out?" Tom asked sharply; Draco would have denied the claims, but Tom wouldn't care about Draco's reputation.

"I grew up around a werewolf; I know the signs," she admitted. "I don't care, by the way, and I've kept it quiet. Oh, I don't blame you if someone did follow you in."

"You believe me?" Harry asked his sister, and she nodded.

"Harry?" his mother called gently, making the group look towards her. "We have a choice for you; you can either stay here or come home until you feel ready to go to school again."

Harry considered his options; if he went home, Lily would probably be over-protective and questioning, but Tom would be able to see him a lot more.

"I'll go home," he said eventually, glancing at Tom who nodded discreetly. Lily smiled, throwing a triumphant look to the sour faced Madame Pomfrey.

"Heather, honey, would you like to come too, just for a couple of days? I'm sure Professor McGonagall wouldn't mind," Lily asked, and Heather nodded.

"I'll call them for you now," Madame Pomfrey muttered, walking briskly towards her office.

"Remus, I expect you to join us too," Lily said sternly. "I'll see to Harry, but then you, James and I need to have a talk." Remus nodded solemnly.

Madame Pomfrey returned a short minute later, joined by Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape.

"How are you feeling Mr Potter?" McGonagall asked, eyeing Harry critically.

"Sore," he answered simply. The Transfiguration professor pursed her lips.

"I would imagine so," she answered. "Professor Dumbledore is unavailable at the moment, so I need to go over a couple of things with you in his place. First of all, all your homework and assignments will be postponed until your return, but you may only return if you consent to having an evaluation of your mental health to ensure you are suitable to carry on with your N.E. this year. I'm sorry; that's just protocol; the idea is you don't suffer unnecessary stress caused by exams."

Harry didn't respond, and instead just sat sulkily, gaining him a sympathetic look from the woman.

The adults gathered together again, moving away from Harry's bed so he couldn't hear them.

"We ought to get going," Luna said softly. "Feel better soon, Harry; I'll go and see what the Aurors missed."

"How do you know the Aurors missed anything?" Heather asked, making Luna smile.

"They didn't know what to look for," she sang, grabbing Tom's arm, who inclined his head slightly towards Harry before following Luna out. The look he gave him suggested he would see him very soon.

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The easiest way to return to the Potter home was for them all to Portkey, and when they landed, while Harry was almost collapsing from the pain of the travel, his mother had hurried to her medicine cabinet and made him down a potion that knocked him out almost straight away.

He slept dreamlessly and woke up the next morning, still in pain, but less than the day before, and feeling thoroughly refreshed.

This proved to be a bad thing however, as Lily, who had apparently slept in his room, deemed him well enough to talk, so she called in James, and now they were both looking at him with concerned looks.

"How do you feel today, Harry?" James asked while his wife eyed Harry critically.

"Better than yesterday," he shrugged, biting down on his lip as his parents exchanged a glance. He nervously rubbed a hand over his cut arm, wishing he could rub away the thing that had caused the problem. He didn't understand why that was the only injury that had carried over from his…dream? Whatever Marvolo had inflicted on him meant that now his parents were convinced he had attempted to kill himself, and babbling about Marvolo's creatures hadn't been a wise move, though in his defence he had suffered a head injury.

"Harry, you know you can talk to us about anything right?" his mother said gently, taking hold of his hand. "No matter how bad it is, I promise we'll listen and we won't get angry; that will only happen if we find out you've been doing something bad and hidden it from us, but if you're honest we'll appreciate it."

Harry nodded, keeping his eyes firmly downcast.

"Are you alright?" Lily pressed on. "Remus and Severus both said they believed you didn't jump, and I'm willing to believe that provided you tell me why the word freak is carved into your arm."

Harry sighed; he knew he couldn't hide the truth forever, but he knew his parents weren't ready to hear it all right now. Unfortunately he had to tell them something so they wouldn't try and lock him away or anything.

"I err, I was made to do it," he admitted after a while; Lily's grip tightened on his hand.

"Who?" she asked sharply, and he noticed James had gone extremely rigid.

"I don't know," he lied. He saw his hand trembling in his mother's grip, and he was unable to stop it. "He's a Death Eater," he said, twisting the truth to his advantage. "He's been stalking me; I think he Imperiused me or something. It was his fault I fell; he must have gotten in the castle through a secret passage."

"Remus mentioned that," James said softly. "I feel for the Malfoy boy, I really do, but we can't allow that tunnel to be open anymore; it's too much of a risk."

"Do you believe me then?" Harry asked quietly, and James nodded.

"I don't want to believe it, but I'd rather someone else hurt you than you do it to yourself. Well, I'd prefer no-one to hurt you, but you know what I mean," James said awkwardly; he never had been great with wording his feelings, but Harry understood him perfectly.

"I'm still not convinced," Lily muttered. "I can believe that a Death Eater is stalking you; anyone who follows Voldemort is surely capable of such things, but I don't think that's all that's happening with you. Ever since you had that diary something's been strange with you. I came to the
conclusion you were depressed, but now I think it's more than that. Even Severus is worried about you, but he wouldn't tell me why, and if he's covering for you I hate to think what--"

"I doubt he has Harry's best interests at heart," James interrupted with a scowl, and Lily looked furious.

"I trust Severus," she said defiantly. "And if you truly trusted me, you would trust my judgement too."

"I do trust you, but you can't deny he doesn't associate himself with, err, shady characters," James retorted.

"I know he's a spy," Harry cut in, causing his parents to look at him in shock. "I had to find that out myself because you never tell me anything. Why should I tell you about me if you treat me like a child?"

"You are a child," Lily snapped, but her expression softened. "There are some things that don't concern you, but we're your parents; we have a right to know what's going on in your life."

"Lily, you know that's not exactly true don't you? The part about nothing concerning him?" James said; Lily glared at him.

"James-" she started warningly, but her husband cut her off.

"He's sixteen; he's old enough to understand--"

"He's too young," Lily hissed; of course by now Harry's interest was at its peak.

"I'm not too young; if it's about me I want to know," he stated, looking determinedly at his parents.

"You remember that Peter Pettigrew guy you beat up?" James said; Harry nodded and Lily flapped her arms.

"James, if you say one more word--"

"How can he learn to tell us things if we don't do it for him? I trust him, which means I can tell him, and he should feel the same way about us," James argued, making Lily glare, which was normally a sign of her losing an argument.

"Fine, but I swear, if this upsets him in any way you'll be sleeping on the couch for a month," Lily said angrily, calming herself down enough to give Harry a pain relieving potion.

"Peter used to be one of my best friends at school. There was me, Sirius, Remus and Peter; the four Marauders; there weren't three of us like I said," James continued, and he looked like he was lost in painful memories. "We were all very close, but there was a war on at the time, and during war relationships get strained."

"You know how Neville was targeted by Voldemort?" Lily asked, apparently finally getting on-board of James' idea. "That was because of a prophecy, saying the one who could defeat Voldemort would be a boy born at the end of July in 1980, born to parents who had fought Voldemort three times and survived. Neville was one child that referred to; you were the other."

Harry's head was spinning; a prophecy had named either him or Neville as the ultimate enemy of Voldemort? He could have been the one with the lightning-bolt scar?
"We all went into hiding; we couldn't be sure who Voldemort would target. Dumbledore believed you were the most likely choice, being a Half-blood like Voldemort. We suspected there was a spy amongst us, so we chose Sirius as our Secret-Keeper because I knew I could trust him one hundred per cent. I know it's wrong, but we all suspected Remus because, being a werewolf, he stood a better chance on Voldemort's side. None of suspected little Peter could be a Death Eater, so Sirius persuaded us to change to Peter. That was the night the Longbottoms were murdered, and we found out from Snape later that Peter had been the spy all along," James said seriously, his face hard and expressions stern. "He would have betrayed us all, and led to our deaths."

"So if Voldemort hadn't have found out where the Longbottoms were staying, we could all be dead?" Harry questioned, and James nodded. Lily's reaction was interesting however, as she shifted in her seat with a guilty expression.

"What?" James asked, picking up on her reaction.

"That isn't exactly how it happened; I've kept this secret for years, but if we're sharing truths I may as well be honest too" she said quietly. "Remember how when you, Sirius and Peter were sorting out the arrangements for the Secret-Keeper, I took Harry for a walk?" James nodded. "I met Severus on the way. You see, Harry, I had lost contact with him at that point, so when I saw him walking, I wanted to just ignore him, but something snapped inside me right before he was almost too far gone, so I shouted to him. He responded to me, and I told him what was happening with Peter and he instantly seemed to become tense. I asked him what was wrong, and he told me Peter had been the spy. I was angry that he hadn't bothered to contact me to let me know, but mostly I was angry at Peter, but by the time I got home it was too late and Peter had gone. I didn't want to tell you, James, so I floo-ed Severus and told him, and begged for him to help, and later he told me he went to Voldemort's lair, restrained Peter, and gave away the Longbottoms details to Voldemort so he'd go for them and leave us alone. I never asked him to do that; I just wanted him to stop Peter, and I know it's wrong, but I'm still torn up over the fact I'm glad I decided to shout him. If I hadn't, we'd be dead. Yes, what happened to Alice and Frank was tragic, but my children's lives will always come first."

"So it's Snape's fault Alice and Frank are dead?" James said coldly. "And you never wanted to tell me?"

"I knew you wouldn't see it the same way I did," Lily snapped. "It's just another reason for you to try and vilify Severus."

"Well you have to be pretty fucked up to turn in an innocent couple," James retorted.

"To save us," Lily hissed, making James laugh bitterly.

"Us? More like you, Lily; you know how he feels about you," the man said dryly, and sensing a major argument coming on, Harry decided he had to intervene.

"Oww," he hissed, clutching his head, and instantly his parents' rage seemed to vanish, replaced with worry.

"What's wrong?" his mother asked, gently examining him.

"I've got an awful headache," he groaned, pressing his forehead firmly against his mattress.

He heard clanking, and then a potion vial was shoved under his nose, and he drank it with a false sense of urgency.
"We'll let you get some rest," Lily said calmly. "Call us if you need anything."

"Stay strong, Prongslet," James said affectionately, ruffling Harry's head with a light touch, making Harry smile.

Harry felt Tom's presence almost immediately after they shut the door behind them.

"If you feel like committing suicide, I strongly recommend you go higher than the third floor," the Dark wizard said casually, and Harry smiled as he recognised Tom's attempt at humour.

"It was nice of you to come visit me at school," Harry said, budging over so Tom could sit beside him. He threw back his covers and then re-covered them both with the blanket. Tom raised an eyebrow but said nothing. "It was dangerous though; you could have been caught."

"Who do you think would have found me out and confronted me?" Tom asked with a dangerous look.

"Nobody, really," Harry admitted. "But Dumbledore might have noticed if he was there, and then he'd have taken it out on me."

"How was it you ended up alone when I specifically told you not to?" Tom pressed on; Harry scowled.

"Longbottom...hardly a surprise," he muttered. "He was telling me all about this history lesson Dumbledore had given him about you, and then he ran off without me."

"A history lesson?" Tom asked sceptically.

"He didn't tell me much; only that you grew up in a horrible orphanage," Harry answered, and he watched as Tom's eyes narrowed.

"I understand what happened based on the conversation you had with Lupin," Tom drawled, changing the subject. "But I am unable to piece together what happened to you while you were unconscious. There is a block in your mind which has nothing to do with your Occlumency."

"That was Marvolo too," Harry told him. "I met him in my mind, I think. He said he had made a spell to get into people's memories and alter them, and make the person live them again; apparently I was his experiment."

"I had always wondered if that was possible," Tom said after a while. "Curious how even years later he finally tested our theories."

"I sort of died too, but I didn't because he said I couldn't stay dead in my mind," Harry continued. "I drowned, then I met Marvolo in Grimmauld Place and he told me all of that, then he set an Inferi on me, tried to rape me, and then made my reflection and a clown attack me."

Tom's expression darkened.

"Tom?" Harry questioned, frowning as Tom's eyes seemed to glow red.

"Excuse me one moment," he said after a period of silence, and then he disappeared, coming back minutes later with hands that were stained with blood.

"What-?" Harry started, but Tom hushed him by pressing a bloodied finger to his lips.

"It isn't his, unfortunately," Tom said, but he seemed to want to say no more on the matter.
regarding the state of him. "When did the carving on your arm come into play?"

"My reflection did it," Harry answered. "It's the only injury I woke up with."

"I believe Slytherin must have caused that," Tom mused. "It's a pity I can't see what went on; it sounds rather fascinating."

"It was scary," Harry affirmed. "Drowning was as terrifying as I remembered, and I never want to see an Inferi again."

"Why an Inferi? Have you had a run-in with one before?" Tom asked, and Harry shook his head.

"No; it was at Grimmauld Place, and, err, I should have told you before I guess, but in real life I found a Horcrux there within Salazar Slytherin's locket. In the vision thing I found it in Regulus Black's room, and I wondered if Kreacher hid it or even found it there; he's my House-Elf."

"At least you didn't activate the soul within that one," Tom said sharply. "I can't imagine why you wouldn't even consider telling me," he drawled, making Harry feel somewhat guilty. "Will you excuse me once more?"

He was gone before Harry could answer, and when he finally returned he looked fierce.

"Did you go and find the locket?" Harry asked, and Tom nodded. "What have you done to it?"

"Nothing yet," Tom told him. "In fact, I was rather hoping you could join me."

"Join you doing what?" Harry asked slowly.

"The locket had been removed unknowingly from its original place. Dumbledore is hunting down the Horcruxes, and I have a strong belief he knows the supposed location of the locket. From what you said, if he's showing Longbottom clips of my past, it is all leading to clues of where Voldemort hid his Horcruxes. When Dumbledore came to the orphanage to give me my Hogwarts letter, he spoke to the owner, who told him stories about me, including one involving the cave where the locket was hidden," Tom stated, and he looked thoughtful. "We need to put the locket back, so he will destroy it."

"So the diary, the diadem and now the locket will be gone; what's left?" Harry asked, and Tom studied him for a moment.

"There's a ring, a cup and Nagini," the man finally told him, and he looked displeased at sharing the information.

"A ring? Dumbledore has been wearing a single ring on his dead hand," Harry muttered, and to his surprise Tom smiled cruelly.

"Two left," he stated. "If you can, I would like you to get a closer look at the ring so I can know for definite."

"What about Marvolo? Do you know what his Horcrux is yet?" Harry questioned.

"You needn't worry about him, my dear; trust me to take care of him," Tom answered, taking hold of Harry's hand, caressing the back of it lightly with his fingers.

"What are you going to do once they're both dead?" Harry asked, curious as to what Tom's actual plans were.
"You know what they are," Tom answered simply; Harry shook his head.

"I know you want to take over," he argued, "but that's all. I don't understand how you're going to manage to stay in the shadows and then just take Voldemort's place."

"Do you doubt my skill?" Tom questioned coldly, his fingers snapping tightly shut on Harry's hand.

"No; I just want to know. My parents have finally accepted that I'm old enough to hear the truth. If you want me to trust you, you have to trust me; at least a little bit," he added as an afterthought.

"How is your studying going regarding the Ancient Egyptian magic you evoked?" Tom asked, making Harry scowl.

"What does that have to do with-?" Harry started; Tom silenced him with a single dark look.

"Answer me," he ordered, sounding so cold Harry shivered.

"I've kind of lost track of it, what with everything else," he muttered awkwardly, refusing to meet Tom's eyes.

"Start it again; it will become very useful," Tom demanded.

"There was a man; something Outterridge. He was locked away in Mentis Morbo Asylum for performing Ancient magic; I want to talk to him," Harry stated, and he was surprised when Tom nodded.

"I shall join you," he said, and Harry knew there would have been a catch. "I'm sure you're aware by now I am a master of disguise; nobody shall ever be aware we visited; not even Mr. Outterridge."

"But what does that have to do with anything?" Harry pressed on, not wanting to be left on the side lines anymore. He had been through so much with Marvolo lately, and Draco too, that he couldn't stand being nothing more than a damsel in distress constantly. He was craving more purpose, even if he hadn't truly realised it until now.

"You recall when I told you I had business to attend in Egypt?" Tom prompted, and Harry nodded. "I am looking for a Tablet created by an Ancient wizard; it is said whoever possesses the Tablet will have immense power and immortality, and the power to control the dead. Combined with owning the Deathly Hallows, I would be invincible, and you, my little Horcrux, would share my immortality and power. Your own magical skills are an asset far more valuable than you can imagine."

"Do you know where to find it?" Harry questioned; it was hard to imagine a Tablet holding so much power, and the ability to give a single man the capability to control the world. Perhaps if the owner was somebody not interested in world domination, then it wouldn't be a problem, but Tom definitely wanted control of the world.

"I have suspicions," Tom nodded. "You will make a far better guide than the locals."

"How will I? I've never been to Egypt," Harry said, confused at how Tom had been so misinformed, but the Dark wizard smirked.

"You are connected to the Ancient remains and artefacts, and you will assist me willingly," Tom said as if it were obvious, and Harry supposed he did have a point. "I remember you telling me you wished to be a Curse-Breaker, so you can have practice at that too."
"How can I be a Curse-Breaker if you want me with you when you're ruling over everyone?" Harry said under his breath, though Tom still heard him.

"Am I correct in thinking you have an image of me sat on a throne, with you by my side, a crown upon my head as I control the common peasants?" Tom asked, and Harry couldn't help but laugh at the picture his mind created.

"Well no," he started, until Tom stopped him speaking.

"You have a lovely laugh, darling," the older boy mused. "It brings out the light of innocence in your eyes."

"I'm hardly innocent," Harry disagreed. "I've been around you far too long; you corrupted my mind long ago."

Tom smirked. "You are delectably corruptible," he purred, "but compared to me, you are an innocent. I did far worse things than you could ever dream of by your age."

"I know I should be frightened of you when you say things like that," Harry whispered, "but I could forgive you for anything, because I can't imagine life without you now. You're like a drug I've become addicted to."

"Now you understand how I feel," Tom responded. "When I was at that orphanage, I used to dream of being alone forever, better than all the others, and having nobody good enough to stand beside me, but now, now I can only picture you with me."

"That scares you, doesn't it?" Harry commented, watching as Tom said nothing, looking fiercely at nothing in particular.

Harry wrapped his arms around Tom's middle, resting his head on Tom's chest, as the other boy's arms wrapped around him almost protectively.

"It's okay, whatever you feel," he said softly. "No matter how much to try to cheat death and gain more power, you're still human."

Tom stayed silent, but after a moment, he pressed a gentle kiss to the top of Harry's head, and Harry had never felt more loved.

X

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I have a random question which has nothing to do with this story-now, the ship of Tom and Hermione intrigues me, but because Harry and Tom are my OTP, I can't actually read any Tomione fics because it hurts too much. I figured I could manage it if there was a story which had Harry as a main character and paired with someone else, but alas, I could fine none.

So, would any of you be interested in a story which was equal part Tom/Hermione, and Harry/somebody else? I won't be writing it for a while, because I still have lots of planning to do for it, but it'll be good to see what people think beforehand.
Also, if you are interested, who would you like to see Harry paired with? My options so far are Abraxas Malfoy, Alphard Black, and Draco Malfoy. Feel free to suggest any other character you think would work.
Thank you for all your responses regarding my possible Tomione story. The more I have thought about it, the less I want to do Tomione and instead to a trio fic (Harry, Hermione and Tom), but I also want to do a Harry/Abraxas, or maybe even a Harry/Abraxas/Tom. Whichever gives me a plot first will be the one you shall first receive xD

Warning for slight lime.

X

Harry awoke to loud banging on his door; he groaned and burrowed his face against the warm chest he was laying on—he jumped up with a start.

"Tom?! You need to leave-" Harry began, trailing off as he eyed the person in his bed who did not look like Tom. In his place was a boy who looked around Harry's age, with dirty blond hair, and piercing blue eyes.

"Play along," the boy hissed in Tom's voice; yet another one of Tom's disguises, Harry realised. He didn't have time to ask what Tom's plan was, because the door opened, and Tom had rolled out of the bed and dropped onto the floor as gracefully as he could while still looking panicked.

"Who's there?" James called immediately, his voice stern. Both his parents had their wands raised.

The fake blond head peeped up from over the bed, a fearful expression on the face. Tom eyed the wands with a mixture of confusion and fear, causing Lily and James to lower them, though they were still in a tight grasp.

"I'm sorry; I'll just be going now," Tom stammered, and Harry had no idea how to react. If he had a trophy on him, he would present it to Tom for phenomenal acting.

"Who are you?" Lily asked softly, though her voice held a stern tone. Her eyes darted between Harry and Tom, eyeing them suspiciously.

"It's time we told them, Harry," Tom said gently, sending him a small smile; Harry just looked blankly back, and he could tell Tom wanted nothing more than to roll his eyes.

"Sure," Harry said finally, trying to look as least confused as possible.

"I'm Sal; Harry's boyfriend," Tom said with a bright but shy smile, and he held onto Harry's hand; the Gryffindor at least knew how to do that properly.

His parents looked surprised, but Lily hid it sooner.

"Oh; how long has this been going on?" she asked.
"About a year and half," Tom answered, looking at Harry as if asking for reassurance; Harry nodded, just to make it more believable. "I am sorry, Mr and Mrs Potter," Tom continued, with a look of guilt on his face. "I know it's wrong to sneak into houses, but I heard about what happened to Harry, and I just had to come and see him; I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all," Lily smiled. "Would you like to stay for lunch? You can meet Harry's sister."

"Thank you for the offer, Mrs Potter; I'd love to meet Heather." Here Lily smiled, because Tom had obviously passed her test by knowing the first names of Harry's family members. "Unfortunately I have to get back to work soon, but it's been nice to meet you, even under these circumstances."

"Do you need a lift back? Whereabouts do you live?" Lily questioned, and Harry saw James cringe.

"Don't worry; I have my bike," Tom smiled. "I'm only up the road in Penzance; it's not far. Maybe I'll come another time with my violin; it's the only instrument I can play, but Harry told me you're a family of drummers, so I guess music is pretty important in your house."

Tom's eyes briefly travelled to his parent's wands that were still in their hands, and James looked like he was stifling a laugh.

"Well, it's been nice to meet you," James said, opening Harry's door and gesturing for him to go out. "I'll see you to the door."

Tom smiled brightly at Harry, and then they were gone, leaving Harry alone with Lily who was looking at him expectantly.

"A year and a half?" was all she said, and Harry hoped the expression on his face was that of guilt.

"I didn't know how to tell you," he answered awkwardly. "He's a Muggle," he added; it seemed Tom was playing that angle, despite his hatred for anyone not Magical.

"I gathered," Lily said shortly. "It would have been nice for you to tell us. Where did you meet him?"

"Sorry," Harry said with a shrug, keeping his eyes downcast. "He goes for bike rides in the countryside a lot. I ran into him one day in the village, and we just hit it off."

He felt his bed shift as his mother sat on it, and she wrapped an arm loosely around his shoulder, as though she didn't want to hurt him.

"I don't have a problem with it, you know," Lily told him softly. "If he makes you happy, then I'm happy; I just can't understand why you'd hide it."

"He lives in Cornwall, and most of the time I live in Scotland; it's a pretty long distance," Harry said slowly, an idea coming to his mind. Realisation crossed over Lily's face, and he waited for her to speak before he carried the conversation any further.

"How exactly do you see him?" she asked, just as James popped his head round the door.

"Who does what now?" he asked stupidly, making Lily roll her eyes.

"Harry's just like you, you know," she muttered, "sneaking out of school; doubtlessly he got some
"I've told him no such thing," James retorted, holding his hands up in defence. "Harry, how have you managed that exactly? I know for a fact that there are no tunnels from Hogwarts to Penzance."

"Students can Portkey to and from Hogwarts with no problems," he told them honestly, and Lily's eyes widened.

"Harry, there's a war on!" she declared darkly, looking somewhat panicked.

"I go straight to his house, and I'm careful; I'm not stupid," he argued. He mused that it was rather strange to argue about a lie.

"Of course a secret relationship would explain a lot," Lily murmured, talking more to herself than the others. "All this hiding away in your room…seeming distracted constantly…"

"See, Lils, I told you we had nothing to worry about," James said cheerfully, beaming at his wife and Harry.

"There's plenty to worry about, James," Lily snapped, turning to Harry with a dark glare. "He seems a nice boy and all, but you can't know everything about him; are you using protection?"

Harry and James both choked, staring at Lily with horrified looks.

"What?" she questioned. "It's a perfectly legitimate question. I know you can't get pregnant, but there's all sorts of diseases and infections you can pick up."

"He's clean," Harry cut in, but Lily looked sceptical.

"You can't know that for sure," she stated, but she seemed to let the topic go. "The Mind-Healer is coming round soon, then you'll be free to relax for the rest of the week; you should be fine to go back to school next Monday."

"I think you need to be checking into the hospital soon, Lily," James grinned, "giving Harry a whole week off school."

"There's no difficulty in reading a book in bed; I'll be asking Professor McGonagall to send me some later this week," Lily nodded, causing James to grin further.

"There's the Lily I know," he joked, and Lily playfully swatted the back of his head as she stood up.

"I'm going to go and ask Severus for some Veritaserum," Lily declared as she made to leave the room. "The Mind-Healer says it's a necessity for evaluations, but I'm not letting a stranger give you a potion."

It may have seemed paranoid, but Harry supposed she did have a point.

"Mum took that well," he said after a moment, remembering he had supposedly just been found out about having a boyfriend.

"She knows you're a Marauder; no matter how much she tells you not to do something, you'll still carry on, even if you have to find a way round it," James mused, looking almost longing. "You are careful though, aren't you? No going out in public on your own or anything?"

"Death Eaters don't care if you're on your own or in a group," Harry pointed out; his father looked
"That's very true," he mused quietly. "Sal seems a nice lad; a bit quiet, but we'll have to have him round more often so he can get used to us."

Harry almost wished that everything that was happening was real, but he knew that the chances his parents would happily accept Tom was incredibly low; perhaps not impossible, but still, very improbable. Although, he would gladly have Tom, rather than anyone else, no matter what anybody else thought.

X

The Mind-Healer was a stern looking, middle-aged woman, with thick auburn hair falling to her shoulders. She seemed to have a very much no-nonsense attitude about her; Harry thought she looked like a meaner version of Professor McGonagall.

Severus handed Harry the potion vial of Veritaserum, and he downed it in one go. Snape and Lily were in the room with him; the protocol called that one relative, and one non-relative, were present as witnesses. Harry had wanted James and Remus, but Lily had a vast knowledge of Muggle psychology, and Remus wasn't allowed to because of his Lycanthropy.

"So, Harry," the woman; Healer Murphy, she had introduced herself as, "let's get straight to business; did you purposefully jump from the staircase at Hogwarts?"

"No," Harry answered simply, annoyed the woman wasn't even breaking him into it gently. Mind-Healers weren't the friendliest of people, so Lily had told him when he asked her why she studied Muggle psychology rather than Magical. Apparently mental illnesses were almost taboo in the Wizarding World, and even the more common issues such as Depression and Anxiety were looked down upon, and so the Mind-Healers tended to treat their patients with disdain.

Healer Murphy scribbled something down on her paper. "And have you purposefully self-harmed at any point in your life?"

"Yes," Harry answered, wincing when he heard his mother gasp, so he hurried to say more. "But only to activate a Portkey."

"A Portkey to where?" Healer Murphy asked with interest.

It was at this point Harry realised he could still have some control over how he worded things, even if his mind wasn't strong enough to throw off the Veritaserum completely.

"To visit my lover," he said; he had to disguise his laugh as a cough after seeing the look on Snape's face.

"Healer; this is getting off-hand, don't you think?" Lily interrupted, and the Mind-Healer nodded in agreement.

"Tell me, Harry, do you ever feel stressed about anything, and to what degree?" the Mind-Healer asked, looking down at a sheet of paper which obviously had questions scrawled across it.

"Yeah, but only to a normal degree," he told the woman with a shrug, and she peered at him with a disapproving look.

"How can you know what's a normal level?" the woman criticised, making Harry scowl.
"I don't know," he snapped, "I can handle it so it's not too much of a problem."

"Are you prone to anger outbursts?" the woman continued, making Harry roll his eyes.

"Only when I'm talking to idiots," he muttered, and he heard Snape try and disguise a snort, while the Mind-Healer looked affronted.

"Harry!" his mother snapped warningly, but he heard a hint of amusement in her voice.

"It's no bother; it's the Veritaserum talking," Healer Murphy stated. "It tends to have a worse effect on those whose minds aren't functioning correctly."

"My mind is just fine," Harry argued, but the woman shook her head.

"Your mother told me you're excessively shy; do you agree?" she continued, making Harry shrug again.

"I guess; maybe not excessively," he responded, trying to glance at what the woman was writing.

"Why is that exactly? Is there something about others you dislike?" Murphy questioned.

"People haven't been very nice to me; I just expect it now," Harry said; the Mind-Healer didn't look affected by his words in the slightest.

"Nobody can be truly aware people are talking about them behind their backs, yet you seem convinced," Murphy mused. Harry wanted to punch her; apparently Lily felt the same way.

"You aren't here to call my son a delusional liar," she hissed menacingly. "You're here simply to evaluate whether my son is in a fit state to continue with his N.E.W.T examinations, and as he has answered that he is not feeling unbearable stress or depression, I think that leaves your duty done. Harry, sweetheart, do you ever find yourself worrying uncontrollably about anything to do with your studies?" Harry shook his head. "There, all finished," Lily snapped at the Mind-Healer, "I'll go with you to hand your report in."

"I'm afraid you can't-" Healer Murphy started, but Lily cut her off with a vicious glare.

"We're leaving now," Lily stated, gesturing for the Mind-Healer to stand and head over to the fireplace.

As they vanished in the green smoke, Snape handed Harry another vial.

"It's the antidote," the professor explained, and Harry was glad Snape had brought it, even if it probably was his mother who insisted he bring it.

"Thank you," Harry said with a small smile; he noticed Snape's features softened.

"If that woman thinks you're delusional for being bullied then she's a fool," Snape commented with little emotion in his voice. "Though, I think if she tries to put that as an official diagnosis then Lily will make sure she regrets even trying."
Tom didn't return until the evening, this time back to his normal look.

"Hello, Sal from Penzance," Harry greeted, earning him a dark look.

"It physically sickens me to act as a Muggle, even in pretence," Tom complained, sitting in the chair at Harry's desk. "I will expect something in return" 

"Like what, exactly?" Harry asked, moving over to stand beside Tom.

"You'll find out in time, "Tom told him with a smirk. "Why is it you seem to be angry?"

"I saw the Mind-Healer today; she was a right bitch," he muttered, ignoring Tom's tut at his choice of words. "She hardly asked about anything to do with school; she mostly accused me of making up stories of being bullied; I'm delusional apparently. My mum got really angry and pretty much kicked her out of the house."

"Pay no mind to what people say," Tom told him, getting to his feet. "They tried to label me as a child, yet here I am, soon to be the most powerful wizard in the world, while they rot in the ground."

"Healer Murphy clearly thinks she's the best Healer in the world," Harry said under his breath, but Tom still heard him.

"Was her name truly necessary for me to know?" he asked; Harry looked at him.

"What do you mean?" he asked, but Tom simply fixed him with a dark look. Tom had managed to hunt Anderson down by a name; he was sure the older boy knew how to find people. "Yes," he said, after a long moment of consideration. "Yes, it was necessary for you to know"

He couldn't push away the sickly feeling inside him as Tom smiled cruelly. 

Harry found he couldn't quite look at Tom without feeling guilty, but he soon forgot all about his guilt when Tom tipped his chin up and kissed him firmly.

Harry gratefully melted into the kiss, wrapping his arms around Tom's neck to pull him down. 

He whined when Tom pulled back abruptly. "I'll be back soon," he whispered, and he vanished just as the door to his room opened.

He was about to complain about the lack of knocking, but the look on his parent's faces told him not to.

"We need to go on Order business," James said hurriedly, glancing out of the window as if he expected a Death Eater to come crashing through the glass at any moment. "Remus will be here for you and Heather if you need anything."

Lily handed him a small object. "This is the Emergency Portkey," she explained. "If anything happens and you can't get to Remus; use this, but always try Remus first if it's safe. Remember we love you."

They basically ran from the room before Harry could respond.

"What's going on?" Harry asked when Tom re-appeared minutes later.

"It's nothing to do with us," Tom answered. "The Dark Lord is currently planning a take-over of St Mungo's; emphasis on the planning."
"I guess that leaves only one person it could be," Harry muttered, and Tom nodded.

"Well he's busy, and your parents are away, so that leaves us with the perfect timing to go and return the Horcrux," Tom said with a smile, showing off his pearly white teeth.

"Like right now?" Harry asked, and Tom nodded. "What if Remus or Heather come to check on me? Or my parents come back soon?"

Tom cocked his eyebrow, and said nothing, instead waving his wand and encasing Harry's room in a bright mist that gradually floated down to the floor and vanished.

"Nobody but us will ever know you left," Tom stated, holding his arm out for Harry to take hold of.

He gripped on to it for just a split second before Tom Apparated, giving Harry the unpleasant feeling of being squeezed through a tube.

As they landed, Harry stumbled away from Tom, before quickly latching back onto him.

They were standing on a rock in the middle of the sea, with waves crashing wildly against it, soaking Harry with the sea breeze. In front of them was a huge, dark cliff, and everything else was impossible to see against the night sky.

"Where exactly are we?" Harry asked, gripping onto Tom even tighter, despite his attempts to throw Harry off.

"Outside the cave; there's Anti-Apparition Wards inside," Tom explained, tugging Harry forwards.

"How did you ever find this place?" Harry wondered aloud, which caused Tom to laugh humourlessly.

"As a child I went on an outing with the other orphans to a desolate village nearby; I got bored, so I came here. It's impossible for Muggles to enter without a witch or wizard, and with all the precautions in place, it's incredibly difficult to steal the Horcrux," the Dark wizard said, staring at the cliffside.

"Regulus Black managed it just fine," Harry pointed out, walking into Tom when he stopped suddenly.

"True; it's a pity he died; he would have made a good follower," Tom mused before stepping down onto another rock, just a bit lower down.

Harry was forced to let go of Tom, and he cautiously followed him down. He held his arms out for balance, as the rock was incredibly slippery.

He moved a lot slower than Tom, who didn't bother waiting for him until he reached the final rock.

"I was always under the belief Gryffindors were courageous; they certainly brag about it a lot," Tom said casually, not bothering to help as he watched Harry struggle not to slip over.

"You can be courageous and still have fears, and I happen to be afraid of drowning." At those words, he took a quick glance at the raging sea beneath him and shuddered. "After drowning twice in my life already, I don't want it to happen again."

"You'll be swimming in a moment," Tom told him, and Harry blanched.

"I can't swim," he reminded the man, who eyed with his disinterest.
"I shan't let you drown; besides, I have a present for you inside," Tom said, sounding almost gleeful.

Harry eyed him warily; anything that made Tom happy usually resulted in someone else's pain.

"Can't we get in any other way?" he questioned, and Tom shook his head, smirking at the boy.

He sat on the rock, and gestured for Harry to sit beside him; the teenager reluctantly obeyed.

Tom slid forward into the water, pulling, or rather dragging Harry with him.

Harry found his arms were flapping violently as soon as he entered the icy cold water; Tom turned and gripped onto both his shoulders hard in an attempt to calm him down.

"Kick your legs," he ordered, letting go of Harry and grabbing his hand.

Harry complied, kicking awkwardly as Tom moved them swiftly through the water, making no sign of acknowledgement whenever Harry spluttered when water splashed into his face.

Fortunately the swim was short, and once in the cave the water was calmer and shallower, allowing them to walk through a narrow passage.

"I still can't believe you thought coming here as a child was a good idea," Harry muttered, glancing darkly at the sharp, dripping walls of the cave. He lit his wand, copying Tom, and waded through the water until they reached a cliff wall, where Tom cast a Drying Charm over them.

"How are we-?" Harry started to question, but he stopped as Tom grabbed hold of his hand and sliced his palm open with a knife.

Harry hissed and tried to yank his hand back, but Tom was stronger, and he moved Harry's palm across the cliff wall.

It immediately started to shake, part of it fading away into darkness and creating an entrance for them to go through.

It led onto the edge of a large lake, which seemed to stretch on forever. The top of the cliff was too high to make out, and Harry felt like they were literally in the middle of nowhere.

"Don't touch the water," Tom said warningly, and Harry moved closer to Tom; away from the edge.

"I wasn't planning to," he muttered, gripping onto Tom's arm, and Tom smirked.

As they walked around the edge, Harry noticed a faint green glow coming from far across the lake.

"I guess Voldemort's favourite colour is green," Harry commented casually.

"Who would bother with something as childish as a favourite colour?" Tom retorted, though his voice held no malice. "Green is simply a respectable colour, commemorating Salazar Slytherin."

Tom stopped suddenly, causing Harry to walk into him. Harry threw out his arms to keep his balance, while Tom waved his hands through the air. Harry had no idea what he was doing, but then Tom's fingers clenched over nothing, and yanked his fist back.

The water began to ripple; Harry stepped back, expecting the worst, but it was nothing more than a small rowing boat; he doubted if they would both fit in it, and that was saying something
considering they were both slender.

Tom climbed in, and then gestured for Harry to get into it too; he looked at the man with uncertainty.

"I thought you said not to touch the water," he said, trying to peer into the murky depths.

"Unless you are incapable of climbing into a boat, you won't be touching the water," Tom replied, rolling his eyes.

Harry sighed but climbed aboard, and found himself sitting in Tom's lap; he was correct in thinking that the boat was too small for them both to be able to sit comfortably and separately.

Harry rather disliked the slight height; being raised above the boat edge gave him no sense of security.

The boat moved slowly through the water, creating small ripples on the otherwise calm water.

As they neared the green glow, Harry could see it was coming from a small jagged rock, but the darkness and the glow disguised anything else.

The boat gently bumped the edge of the rock, so Harry stood up, feeling Tom's hands on the small of his back to steady him as he clambered out. Tom followed a lot more gracefully, and waved his hand, vanishing the glow.

A stone fountain type thing stood perched on the centre of the rock, and sat to the side of it, making muffled sounds and bound in ropes, was the Mind-Healer Murphy.

"I hope you enjoy your present," Tom whispered into his ear, standing behind Harry and wrapping his arms around his waist, as though Tom was a loving husband who had just presented his partner with an extravagant romantic gift.

"What is she doing here?" Harry asked softly, still in surprise. He couldn't even fathom how Tom had gotten her here so quickly.

"You were right; she did appear to view herself as better than others," Tom murmured casually, resting his chin atop Harry's head. "Her Wards were simple to get through; then I restrained her and brought her here for you."

"I don't want her," Harry stated, still staring wide-eyed at the woman.

"That's a pity, because, if you recall, I did something unpleasant for you, and now it's time for you to repay me," Tom hissed gently, his hands caressing Harry's sides. The boy tried not to shiver against the pleasurable sensation.

"I-I won't kill her," Harry stammered, shutting his eyes as Tom ducked his head down to place kisses upon Harry's neck.

"You don't need to," Tom assured against Harry's skin. "You just need to make her drink the liquid."

"How do I do that?" Harry asked, opening his eyes and staring at the fountain.

"You are aware of the three Unforgivable Curses, are you not?" Tom questioned rhetorically.

"What happens to her if she drinks it?" Harry pressed on; he could maybe push himself to cast the
Imperius Curse if it didn't cause the death of the Mind-Healer. Maybe.

"She won't die," Tom answered with a hint of dejection in his voice. "Do you know what I read in her notes? She had wanted to diagnose you as delusional and paranoid; the hospital voided her statement, but she had further notes suggesting she was going to appeal against the rejection."

"Why is she so determined?" he asked, throwing a dirty look at the bound woman.

"Her son was a friend of the Diggory boy; I looked through his mind and saw he blamed you for the death," Tom explained with a dismissive wave of his hand. "It's rather tragic really," Tom mused. "That poor young man with an insane mother who killed him and ran away; nobody shall miss her."

"But you said-" Harry started, but Tom cut in.

"You won't be killing her," he said adamantly. "The potion will simply make her delusional; don't you want to see her pay? Watch her suffer for how she treated you? It's just one little word; one little word and she's yours. Just say the word with enough meaning, and enough power; make sure your mind knows what you need her to do. Say it!"

Harry shakily raised his wand towards the woman, trying to calm himself as Tom's hands slipped under his shirt and then dug his nails into the skin above Harry's hips.

"Imperio!" Harry cast the spell, still trembling as the woman stood up, her bindings falling away. Her face looked clear of the harshness it held earlier, and her eyes were glazed over.

She walked slowly over to the fountain, picking up a shell-shaped object that doubled as a cup, and dipped it in the liquid and drank.

"Keep it strong; she'll fight soon," Tom said lowly, slipping one hand underneath Harry's jeans. He yelped in shock when Tom's cold hand gripped him, but another hand quickly covered his mouth. "Don't lose concentration, or you'll ruin her mind before she can finish."

After her third mouthful, the woman froze, her face contorted in terror.

"Make her keep going," Tom commanded, stroking Harry's member slowly, his other hand still clamped over Harry's mouth.

Healer Murphy opened her mouth to say something, or perhaps scream, but Harry didn't want her to, so she didn't; he could definitely see why this spell was classed as an Unforgivable; it was absolutely perfect for those who needed mindless slaves.

Harry could feel Tom's hardness pressing against his backside as the woman continued to drink the liquid, with tears falling down her face, her eyes wide with fear and her mouth opening as if it to scream without a voice.

"Almost there," Tom whispered, and Harry didn't know whether he meant him or the woman.

He began to stroke Harry faster as Murphy got near the end, stroking until Harry came with a muffled cry, spilling over Tom's fingers.

The Mind-Healer collapsed to her knees on the floor, clutching at her throat and gasping for breath.

Tom withdrew his hand, replacing the one over Harry's mouth with the cum-stained one, and he inserted each finger into Harry's mouth for him to clean, licking off his own salty essence.
"You did very well, my dear," Tom complimented, releasing Harry and casting a Cleansing Charm on him, before striding over to the fountain. He stepped over the women without even sparing her a second glance, and put his hand into the dry bowl, retrieving the necklace that had been placed within. He gripped it, and put the original locket; the Horcrux, into the fountain and cast a spell, refilling it with liquid.

Harry hurried over to stand beside Tom, who had his wand drawn on the woman.

"I thought you said she wouldn't die," he said, trying to press Tom's wand arm down.

"I said you wouldn't kill her," Tom corrected.

"Don't!" Harry hissed, attempting to grab Tom's wand off him. In his struggling, he knocked the fake locket from Tom's grasp, and it went flying into the water with a splash.

Harry stopped fighting, looking at Tom in fear as he expected him to be furious. What he didn't expect was for the older boy to start laughing cruelly.

"Oh, my sweet Harry, you have just made this lady's death very unpleasant; I was going to make it painless," Tom laughed, pulling Harry close to him and creating a ring of fire around them.

Through the flames, Harry could see Healer Murphy still spluttering on the ground, with tears flowing even heavier from her eyes. Beyond that, the once calm water was now rippling, with clammy figures appearing from its depths.

"There are hundreds of Inferi here," Tom told him. "Thanks to you, there shall be one more."

Harry clutched onto Tom as the Inferi clambered onto the rock, edging slowly towards the woman who was now panicking, but unable to do anything in her weakened state.

"What are they going to do to her?" Harry asked fearfully. Tom wasn't looking at him; his face was focused on the Inferi, watching them with a sadistic smile.

"They'll drag her to the depths and drown her. She'll never be fully dead; she'll be aware of her skin rotting and her lungs clogged with water. She'll be yet another corpse destined to suffer in death for eternity."

Harry shivered; the whole idea of that seemed brutal; more horrendous than death, and more horrendous than losing your soul. The woman was cruel, but that didn't mean she should be subjected to living death for the rest of eternity.

He raised his wand, having to steady his trembling arm with his left hand, and pointed it at the woman; the Inferi were nearly upon her, ready to pull her to her doom.

Tom looked at him curiously, but Harry ignored him.

He knew he only had one option; one that was cruel, but the lighter evil.

He felt tears spill from his eyes, but he didn't bother to brush them away. He wanted her to die; she had to die. Death would be a blessing to her; the Inferi were about to grab her, so he had to do it now.

"Avada Kedavra."
Twenty Five

Chapter Notes

Warning - lemon in this chapter.

X

Harry's knees hit the hard, wet rock with a thud as he fell, and he threaded his fingers through his hair and tugged roughly as he saw Healer Murphy's prone form drop to the ground, the body not flinching even when the head smashed open on the jagged floor.

The Inferi stopped moving, and a bright flash of orange surrounded the cave, driving the screeching Inferi back into the murky waters.

Harry leant back on his calves, moving his arms to wrap around his body to try and stop himself shaking. He was crying heavier than he ever had done in his life, and it felt like a piece of him had been torn away from the rest of his body.

Tom crouched down beside him, and loosely drew him into a one-armed hug, almost like Tom was trying to comfort him but wasn't quite sure how.

"You still continue to surprise me," Tom murmured softly, forcefully pulling Harry to his feet. Harry combatted Tom's attempts at leaving by throwing his arms around him and sobbing into his chest. Tom's arms remained by his sides, but Harry didn't care; he just needed something to hold onto.

"H-how could I have done that?" he stammered, his voice muffled against Tom's chest.

"You obviously wanted her to die; no matter how much you may regret it now, the Killing Curse can only be effective if the caster has powerful desire," Tom said. "Why are you upset, precious? You saved her from a far worse fate, and she gave you no benefits for being alive."

"She still had a life," Harry ground out, clutching at Tom tighter. "And I just took it away from her in a flash."

"Her husband was long gone, her son dead; she had nothing to live for; her death is hardly a tragedy. That woman was destined to die here; whether by the Killing Curse, the Inferi or by thirst; the choice was up to us. I know you understand that too, yet you're fooling yourself into thinking her death mattered, when really it doesn't; you just can't stand the thought that you did it yourself," Tom stated, his arms finally closing around Harry. "You did nothing wrong, darling, nothing wrong at all."

"I just feel like I've been ripped apart inside; I feel like I've been shattered into pieces, like I'm not me anymore," Harry sobbed, and he felt Tom shake his head. "Can you just hold me for a little while?" Harry whispered, clutching at Tom as though his life depended on it.

"We're leaving here first," Tom stated, pushing Harry away from him and tugging him towards the rowing boat. Harry couldn't really register what was happening, and he blindly allowed Tom to
steer him, following him silently away from the cave.

He didn't even protest as Tom gently pulled him into the sea, and then Apparated them away.

They landed in an old house, which looked like it hadn't been lived in for years. There were dust covered armchairs that were now a faded red, though must have looked magnificent at first, and they were highlighted with pale mahogany. The same ancient mahogany was used on the table and the cabinets, which still held bottles that looked like they hadn't been drank, or even touched, for a century.

"Where are we?" Harry asked hoarsely; the pressure of Apparition had caused his tears to dry up, but he could still feel the wetness prickling behind his eyes, threatening to fall at any moment.

"This was the home of my father, and his parents too," Tom told him, his words dripping with venom.

"Why are we here?" he pressed on, blinking away the tears so he could examine Tom; he seemed relaxed and at ease, yet there was a dark look in his eyes too.

"It was in this room, when I was your age, that I killed them all," Tom said without a hint of emotion in his voice. "That was my intention when I visited; I wanted my father to suffer for abandoning us simply because he found out his wife was magical. He was nothing more than vermin, and I wanted him to pay. That is where you differ from me; I felt nothing but pleasure from the rush of taking another's life. I felt no remorse or sorrow, but you, darling, you committed murder yet kept your purity as much as you could. There are plenty of monsters in this world, myself included, but remember that even angels can fall."

Harry wiped his eyes angrily with the back of his hands, and nodded. If he were truly evil, he wouldn't have felt so upset by Murphy's death, and he reasoned he had at least spared her a worse fate. However, that didn't mean he was alright with killing; far from it. He couldn't imagine being able to strike down a person who had so much to live for, and with no other reason for departing the world.

He wondered how Tom had done it; how he decided that his family were to die by his hand. He looked to the sofa; had Tom's father sat there all those years ago, killed in his seat by the son he abandoned?

A vivid image of a man much similar looking to Tom warped in his mind, a look of terror overcoming his face before there was a flash of green light, and then the eyes were gone, the look of terror continuing even in death.

He blinked rapidly as the image faded away.

Tom was looking at him curiously.

"Interesting," the man muttered, gesturing for Harry to stand beside him. Harry complied, and Tom turned him to face a mirror, where their reflection was hidden behind a grimy layer of grey. "Your eyes are different," Tom stated simply, clearing the dust with a wave of his hand.

Harry stared hard at his mirror image, not really noticing any difference. His face looked pale, but marred with the pink stains caused by his tears, and the only thing he saw immediately about his eyes were that they were red-rimmed. He knew Tom didn't cry, or possibly couldn't, but surely he must know what happened when others got tearful? He frowned; Tom wasn't stupid, so he peered closer, then gasped and took a step back.
It was hard to tell at first, but on close inspection, his vivid green eyes were now speckled with dark grey and red; the colours of Tom's eyes.

"What's happened to them?" he questioned quietly, turning his face to examine the colours at the different angles.

"It is my belief," Tom started, looking at Harry through the mirror intently, "that when you killed that woman, your soul split, as always happens with murder. However, your soul already homes a small part of my own, so as yours has broken, mine filled its place."

That would explain that vivid image he had just seen.

He decided he should check with Tom. "Does that mean anything? I just saw this quick vision of your father dying; he looked just like you."

Tom's expression darkened, and Harry wondered if he had said too much.

"That sounds possible," he said after a moment of studying Harry. "You shall have to keep a record of any changes and notify me. I shouldn't bother with a Glamour Charm for your eyes if I were you; you'd have to look very deeply to notice."

"You noticed," Harry pointed out, making Tom smirk.

"Well you have me rather enchanted," he commented, stepping in front of Harry and pressing his lips to his.

Harry pulled back after a short moment, his conscience telling him he shouldn't be forgetting what he had done so soon.

"You can reflect all you like," Tom said, knowing what Harry was thinking, "but it shan't bring her back; you are better forgetting and moving on."

"How can I?" Harry asked defiantly. "According to you part of my soul is broken away; I'm sure that will be noticeable."

"Yes; yes it has broken away… I wonder…” Tom mused aloud, and Harry had never seen Tom so distracted, even if it did last only a couple of seconds. "If you are worried about your soul shard, I can help you get rid of it."

Harry opened his mouth to question what Tom meant, but then realisation hit him.

"You want me to make a Horcrux," he stated softly, not even needing clarification.

"Your own Horcrux status shall give you the means to live forever, however there are some ways in which you can be destroyed, though rare they may be. A Horcrux would give you extra security, and enable me to resurrect you should your death occur."

Harry considered it; Tom had been part of a Horcrux himself, and his older self had created many more, although Voldemort wasn't particularly pleasant, in both looks and personality. But if there was something wrong with them, Voldemort wouldn't have done it so many times.

He supposed it was probably very Dark magic, but he had already tainted himself now.

"On our travels to Egypt, we could find you an artefact you connect with, and use it to house your soul fragment," Tom said over his thought. "With your magical abilities, you could lock it deep
away in a tomb or pyramid, never to be found by any other."

"I'll do it," Harry said with a smile.

“Lovely,” Tom announced, flashing his teeth in a smile that made Harry swoon. He moved to stand behind Harry, wrapping his arms around him and pressing his very obvious erection into Harry’s behind. His grinding gave Harry a clear message of what Tom wanted.

“Not here,” Harry muttered, trying to move away from Tom slightly, but the man pulled him back, placing gentle kisses up the side of his neck.

“You look so innocent and frail, yet you have so much power; I love to see you controlling the filth of this world,” Tom growled into Harry’s ear. “You stay sweet in your corrupted state; let me taste your taint.”

He spun Harry round, pressing their lips together in a dominating kiss. Tom’s hands had travelled underneath his jeans, and the gentle strokes were clouding Harry’s mind, pushing away the thoughts that he should be having; a woman had just died by his hands, and they were at a murder scene; it was hardly romantic, but Tom’s hands and mouth were just so good; he couldn’t say no.

Harry found himself being edged backwards until his legs hit the sofa, and he collapsed onto it, bringing Tom with him.

“This is where my father sat when I killed him,” Tom hissed into his ear, and Harry whimpered. “Let us defile his memory even further.”

He pressed Harry until he lay down, and made quick work of unbuttoning his shirt.

“We shouldn’t be doing this," Harry whispered, groaning as Tom sucked at a nipple, biting down hard on it. “I just killed someone-“

“Exactly,” Tom argued, a hand unbuttoning Harry’s jeans and yanking them down his thighs.

“But-“Harry tried to protest, losing the words in his mouth when Tom licked at his thighs, biting into the creamy skin. Tom’s tongue travelled up, darting at Harry’s hard cock, and he yelped when Tom took the head into his mouth. He had sucked off Tom plenty of times, but he had never had Tom do the same to him.

“Quiet, darling,” Tom said teasingly, pushing a finger inside of him as he took more of Harry into his mouth.

He cried out when Tom hit his prostate, whimpering when Tom pulled away, only for the older boy to tear a piece of Harry’s discarded shirt off and push it into his mouth.

“I warned you,” Tom smirked, looking at Harry wickedly. He gathered Harry’s wrists together and cast Incarcerous, binding them tightly, before returning to suck him.

His tongue licked a path across his cock, darting inside the slit, just as he added another finger to his hole. Harry whined loudly through the gag.

His legs were pushed up, bent towards his chest, and then the mouth travelled down, replacing the fingers in his arse with a tongue.

Harry writhed as the warm muscle drove inside of him, lapping at his hole with ferocity.
Tom smirked at him when he whined after the older boy pulled away, and his gag was pulled out so Tom could kiss him, allowing Harry to taste his own body.

Tom pulled back, shoving the gag back in, and moved Harry’s legs to wrap around his waist, giving him no warning before thrusting inside him.

Tom moved at a frenzied speed, thrusting hard and fast without any time for Harry to adjust.

“You’re so pretty, stretched around my cock,” Tom groaned into Harry’s ear; dirty talk was new for Tom. “You’re made to be dominated by me; you’re my little pet.” He thrust particularly hard, hitting Harry’s prostate and making the boy mewl into the cloth in his mouth.

“All that control you had earlier, it means nothing to me,” Tom continued, assaulting Harry’s prostate with each thrust. “You may have proved yourself to them, and that pleases me, but to me, you’re nothing more than mine to corrupt and defile. You enjoy that, don’t you, being tainted by me?”

Harry nodded, whimpering as Tom pulled out of him and dragged him off the sofa, bending him over the table, with his hands still tied, stretched out in front of him.

The mirror floated down, stopping before them, enlarged so he could see everything.

Tom gripped hold of Harry’s hips hard, watching his cock disappear inside of Harry.

“Look at yourself; willingly submitting to me. You’re so perfect, pet,” Tom said lowly, his mirrored eyes never leaving Harry’s.

Harry tried to grind against the table, his untouched cock aching, desperate for release.

“Do you want me to touch you?” Tom panted in his ear, and he yanked the gag from Harry’s mouth. “Tell me who you belong to.”

“I’m yours, Tom, yours.” Harry cried, almost sobbing with desire. A cold hand wrapped around his cock, unmoving. Harry tried to buck into the fist, but Tom simply tightened his hold.

“Tell me you love me,” Tom ordered. “Tell me you love me, and only me; tell me nobody else will ever hold a spot in your innocent heart, tainted by me alone.”

“I love you, Tom; I love you!” Harry cried, dropping his head onto the table when moved his hand slowly. Tom’s other hand yanked on Harry’s hair to pull his head back up. “There will be nobody else, only you. I’m yours; I want you to ruin me.”

Harry screamed in pleasure, as he came over Tom’s fingers, and he felt Tom release inside him, flooding his insides with warmth.

Tom pulled out, turning Harry over and kissing him deeply. His bindings fell apart, and Harry’s hands found their way into Tom’s hair, and he kissed Tom back passionately until they had to pull away for air.

“I will ruin you,” Tom whispered, resting his forehead against Harry’s, “in the way that an artist creates their masterpiece.”

X

Afterwards, Harry berated himself for being so weak-minded, but he had to admit that Tom
certainly made it easy for him to forget everything, although afterwards he ending up feeling guilty, because he just couldn't find it in him to regret what he had done.

His mind had lingered on this until they arrived back at the Potter home; if Tom noticed his discomfort he didn't bother to say anything.

The clock in Harry's room said it was just past eleven; they had been gone for almost three hours.

"Shit! Is that the time?" he hissed, and he ran from the room, coming up with a million excuses in his head for his parents who had probably realised he had been missing.

But when he got downstairs, Remus was sat in an armchair with a book in his hands, only he seemed to be more focused on the fireplace than his novel, biting down on his lip with a worried expression.

"Remus?" he called gently.

The werewolf jumped slightly; he must have really been out of focus to have not noticed him, but he quickly masked his emotions with a warm smile.


Though he had no appetite, Harry accepted it more out of duty than anything; he had learnt many years ago it was better to go along with Remus' chocolate obsession.

"I'm alright, "Harry lied, biting into the chocolate and relishing in the sweet, creamy taste. "Is everything ok? Are Mum and Dad not back yet?"

"Not yet, no," the man answered, a crease forming in his forehead.

"Where did they actually go?" Harry continued, and Remus shrugged.

"They didn't have time to tell me," he stated with a sigh. "They've been alright with me, but I can see how much I hurt them, especially James; I don't know if I can forgive myself for running."

"I forgave you long ago," Harry smiled. "I'm sure my parents will have done too; if we can do it, so can you."

"Hmm," Remus murmured. "You look exhausted, Harry; you should get to bed. You seem so healthy that it's easy to forget you're recovering."

"Hardly; I'm just a bit sore and that will clear itself in days," Harry retorted, which made Remus snort.

"You are so like your father; you dismiss serious injuries like they're nothing," the werewolf said, smiling fondly. "Still, it's late; you get yourself to bed, and I promise I'll tell you when they get back."

"Goodnight," Harry agreed, following Remus' worried eyes to the fireplace before heading back up the stairs.

As he headed onto the landing, a door creaked open, and Heather popped her head round the door.

"Oh," she said, her face falling when she saw Harry. "I thought Mum and Dad might be back; do
"You think they're okay? They've been gone for ages."

"Remus thinks so," Harry answered, trying to give what he hoped was an encouraging smile.

It was strange; despite knowing his parents were in the Order of the Phoenix, he never worried about their safety more than other students worried about their own families, but knowing they were out with some sort of emergency seemed to make everything seem more real.

"Are you okay?" Heather pressed on. "You look like you've been crying."

"I'm alright," he said, repeating the lie he told Remus just a few minutes prior.

Heather looked at him sceptically for a moment before giving up on questioning him any further. "I'm tired," she muttered, yawning to emphasise her point. "Can you wake me up if something happens?"

"Sure," Harry nodded, and his sister gave him a small smile before shutting the door.

When he finally made it to his own room, Tom was standing by his window, staring out in the night sky.

"I could have easily told you your parents hadn't returned yet," was Tom's greeting.

"Are you sure Voldemort hasn't done anything?" Harry asked, frowning when Tom nodded.

"They certainly have been a while," Tom mused. "I wonder if the Dark Lord will hear of it."

Harry stayed silent, changing into his pyjamas before clambering under his bed covers with a frown.

"It'll be bad if he knows, won't it?" Harry questioned, and Tom looked thoughtful.

"Perhaps; it depends on whether Slytherin is making his presence known or is using others to achieve his goals," the other boy said, glancing back out of the window.

"Are you not coming to bed?" said Harry, watching Tom curiously; through the shadows he saw the man shake his head.

"I have much to consider; you sleep," he responded. Harry was grateful when he felt Tom's Sleeping Charm wash over him, and he fell into the welcoming darkness.

X

There were trees all around him, the moon above seeping through the gaps in the treetops and casting small pools of bright light on the ground.

He was running, but he didn't feel like he was being chased; no, rather he was chasing something. He could feel adrenaline coursing through his veins as he hunted his prey.

There were others around him, all panting as they sprinted through the thick trees.

He ducked, narrowly missing a red beam of light that hit somebody behind him who fell to the floor with a thud, but he didn't look back; he had to keep on running.

He caught a glimpse of the back of his victim in the darkness; it looked like a male, with shaggy black hair which seemed almost familiar.
The hunted man stumbled over a root on the ground, and he darted forwards, dodging the spells the man was frantically throwing, and then he lunged, dragging the person to the muddy floor…

Harry awoke with a start; his heart was thumping heavily in his chest, and his forehead was damp with sweat. The dream had felt so real, and something in him was eating away at him, telling him something wasn't right.

He turned over to mention this to Tom, but Tom was asleep.

Harry had never seen him asleep before; he always stayed awake until Harry had fallen into a slumber, even using the Sleeping Charm to ensure this, and Tom was always awake seemingly hours before Harry's body could actually make a response.

He looked rather peaceful. Harry could easily lie in bed and stare at Tom until daylight; he truly was handsome, with sharp cheekbones, and eyelashes that contrasted strikingly against his pale skin. Looking upon Tom now, it was impossible to see a man who was a killer.

He was drawn from his pleasant musings by a bang and shouting coming from downstairs.

He glanced towards his door, wishing he could see through it. The clock in the corner of his eye told him it was two in the morning; anything that happened at this time of night couldn't be good.

"Tom?" he hissed quietly, shaking the man gently to wake him up. Tom seemed to instantly open his eyes, somehow looking alert and wide awake. "I think something's wrong."

Tom sat up opened his mouth to say something, but stopped with a frown.

"The Dark Lord is calling me," he stated simply. His eyes travelled to the door when more raised voices came from beyond. "Nobody has beached these Wards."

Tom stood, and Harry had a glimpse of silky black pyjamas before they were replaced with his usual impeccable suit. He nodded and then Apparated; Harry didn't even have time to see the dust settle before he darted for his door and ran downstairs, his wand clutched firmly in his grip.

He entered the living room, where Remus and Severus were standing, staring at each other with wild eyes.

"What's going on?" Harry asked, stifling a yawn as fresh anxiety started to bubble inside of him.

"James is at St. Mungo's," Remus told him, his tone gentle. "He got injured, though we aren't sure how severely."

"It isn't life threatening," Snape cut in sharply.

"Harry, go get some shoes on and wake Heather please; we'll leave as soon as you two are ready," Remus pressed on, and Harry nodded before running back up the stairs and hammering on his sister's door.

"What?" she said groggily, rubbing her eyes as she answered.

"Dad's in the hospital," he told her; she instantly seemed to wake up.

"Is he okay? What happened?" she questioned frantically, her eyes growing wider with each second.

"I don't know," he frowned. "Remus says to get ready so we can leave."
Heather nodded and shut the door; he could hear her shuffling about as she rushed to get ready.

Harry did the same, running to his room. He pulled open his wardrobe door forcefully, and grabbed the first pair of shoes he could find, pulling out a grey hoody which he put on whilst heading downstairs. He didn't think he had the time to change from his sweat pants into jeans; he just hoped nobody would see him in this state, especially considering his recently-fucked and bed ruffled hair.

Heather was just behind him, her hair also sticking up at the back, and wearing a long coat over her nightdress.

She looked like she was ready to burst into tears at any second, but seemed to be fighting to hold it back.

Snape held out a Portkey without a word, and they all grabbed hold of it, allowing the Portkey to take them to the chilly streets of London, which were filled with a treacherous silence.

Heather grabbed hold of Harry's hand, and they silently followed the adults through the window of the run down building, used to fool Muggles to disguise the hospital, which then opened into the main atrium.

Severus headed over to the reception desk, while Remus glanced suspiciously around. Despite the early hour of the morning, there were still Healers bustling about, and men and women with odd injuries sat in the waiting area.

"He's on the first floor," Snape informed them as he left the reception desk with a scowl.

"First floor?" Harry questioned, looking at the board which held the information for the separate floors. "That's for creature injury."

Remus seemed to walk rather briskly up the stairs, while Snape seemed in no hurry to get there. Heather and Harry were left in the middle; he watched as she nervously chewed her lip.

"It was only a couple of days ago that we were crowded around you in a hospital bed," Heather said quietly. "Do you think whatever tried to hurt you got Dad too?"

Harry certainly hoped not. Although…he blanched at the thought that ran through his head; in his dream he had been chasing down a man with messy hair. He stopped dead in his tracks; Heather looked at him worriedly.

"You've gone really pale; do you feel okay?" she muttered, tugging him forwards when Remus turned around to check on them.

They followed the werewolf into a ward at the end of the corridor, which only seemed to house James and another figure in a bed further down.

Lily was standing by James' bed, clutching his hand tightly, but she smiled when she saw them enter, although it seemed incredibly forced.

James, on the other hand, smiled brightly at the sight, and he held his arm out as Heather and Harry rushed to him, pulling them into a one armed hug.

"We were worried about you, Daddy," Heather sobbed, and Harry stood back to allow her room.

"You don't need to worry about me; I've got you kids to keep me going," James grinned.
Lily had gone to speak with Remus and Severus in hushed tones, and Harry couldn't help but feel he was missing something.

"What happened?" Harry asked, checking over his father. His eyes ran up and down his covered form; something seemed off, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it. James' eyes seemed to focus on his legs as he noticed what Harry was doing, and as he zoned in; he thought something was off about the covers, very much so.

"I got mauled by a werewolf," James said quietly, with a brief glance at Remus who had paled.

"But it's not the full moon," Heather pointed out, her gaze becoming suspicious.

"The werewolves we ran into, well, they were very open about their lycanthropy, even going as far as acting as animalistic as they can, even in their human forms," their father explained. "We got chased down by a group of them, I got separated from the group and one managed to get me; his teeth and finger nails may as well have been fangs and claws, they were that sharp."

"It's gone, isn't it; your leg?" Harry whispered, paling as he stared down at the lower half of his father. He heard Heather emit a horrified gasp.

"The damage was too much," James answered, just as quietly. "I could have easily bled to death, or caught an infection; we tried everything but it was the only way."

"I'm sorry," Harry murmured; James' strong hand gripped onto his shaky one.

"It's not your fault, is it, Prongslet?" his dad said with an encouraging smile, but Harry couldn't shake the feeling of guilt.

"Excuse me," a Healer said, popping their head round the door. "Will Mr. Potter's next of kin please come with me a moment?"

Lily nodded solemnly, and she left with the Healer, with Snape close on her heels.

"Will Dad become a werewolf?" Heather asked, looking at Remus who shook his head.

"I don't believe so; the lycanthropy virus is only present in active werewolves, although I don't think there won't be any side-effects," the werewolf answered, looking thoughtful.

Two more Healers came into the room, their faces hidden by the hoods on their robes. One strode over to the other ward resident, while the other stood facing the wall by James' bed, looking at a clipboard.

"I see we haven't quite finished with you, Mr. Potter," the Healer said, turning around and smiling.

Harry couldn't help but gasp loudly as he instinctively took a step back.

"Harry?" Remus questioned with worry, but Harry couldn't draw his eyes off Marvolo.

"Ulric!" Marvolo shouted, as the door to the ward slammed shut.

The Healer the other end of the room drew out a wand, casting a flash of green light over the person in the bed.

Harry and Remus automatically drew their wands, and Harry grabbed Heather's hand, pulling her to stand behind him.
"Expelliarmus!" Marvolo shouted, catching the four wands which had gone flying towards him; Harry hadn't realised Heather had brought hers.

"Don't you fret, children; being orphaned makes for good character building," Marvolo said with a cruel smirk. "And as for you, Lupin, my friend Ulric over there doesn't like rejection. Once he's finished with Potter you'll be next."

"You wish," James snarled from the bed. Even without a wand, and unable to move to defend himself, he still refused to give up his spirit, which Harry found rather admirable.

Marvolo scoffed and edged slowly towards Harry, Heather and Remus, with his wand aimed at them. Harry stepped even closer to cover Heather, while Remus did the same for him.

Marvolo seemed to dislike that, because with a wave of his wand the werewolf went crashing into the wall, falling unconscious as his head connected with it.

"You lay one hand on my children and I swear you'll be dead," James hissed, using his arms to swing his injured leg over the bed to meet his other. Ulric laughed in the background as the man struggled to stand, having to grip onto the bedside table to balance himself.

"You're fierce; pity it isn't a full moon, or else I'd have made you one of us," the werewolf said in a gruff tone, and he jumped, going from one end of the ward to the other, landing in front of James. "I'll do you a favour, seeing as though you've impressed me; I'll knock you unconscious so you don't have to die screaming like a coward in front of your kids."

"Do your worst," James snarled; he didn't even flinch when Ulric grabbed him and slammed his head against the wall.

Heather yelped behind him, and Harry felt her clutch at him tightly.

He shrugged her off, desperate to run forward and wrestle the werewolf away from his father, but Marvolo had a wand pressed against his chest; Remus' wand.

Harry snatched it from the loose grip Marvolo had on it; for whatever reason, the Dark wizard wanted him to have it, but all he cared about was saving his father.

"Stupefy," he shouted, but a hand with a wand in reached behind the werewolf and deflected the spell with ease, almost like it was nothing while he lowered James onto the bed and stood before him, baring his teeth like a wild dog.

"He's talented, Harry," Marvolo commented almost casually. "He's full of rage; you need that too. Why not go for the trio?"

The trio? The Unforgivable Curses, his mind realised.

Ulric had drawn his hands down James' chest, causing blood to pool to the surface.

Unable to see his father suffer, and knowing he had already committed the worst of the three, he raised the wand, not caring if Heather saw, and shouted "Crucio!"

The werewolf fell off his father, dropping to the floor and writhing in pain.

Heather ran in front of him, trying to tug the wand away, but then she looked him in the eye, shrieked and backed away.
The sound of Marvolo laughing brought him out of the trance he seemed to be in, and he dropped the wand in shock.

"Lovely," Marvolo sang, "just lovely."

"What did you do to him?" Heather hissed, and Harry realised she was talking to Marvolo. "I saw his eyes; they were all red. What spell did you have him under? Is this just some sort of mind torture?"

"Ah, now you stick up for your brother," Marvolo retorted with a dark glare. "You weren't there when it really mattered though, were you?"

Harry saw Heather's face drop; he knew words affected her greatly, and Marvolo knew that too.

"Are you sure I can't have him?" Ulric grumbled as he got to his feet, pointing at the prone form of James.

"Not today," Marvolo snapped. "Don't you think Harry cursed you so prettily?"

Ulric nodded. "I'd have the lot of them right now if I could. The feisty ones always fight back; it makes killing them even sweeter."

"We're all fighters," Remus' voice cut in. "And we aren't going to let you win." The man groggily pushed himself off the floor, swaying on his feet slightly.

Before anyone could respond, the light suddenly vanished from the room, replaced by flashing red. Loud screams pierced the air from the floor beneath; James stirred in response to the noise.

"I thought your spy said they wouldn't be ready," Marvolo spat at Ulric, who snarled back.

"They weren't meant to be; I've been with you all evening; how was my spy meant to tell me they were ready?" the werewolf growled.

Marvolo seemed to regain his composure first, and he smiled menacingly at Harry.

"Do what you like, Ulric," the Dark wizard offered, gesturing to the group. "I'm taking this one," he added, pointing at Harry, and the lustful look made Harry shiver.

"And if the Death Eaters find me?" the werewolf prompted with a gleeful look.

"Show them why you're on their most-wanted list," Marvolo stated, grabbing hold of Harry's arm and yanking him towards him.

Remus and Heather both got blasted as they rushed forwards.

Marvolo pulled the door open, pushing Harry through and throwing all of the wands onto the floor of the room.

"Let's see if you stand a chance," he mocked, slamming the door behind him. "As for you, Harry, let's go and find your lover; I have a proposition for him."

X
Warning for violence, implications of sexual abuse, and torture (possibly, if you define it that way).

X

Marvolo grasped Harry's wrists, locking them in an iron grip behind his back with a single hand. This forced Harry to walk directly in front of Marvolo, and each step jostled the man's sickening erection against him.

Harry heard Heather scream behind the shut door, and he whipped his head around but Marvolo growled and pushed him forwards.

The screaming from earlier was just as frantic, and now even louder as they moved into the staircase of the hospital.

Harry had never felt so useless; he would need his hands if he wanted to do a powerful Ancient spell, but he didn't particularly want anyone to see him do it. Marvolo could read his mind with ease, and had pretty much been inside of his head, so he likely already knew about it, but whoever who making the people scream didn't.

He also didn't want to go into his Animagus form; he would be completely defenceless then, apart from his sharp claws and teeth, but a simple spell would soon take care of him.

"What's your proposition for Tom?" he asked, hoping Marvolo wouldn't take them into the main fight, but that was the way he seemed to be going.

"Seeing as we are currently unable to kill each other, there's no reason for us to be enemies," Marvolo stated, bringing his wand past Harry's head to send a green beam at a Healer who was fleeing. Harry flinched as the body tumbled over the stair barrier. "And we both share a common interest, after all."

Marvolo grinded slightly against Harry, making the teenage blanch.

They reached the ground floor, and behind the large double doors to the entrance atrium, the screaming was starting to die down, and Harry could hear the roaring of flames. He was forced to go through a small side door before he could try and hear what was going on.

Tom had said Voldemort had only been planning a takeover of St Mungo's; Harry hadn't expected for the plan to be completed so soon.

And Tom wouldn't know Harry and his family were at the hospital; anything could happen to him, either by Marvolo's or Death Eater's hands, and Tom wouldn't be able to save him, and the knowledge that anyone who did hurt him would be brutally tortured before being killed gave him little comfort.

The new corridor had no light, with their way being guided by Marvolo's wand, which was not lit
by Lumos, but a red beam that could have been the beginnings of the Cruciatous Curse. Unfortunately that spell was directed everywhere but in front of them, which resulted in Harry walking into the wall a number of times.

It was when Harry ended up walking into a metal trolley; sending it and whatever had been on it crashing to the floor that Marvolo seemed to snap.

He spun Harry round to push him against the wall, and then slapped him hard.

Tears welled up in his eyes as his face burned. He shut his eyes as Marvolo began to caress his sore cheek softly.

"My hands are destined to touch you," Marvolo whispered lowly. His fingers on Harry's face tightened, digging into the skin, and he moved forwards to kiss Harry roughly, holding his head with his other hand so he couldn't move.

As his mind froze, his body kicked into action, and he brought his knee up, slamming it into Marvolo's groin.

The sociopath didn't pull away and fall to the ground like Harry had expected him to, but he did loosen his grip enough for Harry to squirm free and run.

He sprinted for the door they had come through, not caring if there were Death Eaters the other side.

He yanked the door open as arms wrapped around his chest, and he managed a glimpse of men in silver masks before he was thrown back into darkness.

"If you want to touch me, you only need to ask," Marvolo hissed in his ear, pressing his wand against Harry's forehead. "Stupefy."

X

Harry groaned as he blearily opened his eyes, shutting them again as they were assaulted with a bright white light.

He felt groggy, and his body felt stiff, almost like it hadn't been moved in days. He could sense his body was lying on a leather chair that had been reclined slightly, and his wrists and ankles felt heavy.

He could faintly hear screaming and shouting, and the sound of things smashing, and he recalled where they were and what happened.

As his mind started to get more alert, he seemed to feel soreness in his jaw and around his mouth, and he felt something sticky around his lips and on his face. He darted his tongue out, tasting a saltiness that he knew could only come from one thing.

His eyes snapped open with a start, his stomach turning as the first thing he saw was Marvolo standing beside him, leering down at him.

He tried to jump up, but thick leather straps that had been bound around his wrists and ankles tied him to the chair.

"You seemed rather keen to touch me, so I thought I may as well indulge your desire while making good use of that pretty mouth of yours," Marvolo told him with a cruel smile.
"Oh my God," he croaked, and Harry was suddenly only aware of the remains of Slytherin's release on his face, and his inability to wipe it off. "When Tom finds out he'll-"

"He'll thank me, because it stopped you from uttering such vile Muggle phrases," the man snapped. "Besides, he needs to learn to share, and who else better to share with than himself?"

Marvolo ran his fingers down the side of Harry's face, and the boy flinched. Just imagining what Marvolo had done to him while he was unconscious…the thought made him shiver violently.

Slytherin seemed to be delighting in the reactions he was getting from Harry, and he used his fingertips to push his own cum into Harry's mouth.

Harry pressed his lips together tightly, shutting his eyes and shaking his head in an attempt to throw Marvolo off. His behaviour simply earned him a chuckle.

The hand left his face and trailed down to his chest, rubbing Harry's clothed nipples before venturing further down, the fingers clutching at the bottom of his hoodie. He tugged it up Harry's torso, leaving his stomach at the whim of the cold air.

"Please don't-"Harry started, keeping his eyes firmly shut.

"I don't know what you have in mind, Harry," Marvolo cut in. "Though I won't have any trouble indulging you if you'd like." Harry instantly refused to say anymore. "As for now, I have something different in mind."

Slytherin pulled the sleeve on his right arm up, feeding it through the leather straps, and prodded at his bare forearm. His fingers ghosted over the skin, trailing over it in swirls as if he was drawing a picture with his fingertips.

"I had wondered if you'd be marked or not," Marvolo said quietly; this time Harry did open his eyes.

"I'm not a Death Eater," he pointed out, wincing when Marvolo's nails dug into his arm.

"Not every Death Eater carries the Dark Mark; only the important ones," Slytherin mused, licking at his blood stained fingers. Harry's eyes widened as he saw the blood welling on his arm with how deep the man had cut him. "And you, well, you're very important, aren't you? However I suppose Tom hadn't considered the Mark at his age. I, on the other hand, love the symbolism of it; I invented it merely days before I split into the Horcrux. Tom shall understand your marking will be attuned to me rather than Voldemort."

"No," Harry shouted, trying to wrestle his arm from the grip. "I don't want it."

"Pity that," Marvolo mocked, yanking Harry's sleeve down. Harry looked at him in confusion. "I want Tom to see it every time he fucks you."

He turned away from Harry, who immediately started to try and wrestle free of the bindings.

"These hospital rooms are incredibly useful, aren't they?" Marvolo commented casually as he rustled through a cabinet. "Here we go." He had found what he was looking for; a thick wad of bandages. The man unravelled a stretch of it, slicing it from the roll with a flick of his wand, and then repeated the motion.

He pressed the first wad into Harry's mouth, using the second to wrap across it and then around the back of his head where it was tied.
"We don't want to be interrupted by you screaming now, do we?" Marvolo stated with a wicked smirk.

He Summoned a chair, settling himself on it beside Harry. He muttered a spell under his breath, and brought his wand down in front of Harry's face. The tip of the wand was now a gleaming pointed tip, dripping in black oozing goo.

Marvolo clicked something on the chair Harry was bound to, and it fell straight, causing Harry to roughly drop into a lying position.

Harry was shaking violently now, the fear inside him feeling almost like it was ripping him apart from the inside. Every breath he took seemed to ache; seemed to take all of his energy to manage. He outright whimpered when the edge of the wand settled on the flat skin of his stomach.

Marvolo smiled at him, darting his tongue out like a snake, and then pressed the sharp edge into his skin.

A fire shot through his skin, like his entire stomach was burning and spreading the flames to the rest of his body. Then the wand tip moved, and the pain intensified; so much so that all Harry could focus on was the pain, the burning, and how much he needed it to end.

He was screaming into his gag, with tears soaking his cheeks that did nothing to soothe the fire.

The wand curved, and Harry reached the horrifying realisation that Marvolo was drawing the Dark Mark on.

Harry writhed violently, his body longing to get away from the pain that was being inflicted on it.

Out of everything Marvolo had done to him; poisoning him, controlling his body to touch himself, chasing him off staircases, torturing him in his dreams and abusing his unconscious mouth...none of that even came close to the suffering he was putting Harry through now.

With each movement of the blade the pain worsened, and Harry swore his blood was boiling underneath him, and that his bones were crumbling under the agony.

As Marvolo got to the snake stage, the drawing became more rounded and curvy, and by this point Harry shrieks had subsided to muffled whimpers, and the tears had become sobs; the pain now so intense that making any reaction to it made it ten times worse.

His fingers were shaking turbulently, his wrists sagging against their bindings.

When Marvolo got round to the shading, the pain almost knocked him unconscious; Marvolo slapped the fresh markings which jerked him alert with a pained yell.

After several agonising minutes which felt like hours to Harry, Marvolo finally put his wand away, staring down impressively at his work. The man bent forwards, darting his tongue out to lick at the fresh brand, yet the cool, slick muscle did nothing to soothe the burning agony.

Slytherin moved the chair back into a sitting position, and Harry blinked away his tears, staring down at the angry red skin on his stomach with a black skull and snake branded onto it. The skull started underneath his bellybutton, while the snakehead trailed down just under the waistline of his sweatpants.

He leaned across the arm of the chair, throwing up the contents of his stomach onto the floor. The burning in his throat was nothing compared to the still unbearable fire travelling through his body,
Marvolo pulled a face but cleaned up the mess with a wave of his hand.

"One more thing; then I'll free you," he stated, and Harry sobbed at whatever the man had planned next, but he was confident nothing else would ever hurt so much as the Dark Mark he had received.

Marvolo clanked about as he searched, returning with an old-fashioned syringe, looking like it was made from glass and metal, and with a large needle poking threateningly from it.

Slytherin unscrewed the top of it, and poured in a bright blue potion.

"This is such a fascinating method," Marvolo mused with intrigue. "The potion will be administered directly to your bloodstream and take immediate effect, with more powerful results than if you were to simply drink it." He rolled Harry's sleeve up and pressed the needle into his skin, pressing down on the plunger. "It's a potion version of the Confundus Charm; much more effective than the Confusion Draught. Let's see what your Tom does when he sees how pathetically vulnerable you are."

As Marvolo had explained, instantly Harry's mind seemed to become clouded; he couldn't work out what his thoughts were saying.

The straps of the buckles holding him down were undone, and he was hauled to his feet.

He allowed Marvolo to steer him away, taking him through a doorway where screams hurt his ears and lights were flashing in all sorts of colours.

Everything seemed to blur together, with the white of the hospital walls and the spells being cast.

All Harry could really be sure of at the moment was the pain throughout his body, and the person behind him forcing him to walk.

Marvolo stopped, brandishing his wand over a group of terrified looking people huddling in a corner, and after a flash of green, they weren't terrified anymore.

The common sense in Harry told him to run, but he couldn't quite put together how to do that.

He was driven away from the corpses and down a quieter corridor, where the screams were only in the distance. In fact, the only sounds were their breathing and a dripping of water. The lights were very dim, and everything made Harry's head hurt less because there was nothing to understand.

But then Marvolo stopped again, wrapping an arm tightly across Harry's chest and pulling him against his own.

A wand was jabbed into his neck, and then Marvolo was speaking, and it took Harry a while to realise he wasn't talking to him.

"If you even think of cursing me, I'll slit his throat," the man was saying into the darkness.

Harry swayed unsteadily as much as he could whilst in a firm hold.

A red-headed figure emerged, with a wand held out threateningly.

Harry first thought it was Ginny; the figure was pretty, and not very tall, and with long red hair, but when she spoke Harry realised it was his mother.
"Let him go," she hissed warningly, her voice filled with venom. Harry had never heard his mother talk like that.

"I don't think I will," Marvolo retorted, sounding much like a petulant child. "You see, I need him as persuasion for a dear friend of mine."

"I swear if you don't let go of him right now I'll-" Lily started, interrupted by Marvolo.

"You'll curse me, but I'll be quicker and kill your son before it hits me," the man mocked.

"Why would you kill him if you need him?" Lily pointed out logically, her gaze never wavering from the madman.

"He'd be beneficial, but his role is not imperative," Slytherin told her with a cruel smile. "I'll give you an option though; you sacrifice your own life for him, and I'll send Harry on his merry way, or else step aside and I take your son with me. I'll even Vow on it."

"If you're trying to play a game you've lost," Lily snarled. "I'd hand over my own life without a second thought if it meant saving my children."

Marvolo seemed shocked at her words.

Something in Harry's mind told him that was very bad.

"Don't you know what your precious son has been up to?" the man hissed. "Lying to you all and treating you like the fools you are. Were you aware the Dark Lord had two sons?" Harry blinked; Marvolo and Tom weren't Voldemort's sons; he was about to say this but the grip around his chest tightened and blocked his words. "My, ah, younger brother and myself. Your Harry knows this all too well; he's been letting Tom fuck him, joining him on Dark missions and using Unforgivable curses. Why would you save such a corrupted boy? Would it not be better to sacrifice him for the greater good?"

"He is the greater good," Lily hissed back, her eyes flashing fiercely. "No matter what he's done, he's my son and I will love him forever. If you can't understand that; I pity you."

"You're lying," Marvolo growled. "Mothers don't have unwavering love for their children, no matter how much they try and fool themselves. You'd abandon him the first chance you got."

"Never," Lily said defiantly.

Harry's head sagged against Marvolo's shoulders, watching curiously as he watched his mother's features go from determined and fierce to flashing with a strange emotion.

The corridor had gone strangely cold, and an odd feeling was tugging at Harry, fighting past the pain in his body, but he couldn't work out what it was.

Marvolo hadn't noticed, because his wand was drawn on Lily, and even in his confused state Harry knew that wasn't good.

"Do your worst," Lily spat, lowering her wand.

Harry struggled to free his arms; he couldn't quite understand what was happening, but he knew he had to stop it somehow.

"Avada-" Marvolo shrieked, but then Harry got free, and the first thing he could think to do was to
spin around and lunge his hands at the man. A symbol floated through his mind as his hands moved, and then a bright burst of fire shone from his hands, connecting with Marvolo's face.

The man screamed, clutching his face as the skin burnt and melted away.

He dropped to the floor, still screaming in pain, and behind Harry saw Tom, standing with the pale, snake-like figure of Voldemort who was staring at Harry with an unreadable expression, whether Harry was Confunded or not.

An arm grabbed his and pulled him along the corridor in a sprint, a silver shield blocking the corridor as they went.

He was pulled into a room, and he heard a lock click behind them.

"Harry, sweetheart, what did he do to you?" Lily questioned frantically, sinking to the floor as Harry dropped to his knees.

Harry just sat blinking at her.

"Finite Incantatem," he heard her whisper, but he shook his head.

"Potion," he muttered, jabbing a fist into his arm.

Lily seemed to understand what he meant, and she got up and ran to the cabinets in the room, shuffling about until she returned with a vial of a clear potion and handed it to Harry to drink.

Almost instantly the cloudiness in his mind started to clear up, but as they did, his full awareness of the pain and exhaustion of his body came back, causing him to whimper and roll in on himself.

"I'm sorry," he whispered into the room, and he expected his mother to slap him, or curse him, or something; now she knew what she knew, she must despise the sight of him.

And so he was entirely confused when he was wrapped in a loving embrace.

"My poor boy," she cooed into his hair. "What have they done to you, my beautiful Harry?"

She pulled back to examine him, casting Lumos so she could study him better.

Her fingers trailed over the dried semen that lingered on his cheeks, and she gasped loudly.

"I didn't want him to," Harry said, choking over his words. "I was unconscious and-" he trailed off, feeling tears prickling at his eyes. He began to sob, his mind and body too tired to cope anymore.

Lily hugged him again, whispering inaudible but soothing things against his hair, rocking him gently as she had done when he had been frightened as a child.

"I don't blame you for anything," she assured. "Remember I'll always love you, no matter who you are or what you've done. I couldn't have asked for a more wonderful son."

Harry cried into her shoulder, shaking as he let all his emotions out.

They sat in an embrace for a long time, Harry sobbing into his mother as she sat strong, holding her own emotions back as she comforted her son, whispering loving and motherly words to him.

The screaming throughout the hospital had lessened now, and the walls seemed to be shaking as if the building itself was fighting the Dark influence on it.
Lily and Harry both jerked their heads towards the door as a knock sounded on it.

"Harry?" Tom's voice called, and Harry immediately jumped to his feet.

"Unlock the door, please," he stated to his mother, who looked sceptical. "Please," he repeated, his voice breaking, and she seemed to cave, unlocking it but keeping her wand trained on Tom as he walked through the door.

"Expelliarmus," Tom cast before Lily could even blink, and her wand went flying into his grip. The door slammed shut behind him, and he opened his arms so Harry could collapse against his chest.

"Are you going to voice your disgust at me? If you are, I'm afraid I shall have to incapacitate you until I've finished," Tom said to Lily warningly, and Harry presumed she must have shaken her head because he turned his attention to Harry instead.

"The Dark Lord is furious about Marvolo," he told him, "but he saw your wandless magic and is intrigued with you."

"Was it really wandless?" Lily exclaimed. "How did you do that, Harry? You're only sixteen."

"Age is of no consequence to skill," Tom retorted coldly. "Marvolo fled soon after your attack; I believe you severely injured him; it was very impressive, considering the Confunded state you were in."

Tom pulled back, glancing down at Harry. His eyes instantly landed on the sign of Marvolo's assault on Harry and his eyes blazed in anger, while his grip around Harry's back tightened.

"I want you to come back to our home with us," Lily stated, making the two men look at her. "I have the medical knowledge to look after James at home; he shan't be staying in a Death Eater run hospital, whether he is Pure-blood or not. And when we return, I want you, Tom, to explain everything to me."

"Why should I answer to a Mudblood?" Tom sneered, but Lily paid no heed to the insult.

"Because you're not doing it for me; you're doing it for Harry," she told him. "I can see that he loves you more than anything in the world, and as for you, I don't think you're capable of it if you're anything like your brother and father, but you're here for Harry now, and you've broken past our Wards to see him. And no matter whether your methods of showing your affection are dangerous and cruel, I don't particularly care at the moment; we're at war after all, and a strong figure is safer, no matter which side they're on. I can tell the others you're on the Dark side, but I don't have to tell them exactly who you are."

Tom's lips curled. "It's a pity about your filthy blood; you're like a sane, Light version of Bellatrix Lestrange. I'll accept your request, on the circumstance that you and your family swear to an Unbreakable Vow under my terms."

"Fine," Lily snapped, folding her arms. "Harry, is your stomach hurting?" she asked, changing topic rapidly and her tone softening drastically.

Harry nodded, shivering as Lily dropped to her knees in front of him and lifted his shirt.

His mother exclaimed and Tom's eyes widened, darkening into a deep red colour.

"One more thing I wish to keep between us three," Lily said softly, staying on her knees. "I take it
you dislike your brother, no matter his wishes to reunite with you?" Tom nodded, a dark smile on his face. "Well, I will assist you in hunting him down, and I want time alone with him."

"As long as you don't kill him," Tom agreed, and Lily nodded.

"Of course not; that would be too easy," she snarled. "Do you know how I can find the rest of my family?"

Tom nodded, adjusting himself so he was side by side with Harry; an arm wrapped around his shaking shoulders, and led them away from the room.

Lily followed them silently, walking briskly up the empty staircases and through the abandoned corridors.

"So what's going to happen to the hospital?" Lily asked conversationally, as though she weren't walking with the person she believed to be the son of Voldemort.

"It is under Dark control now," Tom answered with a smug smirk. "Though it gives Voldemort no direct power, imagine all those who will be unable to receive medical care. Healers who weren't working tonight shall have been visited in their homes, so no underground organisations will be possible to set up."

They ended up back at the room James had been placed in originally, and when they entered they were all huddled on the bed, Heather wrapped tightly in her father's embrace, and Remus at the edge of his bed with his head in his hands.

Ulric had gone, but there were bloodstains on the floor.

They all looked up, looking overjoyed when they saw Harry and Lily, though Heather and James looked inquisitively at Tom, while Remus paled.

"Thank Merlin," James whispered, and Heather jumped up to hug her mum and brother.

"Where's Severus?" she asked.

"I got separated from him," Lily told her, a frown creasing her features. "We need to leave here now; the hospital is under Voldemort's control. Tom here has promised to fill us in."

James looked suspicious but nodded, and Remus retrieved the Portkey which had brought them to St Mungo's earlier.

"That shan't work," Tom snapped, tapping the Portkey with his wand and stepping back. "Try it now."

They all stood around it as Remus activated it on James' bed, and then they were all spinning, travelling back to the Potter home.

Remus and Lily both rushed to catch James as they landed, helping him onto the sofa and propping him up with pillows.

"Harry, I will need you to perform the role of Bonder for the Vow," Tom stated, tugging Harry with his hand.

"What Vow?" James asked sharply, and Lily sighed.

"Just do it, James; we need this," she said sadly, placing her hand on James'. Heather and Remus
reluctantly joined the pile after being prompted, and Tom placed his own on top.

Harry cast the incantation Tom told him, and watched as the gold beam wrapped around all of the hands, weaving between each one and around the outside, forming what looked like a small cage around them.

"Do you all swear to keep everything I tell you in confidence, not to be repeated to anyone aside from myself and Harry Potter, in every single form of communication? Do you swear to hide my identity from others, and not use anything of what I tell you against me? Do you swear to do me no harm, either directly or indirectly? And do you swear to allow Harry Potter to remain in as much contact with me as he wishes?" Tom said, stating every single possible thing he could think of so there were no loopholes.

"I swear," each of the group said, although it may have been somewhat reluctant.

"My name is Tom Riddle," Tom announced, taking a seat on a chair and basically dragging Harry to sit on his knee. He wrapped his arms around his waist, his fingers running gently circles over Harry's stomach where he was branded; it was the only thing that helped relieve the pain somewhat. "I am the son of Lord Voldemort," he lied, and James went to raise his wand before remembering the Unbreakable Vow. "I am certainly not on the Light side, but I wish to destroy my father and brother, and I have methods in place for this already, but the best way I can achieve this is by siding with my father, though only in pretence. It was I who was writing to Harry through the diary when he was a second year, and we forged a friendship which has become more, and yes, it is consensual," Tom said pointedly to James. "My brother is the one you need to be concerned about when it comes to Harry's welfare. He has developed an obsession with Harry, and seems intent on both forcing him to be a consort, and causing him considerable pain without killing him. It was he who caused Harry to fall from the staircase with the monsters he has created, and he who has given the werewolf clans more wrath and power."

"I'm sorry; are you saying you're Voldemort's son; one of his two sons?" James questioned, looking both in awe and disgust. "I swear to you, I don't know what spell you have my son under, but once I find a way round this Vow-"

"There is no way round it," Tom stated, rolling his eyes. "I did tell you it was consensual, or do the facts your son is quite content to sit upon my lap and craves my touch go over your head?"

James quietened, still looking rather disgusted.

"Was this my fault?" Heather asked quietly. "I never stopped anyone being horrible to you, and you must have been so alone and I didn't care; no wonder you had to be friends with Tom."

"It wasn't just your fault," Tom answered before Harry could speak. "Your entire family has ignored his crisis over the years, trying to delve into his mind and actions instead of seeing what is right in front of you; you only have yourselves to blame."

"Tom makes me happy," Harry said, speaking at last. He settled back against Tom, wrapping an arm around him as if to prove his point. "He was all I had at one point, and even now he's more important than anyone; I just want you to accept that."

"Merlin, Harry," James exclaimed. "I can accept you and him if you really want me to, but whether he's working for Voldemort or not, he's still on the Dark side; you have no idea what he's capable of."

"He knows well enough," Tom answered with a wicked glint in his eyes, and Harry nodded.
James looked at the others in the room; to Lily who was determinedly looking away from her husband; to Heather who actually appeared adoring as she looked at her brother and his lover; and to Remus who was also averting James' gaze.

"You knew," James stated, and Remus nodded gently. "Oh, Harry; I thought we raised you right."

"You did," Harry insisted. "I don't hate Muggleborns or anything; I even told Tom his ideology is stupidly flawed, but I hate Neville Longbottom for how he's destroyed my life. All I want is for him to suffer, and then I'm done; I just want to move away and live in peace, but I can't do that knowing the Boy-Who-Lived continues to do so while he's done so much. You know, it's his fault Cedric died, and he ran away at the Ministry which led to Sirius dying." James stirred here. "I went inside the Veil, Harry admitted to them, being met with disbelieving eyes. "I found a way inside, and I spoke to Sirius, and he had accepted his death; he wants us all to move him, but I can't do that completely until both Bellatrix Lestrange and Neville Longbottom pay for what they did."

"I didn't know Neville did that," Remus said softly, his voice full of pain, and James nodded in agreement.

"I know to you I'm nothing more than a filthy Mudblood," Lily cut in sharply, "but if you were to win this war, I want protection for everyone in this room."

"That depends," Tom answered, looking at them all darkly.

"On what?" James questioned, and they all leant forwards to hear the answer

"If you assist me in raising the dead."

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"Raise the dead? Did you suffer some sort of head trauma as a child?" James said incredulously, looking at Tom as though he were stupid.

"Simply because it is not a part of modern-day magical society, does not make it impossible," Tom tutted. "It is my own personal business as to how this is possible, but I believe I will need a significant amount of magic to ensure it works, and having only two wizards will not do, no matter how powerful they both are." Tom paused, nuzzling his chin on Harry's shoulder. "I know in your minds, by 'raising the dead', you believe that to mean bringing departed souls back to this realm as they once were, but that is not the case; the dead will be entirely under my control."

"So like Inferi?" Remus questioned, his eyes narrowed as he eyed Tom critically. "But they're nothing more than re-animates corpses."

"Exactly, and Inferi cannot cast spells and are driven away with a simple spark of fire and light. If it is easier for you to imagine, picture a cross between an Inferi and a human under a strong Imperius curse," Tom stated; Heather nodded at the mental picture.

"So we assist you with a spell so Dark that it's lost with Ancient magic, and we are all protected from harm?" Lily cut in sharply, and Tom nodded.

"Only from myself; I cannot protect you from anyone else, although I can request for my followers not to harm you," the Dark wizard assured.

"I don't know about this," James muttered, a twisted grimace crossing his features. "I have always sworn loyalty to Dumbledore and the Light; helping you carry out some horrendous ritual simply for protection…well, I know how to protect my family from people like you."

"It should be interesting to see you try to protect your family when you're missing a leg," Tom mocked cruelly. "Besides, I would have thought you would like to see your dear friend Sirius Black again."

Tom had played Remus and James perfectly, and Harry could see they had both fallen straight into his hands. Lily noticed this too, and she reached out to clutch James' hand tightly.

"Sirius is at rest now," Remus croaked, his voice straining with each word. Harry thought he looked like he was ready to burst into tears at any given moment.

"Did you not hear Harry before? He is forever stuck behind the Veil, unable to completely move on. He's almost like a ghost confined to a dark, empty room for eternity," Tom described, smirking as a tear forced its way from Remus' eyes.

"You would really bring him back? I couldn't live to see him as your mindless slave," Remus muttered; Harry watched as Tom's eyes lit up darkly.
"Not at all; he would be under my power, but I can relinquish enough control for it to seem as it once was." Tom answered. James looked horrified.

"Remus, you can't really be considering this, can you?" James questioned weakly, and he looked at his wife and daughter who both looked away guiltily.

"How would you feel if you lost Lily?" Remus snapped sharply. "Or Heather or Harry? Wouldn't you give anything at all to get them back?"

"Didn't we say we'd do anything if it meant our children could be safe?" Lily added, staring at her husband with fierce eyes.

"I almost have lost Harry," James said quietly, pain lacing his voice. "I only just lost my best friend."

"And I'm offering you a chance to have both," Tom's voice said, filtering around the room like a spirit. "Surely your loved ones are more important than Light and Dark? You're simply being offered a chance for control; for power."

Tom's voice was power itself, and Harry could see Heather entranced by him already. She seemed to be hanging on his every word, staring up at him in awe.

"You don't even need to assist me right now; it shan't be ready until the New Year, but I will need your word," Tom continued, his tone demanding.

"Alright," James said softly, shutting his eyes.

Remus, Lily and Heather all voiced their acceptance too, and Tom smiled widely, his grip tightening on Harry possessively.

"Perfect," he announced, dropping a hand to rest on Harry's thigh.

Harry watched as his father's eyes narrowed dangerously, but the man said nothing although he was clearly gritting his teeth as Tom's fingers moved lightly across his clothed skin.

"So that's that then? We just have to sit around until you decide to grace us with your presence again?" James asked exasperatedly.

"Well you could try and go against the Vow if you wish to die," Tom mused with a cruel smile. "I do not care to give up control; the little I have relinquished for you regarding your dead friend should be good enough for you."

"Thank you for offering," Lily said quietly. "I know far too well that you'd have no qualms killing us all. I'm glad you understand Harry enough to know that he needs his family."

"I think it's more of a case of wanting, rather than needing," Tom retorted calmly. "Harry and I have personal matters to discuss now, but do not even bother to attempt to spy on us because your efforts will be pointless."

James scowled again as Harry stood from Tom's lap at the man's gesture.

Tom wrapped his arm around Harry, resting his hand on Harry's hip in a pose that was clearly orchestrated to provoke his father, and likely to show his mother how much more important he was in Harry's life than her.
Tom led him out of the room, and the older boy didn't even cast his eyes back as they left.

Harry heard his family talking in hushed whispers as soon as they were out of sight.

"They definitely can't tell anyone about you, right?" Harry asked, just wanting confirmation. He knew Tom had worded it precisely in the Unbreakable Vow, but he just wanted to be sure.

"No; all they can do is complain to each other about it," Tom told him with a smirk.

They stepped inside Harry's room, and Tom threw up a Privacy Charm as usual.

"I wish for you to know, that no matter Marvolo's desire to work with me to destroy the Dark Lord, I shall never side with him," Tom said lowly, kissing Harry possessively. "He dared to touch something that is mine, and he shall pay for that. Scourgify."

Harry was grateful that his face was finally completely clean; he had had far too much going on for that to have been a priority.

"I was unconscious," Harry muttered quietly. "He tied me down; I didn't know what was happening, but just thinking—"

Tom cut him off, pressing a soft finger against his lips.

Harry fell into Tom's arms, whether Tom had wanted him to or not, but the man didn't push him away.

"Can you remove the Mark?" Harry whispered after a moment, resting his head against Tom's chest.

"I can in time," was the firm answer, and that was good enough for Harry. He trusted Tom would find a simple method and get rid of the branding as soon as he could. "It may take some time for me to study the Mark in order to find out why it is irremovable for the common Death Eater, but nothing is truly permanent."

"I would say death was, but you seem to be finding your way around that," Harry mused lightly, and he felt Tom let out a short laugh.

"Let me see it again," Tom ordered lowly, leading Harry over to the bed.

The Gryffindor lay down at Tom's request, wincing as cold fingers lifted his shirt and ghosted across the Mark.

It was still stinging, his skin feeling like it was burning a small flame underneath his skin, and he arched into Tom's cold touch, trying to soothe the pain within him.

"I had never considered branding anyone like this," Tom murmured from his position kneeling between Harry's legs. His fingers were dancing over the Mark, his wand joining his exploration, but his eyes were staring deep into Harry's. "It was likely meant as a psychological way of reminding the Inner Circle who their loyalties belonged to, but there are other ways of doing that; ways which are not a liability. All it took was a slip of the sleeve, and they could be locked away or tortured upon discovery of the Dark Mark."

"Tortured?" Harry repeated, his voice breaking as Tom lowered his head and darted his tongue up the brand, which was oddly soothing and sent a shiver of pleasure running through Harry's body.
"The Ministry is not as pure as they like civilians to believe," Tom commented, tracing the outline of the Mark with his tongue, humming and sending pleasurable vibrations through Harry's skin. "Dumbledore did not refuse the Minister of Magic position simply because he loved his job as Headmaster too much; he knew what the Ministry was involved in, and even if he might not agree with their methods, it would be almost impossible to change."

"But surely Dumbledore could stop what they were doing if he didn't like it? I mean he's the most power-; I mean he's the second…third? Most powerful wizard in our world, isn't he?" Harry questioned, flushing under the smirk and deep set eyes that Tom flashed at him.

"You need the right sort of power to do certain things," the older boy asserted. "Are you aware that even in his duels against Voldemort, he won't directly cast a harmful spell? He's clever enough to work around it, yes, but he refuses otherwise. He had a sister who died when she was very young; nobody knows for certain how, in fact very few even know he had a sister, but it was potentially his fault she died, as she was caught in the midst of a duel between him and two others."

Harry found that rather tragic; his sister hadn't been the greatest of siblings, but killing her, even by accident, would be unbearable for him.

Harry was drawn from his inner musings as Tom nipped at his sore skin, and Harry yelped as a somehow pleasant pain coursed through him.

"Marvolo said," Harry said breathlessly, "that he wanted you to see his Mark every time you…” he trailed off, not wanting to sound as crude as Marvolo had, but Tom appeared to understand what he was getting at.

"Pity for him, I have changed the Mark so the claim of your ownership lays with me, and me alone, despite what the imagery may suggest," Tom drawled, a bemused smirk on his face.

"You changed it?" Harry asked incredulously. "How?"

"Do not doubt my skill, my dear," came the short reply.

Harry looked down his body; the Mark was still there, glaring harshly against his reddened skin, but now, protruding from the snake's mouth, was a lily.

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The remainder of the week had been particularly strange.

Lily had been nursing James, and helping him to manage with only one leg. Lily had transfigured him a wheelchair, which was awe-inspiring for a man who had grown up in the Wizarding World, but he still insisted on moving himself as much as he could.

He was currently waiting on a wooden replacement, much like Mad-Eye Moody's, but due to the abolishment of a safe St Mungo's, the replacement was harder to come by. Lily had wanted to get James a Muggle prosthetic limb, claiming it would be more hard-wearing, but her husband had refused, claiming whatever worked for Moody would be good enough for him.

Harry had told his parents he wanted to go back to school on the Saturday. That night was a full moon, and he wanted to be there for Draco. He didn't tell his parents that was the reason, of course, but Remus had smiled at him knowingly, with a beaming look of pride in his eyes.

Heather had stated she might as well go back when Harry did, so Lily insisted they all have one last family dinner together before they returned to Hogwarts.
Lily had requested that Tom join them too, much to James' displeasure, who had concluded that by not seeing the boy, and by never talking about or to him, then it would mean he didn't exist. Still, Harry had been more surprised than his father when Tom agreed. Upon reflection, Harry decided the reason Tom had accepted the offer was purely to irritate James, rather than out of politeness to his mother.

The dinner itself had been awkward, with uncomfortable silences, and Harry trying not to blush too heavily whenever Tom's hand obviously settled on his thigh. Harry had outright squeaked when Tom rubbed his cock, and James looked like he was preparing to chop his other leg off with a butter knife to bash Tom over the head with it. If he hadn't sworn not to harm Tom under the Unbreakable Vow, he probably would have done.

The worst part of the evening came when Lily and Remus started a conversation, as everyone else was preoccupied. Harry was getting molested, James was busy trying to kill Tom via glaring, and Heather was keeping her eyes fixed firmly on her dinner as she blushed so much her red face was clashing with her hair.

Remus and Lily decided to talk about their favourite topic; books, and were discussing a Wizarding author's new work compared to their old ones, when Tom cut in with his opinion that the old books were entirely better, resulting in a debate between Tom and Lily against Remus. Harry still couldn't get his head around how that had happened.

Although, in his defence, it had been difficult for him to think about anything once Tom had started kissing and undressing him in front of everyone once they had eaten. James actually fainted at that point, and Tom used the distraction to drag Harry out of the room proceeded to shag him senseless on his parent's bed. Tom had told him he would clean the mess they left, but Harry thought he heard his father sobbing when the man retired for bed, making the Gryffindor sure that Tom had lied.

Harry wasn't overly surprised when James refused to look him in the eyes the next day, even when he hugged him goodbye. He smelt of cleaning products which said a lot; James normally refused to clean using Muggle products, claiming spells made things so much easier, which was probably why he hadn't considered the dangers of bleaching a bed.

"If he wanted to kill Dad, the Killing Curse would be much easier," Heather commented as they Floo-ed back to Hogwarts, landing in the Headmaster's office.

Madame Pomfrey and Professors McGonagall and Dumbledore entered through a door as they heard the whooshing of the fireplace.

"Hello Mr. Potter," the matron greeted. "Are you sure you feel well enough to attend your lessons?" She looked as though she doubted Lily would have been able to look after him properly, despite her Muggle and Magical medical knowledge.

"I'm fine; physically, anyway," Harry said, adding the last bit on as an afterthought.

"There is a new curfew in place," Professor McGonagall stated. "All students are to be in their dorm rooms by eight o'clock, no matter their age, and you are not permitted to leave for breakfast or classes until half seven in the morning." Harry and Heather nodded to show they understood.

"I'll escort you back to your common room, Miss Potter; Professor Dumbledore would like a word with your brother."

"I'll see you at the common room, maybe," Heather said to Harry, her voice very small, which was perhaps the reason why the Transfiguration professor seemed to soften in her stance and offered
the girl a very faint smile.

The females left the office, leaving Harry alone with the elderly Headmaster.

"Please have a seat, Harry," Albus said with a bright smile, and Harry complied, sitting himself down and keeping his gaze firmly focused on the desk in front of him. Tom had trained him well in Occlumency, but Harry's skill level would never match up to that of Tom's Legilimency level. As such, his mind was vulnerable to Legilimency attacks from people such as Dumbledore.

"You have had a rough time of it lately, from what I've heard," Dumbledore stated gently. "How are you managing with it all?"

"Fine," Harry answered simply with a shrug. Dumbledore was resting his hands on his desk, the dead hand resting on top of the healthy one. On one of the darkened fingers was a ring, the symbol of the Deathly Hallows faintly visible in the black centre.

Harry had taken the liberty of re-reading the tale of the Three Brothers after he had lost the Invisibility Cloak. Tom claimed Dumbledore was the owner of the Elder Wand, and Marvolo thought Dumbledore owned the third too; the Resurrection Stone, but that was literally a stone, not a ring, unless it had someone been fused into Dumbledore's ring.

He glanced up briefly; Dumbledore was looking at him almost tiredly, and Harry could see the fragility of how old the man really was, but at the same time he looked somewhat thoughtful, like an old scholar.

"Harry," Dumbledore said gently, his voice sounding as though it were pained. "Your mother told me that there is a particular Death Eater who is stalking you."

"I wouldn't call it something as pleasant as stalking," Harry muttered sarcastically under his breath.

"I have taken extra precautions in the castle to protect both you, and the other students," the headmaster continued, not showing any sign that he had heard Harry, although the Gryffindor suspected he had. "I have taken the liberty of extending this protection to the Shrieking Shack tonight, should anybody require it." Harry's head shot up, and he stared at the headmaster curiously. "However, in future, if a student happened to search by the Whomping Willow for something they had perhaps forgotten, they would find any concealed entrances sealed."

Harry averted his gaze again; he and Draco would have to find somewhere new for him to transform the next full moon. Still, he supposed the fact Dumbledore had given them fair warning, without directly revealing his knowledge of Draco's lycanthropy, and Harry's Animagus ability, was rather considerate, and maybe even a bit admirable, though he would never tell Tom he thought that.

"Err; can I go now, sir?" Harry asked, and Dumbledore chuckled.

"Certainly, my boy, unless there is anything you wish to tell me about," Albus smiled.

Yes, there was plenty he should tell Dumbledore about, but he didn't especially wish to tell him.

"No, sir; there's nothing," he answered, looking up at the man just in time to see a small flicker of recognition and perhaps sadness flash through Dumbledore's eyes.

"Very well," was the calm answer, and the headmaster watched as Harry stood. "I believe your friends are congressing in the Dungeon Corridors; I imagine they will be very pleased to see you have returned in good health."
Harry smiled awkwardly and muttered a quick thanks, before leaving the room as quickly as he could without it looking like he was fleeing.

He headed down the staircase, feeling a slight flicker of fear at the height, which was perhaps the reason his arm kept on brushing into the stone wall; he had moved as far away from the edge as possible, despite the fact there were barriers to stop accidents.

There were students roaming around, and nearly all of them stopped what they were doing to point at him as he passed them, and Harry didn't want to know what the theories were surrounding what had happened. He supposed he would find out soon enough.

He made it down to the dungeons in record time, wanting to get away from the daunting staircase and watching eyes as soon as possible. He wondered if he could somehow move into the dungeons, and he felt a sense of regret at not considering the option of being a Slytherin when he was sorted.

If he had been a Slytherin, then maybe he wouldn't have managed to get himself lost.

The dungeon corridors were vast, almost like a maze. The area where the Potions classrooms and the Slytherin common room, although that was not obvious unless you knew it was there, was relatively small and simple, but beyond that there were so many twists and turns it was difficult to keep up.

He was ready to go Hansel and Gretel style, and create a trail made from whatever he could find, when he heard someone shouting his name.

The next thing to knew, he had a happy Ginny Weasley wrapped around his body.

"I didn't think you'd be back so soon," she said with a wide grin. She stepped back, leaning against a smirking Blaise Zabini. "How are you feeling?"

"Considering I fell from a great height not so long ago, I'm actually doing pretty good," Harry told the pair, missing out his issues concerning the rest of his life.

"I noticed you used the word fell," Blaise observed. "I knew those rumours were wrong."

"What rumours?" Harry asked with feigned interest; he'd have to find out sooner or later.

"Nearly everyone's saying you jumped," Ginny filled him in. "Some say you had a pact with Anderson, while others say you were so depressed about his death you felt you had to do the same."

"Of course, the intelligent ones amongst us knew otherwise," Blaise added. "For a Gryffindor, you've had a surprising amount of Slytherin support."

"Only because your House is scared of Draco Malfoy," Ginny cut in, grinning. Blaise rolled his eyes but let the comment slide. "I suppose you came down here looking for him."

"Him and Luna; no offence," Harry muttered, smiling sheepishly.

Blaise offered to show him where Draco and Luna were, and Harry graciously accepted, though he didn't bother to mention about his wanderings around the corridors.

They were in a small, ancient classroom that Harry wouldn't have even known existed if Blaise hadn't pointed it out.
They both looked surprised to see Harry, Draco more so than Luna.

"Hello, Harry; I'm happy you're back," the Ravenclaw girl smiled, and Harry decided it wouldn't hurt Tom much if he hugged her.

"What are you doing back so soon?" Draco asked, eyeing Harry critically. He seemed to be almost looking Harry over for damage, and Harry noticed both he and Luna seemed to be staring right through his shirt to where his now unique Dark Mark lay.

"I told you I'd be with you this full moon," Harry pointed out, and to his surprise Draco scowled.

"You shouldn't put your health at risk just for me," the blond muttered. "You Gryffindors really are stupid; I wouldn't have sobbed for a month just because you broke a promise."

"My health isn't at risk," Harry assured. "Besides, I could do with a break from everything that's going on; running around on four feet with a wolf sounds like a good way to burn that energy."

Draco ended up copying Harry's grin.

"I think you'll have fun," Luna stated, swinging her legs as she sat on a desk. "Harry, have you seen this desk?" she asked, pointing down to her seat. "Tom used to sit here."

Harry was quick to look at the desk; how Luna knew Tom had used it was a mystery, because there were no markings on the desk whatsoever.

"How can you tell?" he asked, and Luna smiled at him dreamily.

"It has a faint lingering of his magic around it; that can only happen with a powerful wizard, which is the same way I know Professor Dumbledore used to spend a lot of time on the Astronomy Tower. The Grey Lady told me that Slughorn used to teach at Hogwarts for many, many years, and one day, he just shut up his old classrooms and nobody knew why."

"Probably something to do with Riddle," Draco muttered under his breath. "Do you not find it weird that your boyfriend was a student here back in the 1930's? He's basically seventy or so."

"In soul; not body," Harry pointed out. "There are plenty of novels where there's great soul versus body divides."

"It's rather romantic," Luna mused. "Though Tom is actually only sixty-nine, Draco."

"Close enough," Draco smirked. "How would you know, anyway?"

"I looked it up," the girl explained. "I don't think how I did it is allowed within the school rules, but I think sometimes you have to be flexible to learn. He'll be seventy on the last day of the year."

"Are you telling me that because you think I should celebrate his birthday?" Harry questioned, and Draco let out a bark of laughter.

"I know they may look different, and it's probably easy for you to forget, but Riddle and Voldemort are basically the same person; can you really imagine Voldemort at a birthday party?"

Harry laughed at the mental image. "Maybe he'd be nicer if somebody gave him a present, and a cake, or something," Harry mused.

"Are you seriously suggesting we can solve the Wizarding War by showering the Dark Lord with affection?" Draco commented with an amused smirk.
"That would certainly be a pleasant end," Luna sang. "There was a war amongst fairies which was ended when one of the tribe leaders gave the other a hug."

"There you go, Draco; go and give Voldemort a hug and you'll be a hero," Harry grinned. Draco responded with a rude gesture.

It felt good to be back with people he could spend time around without having to think about death and mayhem with, and they spent the rest of the day smiling and talking with each other. As the day moved on, Draco seemed to get more agitated, however, as though he could feel the pull of the moon before it even lit the night sky.

He pulled a vial out of his robe pocket, swirling the gloopy green mixture around in the glass container.

"Are you ready to go?" he asked Harry, who nodded, despite the nerves that had set in. He knew Draco had the Wolfsbane, and even if he didn't he wouldn't attack another animal, but with all the warnings his parents and Sirius, and even Remus himself, had given him about staying away from Remus at the full moon, he still had that smidgeon of fear. They had countered their comments, of course, by saying any other time Remus was his lovely old self, but as a wolf without Wolfsbane, it was dangerous for humans to be near.

They walked, under the Disillusionment Charm, to the Whomping Willow, where Draco set the knot which would allow them entrance. Once they were in the underground tunnel, they cleared the spell off them.

"We won't be able to use this anymore," Harry told Draco as they clambered through the rough, trip-hazard like ground. "Dumbledore has to shut the tunnel down as a precautionary measure, but he's put Protection Charms around the Shrieking Shack tonight."

"He told you that?" Draco asked, with just a hint of worry in his voice, which Harry would not have been able to pick up had he not been used to Draco by now.

"Not me, exactly; well, he did tell me exactly, but he didn't say anything that was aimed directly at me or you. The words he used were just general statements. I'm pretty sure he knows about both of us, though."

"Typical," Draco muttered.

The boys climbed up through the floorboards and into the Shack. The walls and floor were littered with scratch marks, and the furniture looked like it had been torn to shreds.

"Don't worry; it was like this before I ever turned up," Draco drawled, taking out his potion vial. He took one look at the glass, before removing the stopper and downing the green liquid.

The building was dark, with the night sky shading the shattered glass of the windows.

They sat in silence, an uneasy tension simmering between them, but it ceased when Draco gasped loudly.

"Change!" he ordered, and Harry complied, turning himself into his fox form.

He looked up from his short height, as Draco writhed in pain, his back arching backwards with a sickening crack. Harry wished he could do something to help, but all he could do was watch in horror as claws burst from Draco's fingers and toes, and the sharp features ripped away his clothes, drawing blood from the chest that was spurring grey fur.
Draco fell onto his arms and legs, his face contorting and making his screams turn into growls.

Then Harry was looking at a grey wolf, with white streaks running through its fur. The eyes were still Draco's; a mixture of amber and grey, and it was a sign the Wolfsbane had worked.

Harry hadn't realised he had been simply staring, until the wolf swatted Harry over his head with his paw. The impact, though light, sent his small body tumbling over, and the wolf howled in satisfaction.

Harry barked; a high pitched little yelp, and compared to Draco's large, wolfish form he could have seemed almost pathetic, but he didn't care, and he leapt his small body as Draco's leg. He wrapped his front legs around it, biting down softly on the smooth fur.

Draco allowed him to feel like he was more dominant for a few minutes, but once the werewolf was bored, he shook his leg violently, causing Harry to let go.

The werewolf stood as tall as he could, his back arched and teeth barred. His eyes were lit with mirth though, and he seemed to be telling Harry to run; Harry didn't think twice after seeing those teeth. He felt Draco's pounding footsteps behind him, and using his smaller form to his advantage, Harry ducked underneath a small table, waiting for the wolf to pass before scampering back out and jumping up onto the table he had hidden under.

Draco turned around, and Harry leapt, landing on Draco's back with his limbs splayed out across the fur to hold onto him without falling.

Harry nuzzled his head against the soft fur, pawing at the wolf until the animal rolled over. Harry had to jump away before Draco squashed him.

They continued playing like that for a while, the animalistic energy inside of him more than eager to make Draco his playmate.

As the night went on, he felt his energy dropping, and he blinked tiredly up at the wolf, who had him pinned between two large paws.

Draco seemed to realise, and his eyes were just as tired. He dropped down, resting his head over his paws, and drawing Harry into what was somewhat a hug. Draco's front legs had closed around his body, trapping him in place, and when Harry curled over, his body was closely resting under Draco's head, placed just so that Harry wouldn't be crushed if the wolf's head dropped too far.

Harry snuggled up closer, resting his fur against Draco's, and the two animals slept in a pleasant slumber.

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Chapter End Notes

I have posted the first chapter of my Tom/Abraxas/Harry story, so please go and have a look and tell me what you think.
The best thing about being an Animagus was that Harry could control his transformations, and change to and fro whenever he liked. Draco, on the other hand, could not control his change into a werewolf, so by the morning, the blond Slytherin had taken on the form of a sleeping human with his arms wrapped around a fox. Unfortunately, another downside that wouldn't affect Harry as an Animagus, but affected werewolves, was that they didn't change back with their clothing on, resulting in a naked Draco Malfoy hugging him.

Harry supposed he was very grateful that Dumbledore had put so many Protection Charms around the Shrieking Shack, because if Tom had seen Draco's pose, the Slytherin may not have lived to see the next full moon, or most likely the next day.

Harry woke up first, so to allow Draco to not wake up as awkwardly as Harry had, he squirmed out of the blond's arms and transformed back, before conjuring a blanket to cover Draco and protect his modesty.

It was done just in time too; Draco woke up not much later, and even with a blanket covering him, a very faint blush stained his cheeks.

"It was different having you here," Draco commented, as a way of saying good morning.

"Good different or bad different?" Harry mused, staring intently at the walls as he heard the shuffling of clothes as the Slytherin got dressed.

"Good; I get bored easily, you see," Draco explained casually. "Besides, I have the animalistic urge to run about, and it seemed to be more satisfied with you joining me last night, which is good; I despise how, despite the potion, my mind wants me to frolic like a common beast."

"Better than attacking yourself in place of killing," Harry muttered darkly, earning him a glare.

"We better get back soon," Draco stated, ignoring Harry's comment. "I need to have a long, hot shower."

Harry rolled his eyes but nodded, and followed Draco out of the Shrieking Shack and through the tunnel.

"You know, Remus used to sleep in his office at the full moon," Harry remarked as they walked. "Sirius kept him company in his Animagus form, along with using the Wolfsbane Potion, and nobody but Snape and Dumbledore knew about it. Maybe we could sort you out some sort of empty classroom away from everyone."
"I might use the Room of Hidden Things," Draco mused aloud.

They had reached the entrance to the Whomping Willow now, and Harry reached out a hand to stop Draco going through, so he could speak to him without the risk of being overheard.

"Voldemort isn't expecting you today, is he?" Harry asked, trying to keep the nervous tone out of his voice. Draco picked up on it, however.

"No; not until next weekend," was the answer. "Why? You look worried."

"You know how I turned one of Voldemort's Horcruxes into that creep Marvolo?" Draco nodded. "Well, Voldemort found out, and I haven't seen him since."

Draco's horrified expression wasn't exactly comforting.

"He's killed people for doing much less than that," the Slytherin gulped. No, he definitely wasn't being comforting.

"I am aware of that," Harry hissed quietly.

"I hardly doubt Tom would allow you to be killed," Draco responded, managing to finally control his outward emotions. "Though I do wonder how he'll manage it."

"He will," Harry mumbled, trying to reassure himself more than anything. Although, Voldemort had caught sight of his Ancient magic, and hopefully that would intrigue the Dark wizard enough for Harry not to have to go into hiding.

"If I were you," Draco said, interrupting his thoughts. "I'd be more worried about facing the students at breakfast; I've never heard anybody being talked about for so long before."

"Not even the Longbottom and the things he gets up to?" Harry questioned, making Draco smirk.

"Well, no normal person has been talked about so much, just for one incident," the Slytherin corrected himself.

Draco had, indeed, been very correct, for when Harry walked into the Great Hall later, attempting to hide behind two burly students, all eyes seemed to turn to him, and he could hear hushed whispers everywhere.

He plonked himself down in a seat as close to the doors as possible, and almost immediately the other sixth year Gryffindors seemed to be by his side, asking him questions all at the same time.

"Are you okay?"

"Are the rumours true?"

"Was it my fault?"

"Was it because we've not been there for you?"

"Should we have been more comforting about Anderson?"

"No, no," Harry stated firmly, stabbing a fork into the sausage he didn't feel like eating. "I didn't jump; I fell off."

"People can't just fall off," Hermione cut in. "There are magical barriers; they would have to be
"Well I didn't take them down, but someone did," Harry scowled. "I wouldn't have been so jumpy either, if a giant hadn't been let into the castle."

Hermione and Neville both exchanged guilty looks, and Lavender looked almost triumphant; her arms tightened their grip on Ron, and she smirked mockingly at Hermione.

"You see, Won-Won; she's dangerous to be around," Lavender said, 'whispering' to Ron, though with the obvious intent of Hermione hearing.

Harry thought Lavender would have sounded more malicious and respectable if she hadn't called Ron 'Won-Won'.

"I'm just glad you're feeling better," Parvati said with a bright smile, and the others nodded.

"And that you didn't jump," Dean added, gaining more nods of agreement.

"It was kind of obvious he didn't," Hermione snapped, as though she had tired of their lower intelligence levels. "Heather seemed pretty adamant about defending him; she wouldn't have argued with her friends if it wasn't true."

"Heather's been getting into arguments?" Harry questioned, looking around for sight of his sister; she wasn't in the Great Hall.

"Yeah, her and Romilda Vane had a pretty nasty fight, and you know Romilda; everyone else is too scared of her to disagree with her," Parvati answered, looking sympathetic.

"She's a complete bitch," Lavender agreed. "Even Pansy Parkinson thinks she's horrid."

"I'm going to go find my sister," Harry told the group, standing up from his seat. He had hardly touched his breakfast, but that didn't even seem important anymore.

Once he was alone in a corridor, he pulled the Marauder's Map out from his bag. After his disastrous attempts at trying to find Luna and Draco the previous day, he had decided to keep the Map on him from now on.

Ironically enough, Heather was in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom. Harry didn't know if Heather knew he had used it as a hide-out for a lot of his Hogwarts life.

"Heather?" he called out softly as he opened the doors to the bathroom.

He heard a very faint clink of something metal hitting the floor and the hurried shuffling of somebody behind a stall, before the door was yanked open.

Heather's face was pale, though her cheeks were somewhat red and puffy. Her eyes were red-rimmed, with tears still stuck on the ends of her eye lashes, and her hair looked wild and tangled.

"Heather, are you alright?" Harry asked, concerned, watching his sister intently as she shoved her hands into her robe pockets and shrugged.

"I heard you fell out with Romilda," Harry continued, trying to prompt Heather to talk.

Before, Heather had always seemed so upbeat and confident, although rather cocky and arrogant at times, yet since the war had started, he had seen it affecting her by causing her distressing anxiety, but he had never once seen her like she was now. She looked almost broken, and Harry knew it
couldn't just be a one-off thing, but then again, he had spent so long drawn into his own world, and basically obsessed with Tom, that he hadn't been near his sister long enough to see any other side of Heather than the side she was when with her friends.

"I don't need her anyway," Heather sniffed quietly, stalking over to a mirror and trying to straighten her hair by running her fingers through it, her hands still covered by her sleeves. "Can't you just go away?!!" she snapped, turning to glare at Harry when she noticed he was still watching her.

"I'm your brother; I can't leave you like this," he stated, but that seemed to anger Heather more, and tears started to course down her cheeks.

"Exactly!" she fumed. "You're my brother, and you want to stand by me, but I've done nothing for you over the years. I deserve all I've got; I should have done something sooner and I didn't, but I don't need you trying to tell me I deserve kindness when I don't, so leave me alone!"

"Heather, listen-" Harry tried, but Heather growled and stomped off; Harry could feel his heart aching as she ran away.

"She doesn't mean it, you know," a sad voice said, and Harry looked to see Myrtle floating towards him, pearly tears marring her ghostly face. "She's just angry at herself, not you."

"I only want to help her; I don't care about our past," Harry muttered, staring mournfully at the door.

"Give her time," Myrtle assured him. "She's been keeping things to herself for a long time."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked in shock, spinning round to face the ghost again. "I've not seen anything to suggest she's been struggling. What's wrong with her? Please, Myrtle, you have to tell me."

"I promised her I wouldn't," Myrtle sobbed. "She hid everything on purpose so you wouldn't find out. I just wish people wouldn't be so cruel; see how the two of you have turned out because of other people? Olive Hornby refused to apologise to me, even after I spent years haunting her. She bullied me to the death and then made me out to be the horrible one. Of course, she's dead now, but she got to move on, while I'm stuck in this bathroom forever."

Harry knew the ghost could move about the castle, but he decided it wouldn't be a great idea to point this out; he knew what she meant, after all.

"Err, anyway, Myrtle, thank you for telling me what you could," Harry said, trying to prevent Myrtle from going into a rant about her life and death; he had heard it all before, at least five times. "I need to get going to lessons now."

Myrtle nodded and weepily bid him goodbye, and Harry spent the rest of the day in concern of his sister.

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The week passed far too quickly for Harry's liking. He spent a majority of his free time looking out for Heather, but whether it was simply because her and her friends had fallen out, or whether it was her normal behaviour, he didn't see much of his sister. On the occasions he did, she seemed perfectly fine, spending most of her time laughing with Seamus, but since Harry had seen that pained look in her eyes in the bathroom, he could see it lingering beneath the deep brown irises.

He had also spent a lot of the week being accosted by other students. Ones who believed the truth
simply ignored him as the usually did, but others who thought he had tried to kill himself by jumping off the staircase either tearfully embraced him and told him if he ever needed to talk they would be there for him, even though he didn't know half their names, while others questioned how he and Anderson could have planned such a wicked thing together, not understanding Harry had fallen and Anderson had been murdered. The worst people were the ones who told him they wished he had died, or that he purposefully jumped from a safe distance so in their pact, Anderson would die and he wouldn't. Ginny had cast a particularly exceptional Bat-Bogey Hex when she overheard somebody say that, and refused to remove it, despite threat of detention.

His teachers, meanwhile, had decided though he had had a week off school, he needed to catch up with his work, and had piled the work on once more. For once, Potions was his best class because it was a breeze with the Half-blood Prince's book. Ancient Runes was especially hard, as he was doing almost all of Draco's work for him too, which was hard with how much work they were now getting. Daphne Greengrass had apologized to Draco over her behaviour on finding out about his lycanthropy, and offered to do some of his work for him in exchange for a good word to Pansy to get them back together. Unfortunately, Daphne wasn't as good at Ancient Runes as Harry was, and Draco preferred a better grade.

All that couldn't distract him from the impending doom of seeing Voldemort, however. He had heard nothing from Tom; no notes with daring escape plans, or secret instructions, so either Tom was going to help him once he got to the Manor, or he would just let Voldemort kill him, and he sincerely hoped it wasn't the latter.

His common sense tried to reason that Voldemort wouldn't kill him, because he performed wandless magic in front of the man, which should have made him seem too powerful to kill, despite the fact he released part of Voldemort's soul. If Marvolo were to join Voldemort, though it would be terrifying, at least Voldemort would have no reason to mourn the loss of his Horcrux, but he somehow couldn't see that happening, and he wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing.

Much to Harry's displeasure, Saturday was finally upon them, and while most students were celebrating the break from lessons, besides Hermione who had planned a library day, Harry wished it were Monday again.

He knew that avoiding Voldemort wouldn't end fantastically for him though, so he reluctantly trudged his way through the corridors to meet Draco, having enough trust in Tom that he wouldn't be brutally tortured and murdered.

"Don't look so terrified; that will just encourage him," Draco warned him, and Harry groaned.

"Can we go now? I just want to get this over with. I think waiting and not knowing will send me crazy," Harry muttered, making Draco smirk.

"You may not be a stereotypical Gryffindor, but you certainly have some annoying traits about you," Draco sneered. He held out the Portkey, and Harry hesitated for just a moment before taking hold of it and allowing Draco to activate it.

Malfoy Manor seemed strangely quiet upon their arrival; the only person waiting for them was Voldemort himself, and Harry wasn't sure if he'd be able to walk anywhere as his legs felt like jelly.

He didn't seem to look furious or anything, but Harry didn't know whether that was good or not.

"I will talk to you later, Malfoy," the Dark wizard said coldly, his tone so menacing that Draco hurried off with a quick mumble of 'Yes, my Lord.'
Voldemort turned away from Harry and began to walk to a room; the order to follow him was left unsaid, and Harry felt his feet obey the silent order.

The door shut solemnly behind Harry, and he was suddenly far too aware of the silence around the rest of the Manor, and how it was only him and Voldemort alone together.

He was hit with a Cruciatus Curse almost straight away, and he dropped to the floor, shouting in agony as invisible, burning knives sliced his skin.

The Curse seemed to continue for hours, though it was probably only seconds, and when it was lifted, Harry panted heavily, his body heaving and his limbs shaking uncontrollably.

"A filthy Half-blood like you shouldn't be getting involved where he doesn't belong," Voldemort hissed, and if Harry were not so terrified, he might have pointed out Voldemort was a Half-blood too, no matter how much he denied it to himself.

"I didn't know it was one of your Horcruxes," Harry stated, and from the look of pure evil that flashed over Voldemort's face, he wasn't quite confident it had been the best thing to say.

"I ought to kill you," Voldemort snarled, pointing his wand at Harry. A pain flared up his arm, and he dared to look down, paling as he saw blood staining his sleeve. "Tom could find a new pet; he wouldn't miss you."

Somehow, hearing that hurt more than the torture Voldemort was inflicting on him. From the expression on his face, Harry could tell that if the Dark Lord had lips, they would be curling, as otherwise his features mirrored Tom's.

"That is all you are to him, you know," Voldemort continued, a cruel smile on his face. "A little toy; a vessel. You're worthless to him; he just cares about making you submit to him. He could find another to do that." Harry whimpered; he could feel blood soaking his clothing, and the pain had gotten so intense everything seemed to have now numbed. "And yet, you did not just perform wandless magic that night; you invoked the magic of the Ancients."

Voldemort stalked forwards, and Harry flinched as he roughly pulled Harry to his feet and yanked his sleeve up, showing Harry's blood stained arm, the skin parted deep beneath the blood.

"Heal yourself with it now, or bleed to death," the Dark wizard ordered, and Harry reluctantly obeyed, watching the faint glow settle over his skin. Feeling returned to his arm, with no pain either, and he wiped the blood away with his other sleeve, just in time to see the long, deep scars winding across his arm vanish.

"You are very fortunate, boy," Voldemort snarled, his voice making Harry feel anything but fortunate. "I believe you and Tom are travelling to Egypt together." Harry nodded. "I have a request for an object I wish for Tom to bring back; and you will activate the item for me."

Harry nodded once more, and his eyes glanced at the door, a gesture that caused a cruel smirk to flicker over Voldemort's face.

"Simply because your death has been postponed, doesn't mean you can get away with what you did," Voldemort told him, before casting another Cruciatus Curse at him, and though it lasted a lot less time than the one previous, it was still blinding agony.

"Dumbledore destroyed one of your Horcruxes; the ring," Harry ground out. "It had the Resurrection Stone in it."
Voldemort looked at him sharply.

"Bring it to me," the Dark wizard commanded, his eyes flashing dark red. "Bring it to me, or else your family dies, one by one. The longer the wait, the more who die. You are dismissed; send Draco in here."

Harry was perfectly happy to do as he was told, and he forced his aching, throbbing legs to carry him away from the room. He had gotten off better than expected; his punishment was more in the form of threats, but he could handle that; well, he hoped so. Killing Dumbledore was difficult for Draco, but stealing something off him wouldn't be much easier. Maybe they could do both at the same time.

He knocked on Draco's door on his way to Tom's room, and the blond boy didn't look particularly happy about being summoned.

The Manor was otherwise deserted, but Harry suspected that Tom would be in nonetheless.

He didn't even have to knock before the door opened, and Tom was beckoning him inside with an unreadable expression.

Orion and Bast, his two kittens, who were now much bigger than when he had last seen them, were waiting behind Tom, and bounded towards Harry when they spotted him, only to be lightly kicked aside by Tom. The Dark wizard hissed at them, almost as though he was a cat too, and they scampered underneath a chair, watching the humans with glowing eyes.

"Are cats eyes meant to glow like that?" Harry asked, distracted momentarily from his Voldemort related thoughts.

"I have been experimenting on them," Tom said simply. "Nothing to harm them, as I find kittens do tend to be highly irritating, and I shall not have any more young ones running around here again, however I shan't tell you what I have been doing until my work is complete. Anyway, I notice you are in working order."

"I ache," Harry told the man, who nodded impatiently and waved his wand over Harry, causing a cool, refreshing feelings on his limbs which started to dull the pain almost immediately. "Err, he mostly just threatened me; maybe a bit of blackmail too."

"How so?" Tom questioned calmly, as though being blackmailed by Voldemort was completely normal.

"Well first he said he needed me alive so I could activate something he's going to ask you to get from Egypt; it isn't the tablet you're after, is it?" Harry asked, feeling a bit of relief when Tom shook his head. He took a deep breath before continuing. "I also may have told him that Dumbledore has destroyed the ring Horcrux," Harry said sheepishly, "and it has the Resurrection Stone in it, and I guess he didn't know, because he's told me I have to steal it for him or he'll kill by family one by one. I don't know how I'm going to manage that though; I mean, it's stealing from Dumbledore. Besides, it's not even a month until the Winter Holidays, and Dumbledore is gone half the time now anyway."

"I will get you an extension to keep your family alive, if you'd like," Tom told him with a reassuring tone. "Though you will have to do something in return, and it shan't be easy. The Dark Lord may be insane at times, but that doesn't stop him being extraordinarily clever. He is aware that performing the Crucius Curse on you too much could easily cause your mind to break, and that wouldn't be advantageous while he needs you. And as you are young, like Draco, you have
spent your whole lives depending on your family for care and support, and threatening to kill them is far for horrific for a child to deal with than their own torture."

Harry grimaced, knowing Tom’s words were true. Being tortured would have been unpleasant, but once it was over that was that, while having this new threat over his head was far worse in the long run.

"I shall go and speak to the Dark Lord now," Tom stated. "Wait here for my return."

The cats seemed to reappear, far more happy looking once Tom left; Harry thought perhaps taking one to Hogwarts with him, and leaving the other with his parents would be a better option, before Tom scared them to death, or mutated them with whatever weird experiment he was doing.

Tom returned a short while later, causing the cats to run away from the string Harry had found which they were chasing.

"You have a compromise," Tom announced, ignoring the cowering animals. "You can postpone your Dumbledore task, but you have to do something else tonight."

"What?" Harry questioned warily.

"You will do well to remember this is designed as a punishment before you react negatively," Tom warned. "The Dark Lord wishes for you to bring a Gryffindor student here."

"Why?" Harry continued, though he had an idea, and the thought sent a shiver down his spine.

"I’m sure you know why," Tom answered with a smirk. "Pick somebody you feel deserves to die."

"I don’t think anybody deserves to," Harry said quietly.

"Either that, or one of your family goes instead," Tom cautioned, and he handed Harry a book. "I’m sure you can find somebody; that book will be a temporary Portkey, which will allow the student entrance to Malfoy Manor on a single occasion. To activate it, simply say ‘Portus’."

Harry sighed; he knew the warning to his family wouldn’t be an empty threat. He just didn’t know who he would pick. No matter who he chose, the feeling of doom amongst the other students concerning the disappearance would haunt him every time he entered Gryffindor Tower, and that was probably why Voldemort requested that House in particular.

Harry started as Tom tapped him with his wand, and then his skin started to fade into the background; he had been Disillusioned.

"You are familiar with the Imperius Curse," Tom stated. "I recommend you use it for a swift selection without drawing any unnecessary attention, and do not be seen; if you are the last person seen with somebody before they disappear, that will draw suspicion to you. Go now, before people go to bed."

"Err, okay," Harry mumbled, stomach jolting as Tom activated the Portkey.

He walked slowly to Gryffindor Tower; he was in no rush. How could Tom expect him to just pick a student from his House and bring them to their doom? He understood how Voldemort could do that, but he had hoped Tom might have persuaded the Dark Lord to request something less cruel. Still, maybe Tom saw no problem with it; in fact, he most likely didn’t.

How was he going to choose someone, for that matter? He couldn’t just ask around and see if
anyone was suicidal or terminally ill, and wouldn't mind dying. Or maybe he should just pick a
student he didn't really know, so their disappearance wouldn't cause so much notice for him.

Gryffindor Tower seemed to be upon him in no time, and he waited five minutes for the portrait to
swing open when some other students returned from elsewhere, and stepped into the bustling
common room.

All he could see was smiling faces, and he didn't know how he could just choose one of them to
die, but he had to, or else one of his family would take their place, and he knew without a second
thought which would be the worst option.

Obviously he wouldn't go for one of his year-mates; their missing presence would be far too
noticeable, and though he wouldn't call them his friends, he liked most of them well enough, while
he needed Neville to destroy Horcruxes, and it would upset Ginny if he took Ron.

Then he spotted his sister. Heather was sat with Seamus, Dean and Parvati, while Heather's old
friends sat behind them, laughing and pointing. Romilda Vane was the loudest and most
enthusiastic, and Harry knew who to pick.

True, Heather and Romilda may have had a simple fallen out and would make up soon, but at the
moment she was being beyond cruel to a person who was meant to be her friend, and she had never
been pleasant to Harry.

He stealthily moved towards her, his body obeying Voldemort's command rather than his mind,
which felt like it had shut down the horror it was about to bestow upon this girl, and he whispered
'Imperio'.

He made Romilda make her excuses to leave the Common Room; oddly enough, none of her
friends offered to come with her.

He made Romilda walk to a deserted corridor, and then pushed the book Portkey into her hands,
and cast the spell to activate it. It horrified Harry had easy that had been; any student working for
the Dark Lord could cause so much havoc from within the castle walls. It was fortunate he and
Draco were the only ones; who he knew about, at least. Death Eaters may not yet be able to enter
Hogwarts, but Voldemort wouldn't have to worry about that if he had insiders.

When they landed, the Imperius Curse must have been disrupted by the travelling, especially
considering Harry wasn't wonderful at casting it in the first place, as Romilda was looking around
wildly, her eyes darting from side to side fearfully.

Harry cast Finite Incantatem on himself to remove the Disillusionment Charm, and he scowled
when Romilda seemed to relax at the sight of him.

"How did I get here?" Romilda demanded, putting her hands on her hips. "And where is here? I bet
Loony Lovegood had something to do with this."

"Her name is Luna," Harry said through gritted teeth; Romilda just rolled her eyes.

"Whatever," she sneered, and Harry wondered if she would be this cocky if she knew where she
really was. "But listen, if this is some weird tactic to try and get me to make up with your sister, it
isn't going to work. I mean, who does she think she is? Calling me a liar, just because she can't
accept that her brother is a suicidal freak; I was just trying to help her see the truth, but she went off
on one."

Harry couldn't understand how anyone so vile could be so popular, but then again, fear made
people do a lot of things they wouldn't normally do. But beneath the cruel, heartless exterior, Harry could see the fourteen year old girl within; was it really right to let her die so young, no matter how horrible she was?

But then Romilda said something that settled her fate.

"Heather's a freak anyway," the girl stated blandly, "slicing her arm up every night."

Harry's blood went cold inside of him.

"What?" he breathed.

"I caught her one time last year and she begged me not to tell anyone," Romilda continued as though Harry hadn't said anything. "And of course I wasn't going to; I couldn't have people knowing I was friends with some psychotic weirdo. If she wants to bleed herself to death, that's her problem."

Harry's heart hammered wildly. It made sense; why Heather was so upset when he found her crying, and why, when he thought about it, he had never seen her wear short sleeves, but he had never paid much attention to it before. He felt sick to his stomach; according to Romilda, and what Myrtle said too, it had been going on for at least a year, and he hadn't seen the signs. And the one girl who had known ignored the problem, and refused to help Heather, purely for selfish reasons.

Romilda was looking at him fearfully.

"W-what's up with your eyes?" she stuttered, trying to make her voice sound brave; Harry ignored her and grasped her wrist, dragging her to the room where he and Voldemort had been before.

Voldemort, Tom, and Draco were indeed there, and Voldemort's eyes flashed dangerously, while Draco tried to hide his confusion. Tom seemed to only have eyes for Harry, and the Gryffindor could feel his face flush as Tom seemed to undress him with his eyes.

Romilda whimpered at the sight, and she squirmed out of Harry's grip to bang on the door that had shut behind her, but to no avail.

"What are you doing?" she sobbed to Harry, and he cast his eyes away from her so he couldn't see the terror in her own.

"I requested that young Harry brought me a student he believed deserved death," Voldemort stated, his voice a cold calm.

"B-but, I'm only fourteen," Romilda cried. "I'm a Pure-blood too."

"Blood purity matters not to him," Voldemort said, pointing to Harry. "Tell us, why do you wish her to die over the others you could have chosen?"

That question was directed at Harry, and he took a breath before answering.

"She's never been nice to me, but I pushed it aside," Harry answered quietly, keeping his eyes on the floor, "but she's now been cruel to my sister, and has allowed her to harm herself without a care."

"I do care!" Romilda argued. "I even gave her a cream to hide her cuts from your mother so she wouldn't freak out about it."
"That doesn't help her," Harry snarled, and he jerked his head up when he heard Voldemort laughing coldly.

"Well, you chose her; you kill her," the Dark Lord hissed. Harry didn't know if it was himself, Draco, or Romilda who gasped; likely all three of them. "Draco must learn how easy it is. Do it, or my compromise is void, and Romilda and Draco will be imprisoned together until the next full moon, when only Draco will be released."

Draco's face drained completely, and Harry could see the trembling in his limbs. Romilda looked slightly confused, but the mention of the words 'full moon' must have given her an idea.

She turned to Harry, dropping onto her knees.

"Just do it," she begged. "It'll be quick, won't it? It won't hurt. I don't want to be ripped apart. Please."

Tom had come to stand behind Harry, wrapping his arms around Harry's chest, with just enough room for Harry to raise his hand.

"Do it, my dear," he encouraged darkly. "Show them how powerful you are, my corrupted angel."

Romilda had stopped crying, and was staring at Harry with a brave façade.

He raised a trembling hand, uttered the curse, and in a flash of green light, Romilda Vane's life was gone.

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Chapter End Notes

Err, I did mark this story as Dark!Harry, just saying. I'm not going to make him evil or anything though.

Next chapter will be much lighter, because Harry will be home for the holidays, and Tom will be there too, and then after that, my boys are Egypt bound.

And it should be out much sooner than this chapter was.
I apologise for the long wait for this chapter, especially after I promised it wouldn't be long. Real life threw some problems my way, but I've had a sort through of my thoughts, and I really want to get this story flowing again. I will post an author's note at the end of the chapter with more details if you want to know more.

Also, just so you know - this chapter is skipping forward about a month in time. It err, may be slightly Winter holiday themed, which was maybe perhaps because of my original plan to have finished the chapter the same sort of time, maybe, but yeah, life ruined that idea. Ah, well, the chapter plot is still important.

Harry found the most horrifying thing for him hadn't been the death of Romilda, surprisingly. It wasn't even the almost purring sounds Tom was making in his ear as the girl's body fell to the floor, or the sadistic smile on the face of Voldemort; no, it was Draco's reaction that was the worst thing. Harry had expected the blond to be horrified, or disgusted, or maybe saddened, but he didn't expect to see a look of respect and admiration on Draco's face.

Even worse was when Draco later told him that seeing Harry cast the Killing Curse so willingly to save his family had inspired the Slytherin to work harder at his task, as killing Dumbledore would be the lesser evil than allowing his parents to die. In Draco's words, if an awkward little Gryffindor could kill, a bold Slytherin surely could too.

Harry also had the issue of dealing with his sister. He had left the topic of self injury alone, because Heather seemed in shock at the disappearance of Romilda Vane from school, even though Tom had given Harry a mock runaway note to leave in the Gryffindor Common Room, made out like the girl herself had written it. He had vaguely asked Heather if she was okay, and he reassured her if she ever needed to talk to anyone, he would be there to listen. She didn't seem willing to say anything, and Harry didn't want to pressure her into anything right away, but he was definitely keeping his eye on her. It was Winter Holidays now, and he decided to leave her be for the moment, so she could enjoy her break from school. Plus there was the fact Tom had basically confined him to his room, which meant he didn't have time for spending with his family.

He had only been at home for a couple days, but Tom had told him he wanted to go to Egypt as soon as possible. The older boy would have simply taken Harry without a word of warning to his parents, but Harry said he would speak to them first so they didn't panic, and Tom had reluctantly allowed it.

It was the scent of baking gingerbread that finally persuaded Harry to go downstairs and speak to James and Lily, who were sat with Remus in the kitchen. James now had a prosthetic leg, and he seemed to be coping well with it. Severus never came round to their house during holidays, because things were too awkward between him and James.

"I thought the smell of baking would bring you down," Lily smiled, looking up from the icing she
was putting into piping bags; she always baked and cooked by hand. "We've hardly seen you and Heather since you've been back. I suppose you have Tom, and Heather needs her space; I do hope Romilda's alright."

Harry looked down awkwardly, pulling a chair out to sit on so he didn't cause any suspicion.

"She's a silly girl, running away in the middle of a war like this," James muttered. "Hogwarts would have been far safer than anywhere else."

That much was true; Lily and James hadn't been happy about having their children back for the holidays, because a lot of Muggles had been murdered in their village. In the end, they had permitted them to return, on the promise they wouldn't leave the house. Of course, Harry would be leaving, and not just the house but the country.

"Err, Mum, Dad, can I ask you something?" Harry asked, tapping his fingers on the worktop nervously. His parents looked at him curiously, and he raised his eyes to meet theirs; even if they said no, Tom would still take him. "Tom is planning to go to Egypt soon, and he wants me to go with him."

"Egypt? Why?" Lily questioned, placing down the piping bags and looking at Harry seriously. "I know Tom will probably try and convince us, but I'm not sure it's a good idea. I don't feel it's safe enough to let you go to the village; how am I meant to know you're safe when you're in another country?"

"I doubt Death Eaters are going to attack their leader's son," James stated logically. "And do you really think Tom is simply going to talk to us to convince us to say yes?"

"I suppose you're right," Lily sighed. "I'll let you go, on a number of conditions." Harry nodded, and she continued. "First of all, I want you to Floo me every day; secondly, and I can't believe I'm saying this, but you do not leave Tom's side, and you do as he tells you, and thirdly, you can go only after Christmas and Boxing Day, and be back by the time school starts again. The Weasley's have invited us over to their house Boxing Day, so you have to be there then."

"Thank you," Harry grinned, astounded his parents had agreed so easily, but he supposed he would be wary of saying no to Tom as well. His smile brightened as his mother opened the oven and cast a Cooling Charm over the gingerbread, and iced him a cookie.

"Oh, and sweetheart," Lily called, as Harry thanked her and turned to leave. He turned to face her, the gingerbread already in his mouth, ready to be bitten. "Tell Tom we would like him to join us for Christmas Dinner; he's obviously a big part of your life, so he should be with you on special occasions."

Harry nodded, although he wasn't sure it was right to tell Tom he was invited; it was safer to ask, even with an expected answer of 'no'.

He climbed the stairs back to his room, snapping off half of his cookie to offer Tom the rest, though the offer was refused.

"My parents said I can go to Egypt," Harry told Tom as he sat down on his bed, curling his legs up beside him. "But we have to go after Christmas and Boxing Day."

"Their permission wasn't necessary," Tom said, his lip curling. "However, at least it's far easier for you that way, rather than smuggling you out. I can't say I'm surprised that your parents wish for you to be here over Christmas; people are so obsessed with the holidays, and spending time with
their families. I haven't once surrounded myself with others, not since I was old enough to understand and make my own choices."

"Well, about that," Harry laughed awkwardly. "My mum says you're invited to join us for Christmas dinner, and, err, she seems pretty adamant you come. I guess it saves you being up here on your own all day; not that you probably would sit around here doing nothing, but yeah," Harry added awkwardly with a shrug; it would be nice to spend time with Tom in a more normal setting, but Tom would never be swayed by someone else's opinion.

"Fine," Tom said, eyes rolling.

"Mum won't be happy you said no-wait, what?" Harry said, taken off guard, and Tom chuckled.

"I rather like being around your parents; especially your father, though don't mistake that for me liking them. I can see the horror in his eyes every time I touch you," Tom smirked, and Harry had to laugh at the expense of his father.

"You shouldn't like being with my parents purely because you like to infuriate them," Harry reprimanded jokingly; Tom only smirked further.

"I have no need to be pleasant for them; they've served their purpose now, so I can treat them as I wish," Tom stated. "Though please be aware just because I will be joining your family for a meal, does not mean I will be celebrating any holiday; and do not bother with a gift." Harry was glad Tom said that, because he would have had no idea what to get the man. "Your promise to make a Horcrux is pleasing enough for me."

"Err, okay." Harry nodded. "And on Boxing Day I have to go to the Weasley's, but you could prepare everything and we can leave when we come back?"

Tom was silent for a moment. "I shall accompany you to the Weasley's as well," Tom told him. "Though the parents are blood traitors, they are still a Pure-blood family, and the children only believe in the Light side due to the way they were raised; it will be beneficial to see who is worth persuading to join my side."

"Ginny, definitely," Harry muttered. "But, are you sure you want to go? What if Neville Longbottom's there?"

"I'm not planning to commit murder and torture any of them just yet," Tom said with a dark glare. "And I shall be in disguise so they cannot trace me, or connect your family to me. I am also intrigued as to how a poor Pure-blooded family lives; all those I have visited have been wealthy. Your family lives comfortably, and I am very aware that the Potter accounts have enough money for you to live almost as well as families such as the Nott's and the Parkinson's."

"Which is probably why my mum and dad are happy here," Harry said under his breath, his eyes studying the back of Tom's hands.

"Once we have finished with your familial duties, we shall visit the mental asylum you wished to see, and then leave for Egypt in the early morning."

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Christmas was soon upon them; term had finished so late that there was hardly time to get used to being at home. Because he would be spending the rest of the holiday abroad, he and Tom had completed all the homework he had to do. He hadn't wanted Tom to help him, but the man assured him that he would be taking over the Wizarding World soon, and he didn't care what qualifications
Harry had, and he would train him to be a freelance Curse-Breaker. Freelance workers were often looked down upon, because they had a reputation for finding more Dark artefacts than gold, and sold mostly to sleazy shops down Knockturn Alley, but Harry thought that Dark artefacts were tame after the things he had experienced, and he had no problem with them providing they didn't attempt to kill him.

By Christmas Day, all his work had been finished, and it had lifted a load off his shoulders which he hadn't known he had had. In the morning, he left Tom to go downstairs and open his presents, and went with Remus and his father to visit the memorial headstone that had been placed for Sirius, while Heather and Lily popped over to visit Snape. Even knowing Sirius would return soon didn't stop the three men returning red-eyed, but Christmas had been Sirius' favourite holiday, and he wouldn't have wanted them moping around.

Tom finally joined them downstairs while Lily was chopping vegetables, with Remus assisting her. Lily had banned James had from cooking Muggle style years ago, so he was sat watching and sneaking food when he could, which resulting in him being threatened with a carving knife numerous times.

"That's an impressive blade," Tom commented, Accio-ing the knife out of Lily's hand and into his. Harry flinched, though the handle landed smoothly in Tom's grip. "When I was a seven, I remember trying to skin and slice open a rabbit with a simple dining knife; it was terribly difficult and messy, but I got the job done in the end. This would have made it much easier."

Tom slammed the knife into the worktop, the metal tip digging into the surface, and the adults in the room jumped. Tom smirked as he picked up the knife and ghosted his fingertips across the sharp blade.

"What were you doing cooking with knives at that age?" Lily asked sternly. "Especially with inappropriate ones?"

"Oh, it was nothing to do with cooking," he answered with a dark smile. "Young Billy Stubbs called me a demon for talking to a snake, so I skinned and gutted his pet rabbit, and then hanged it from the rafters for him to find."

Lily paled and summoned the knife back to her.

"How about you two go sit in the living room?" Lily suggested, her tone soft but slightly wary. Her lips were pursed, and Tom only smirked further. He glanced back at the knife, and Lily closed her hand tightly over the handle.

Harry sighed; Tom had only been around for two minutes and he was already affecting his family. Getting through the dinner itself was the most awkward part. Tom was very charming, and made pleasant conversation and complimented the food; Harry wouldn't really know if the compliments were true, because the way one of Tom's hands insisted on touching him made it almost impossible to eat.

Tom managed to maintain a flowing conversation despite what he was doing to Harry, and only Lily and Heather seemed to be able to match him. Heather was only managing because she likely didn't realise what Tom was doing. Lily's words were harsh and forced, while Remus kept his eyes on his plate, and James only managed a few grunts.

"I have told Harry I'll be joining you at the Weasley's tomorrow," Tom informed the group, his hand pressing down over Harry's crotch and making him squeak. "I bring no threat; I simply desire
to see how a Pureblood family with no money lives. Of course I shall be in disguise too; we can keep to the story of Sal, except alter the Muggle background to that of a home-schooled, travelling Wizard."

"That's fine," Lily said, managing a smile, no matter how forced it looked. "James, stop that!" she hissed, and James begrudgingly removed his fork from the table he had embedded it in. "And then I hear you and Harry are going to Egypt?"

"Yes, though our business is no concern of yours," Tom muttered darkly, and Lily nodded.

"I don't particularly want to know," she responded, her eyes flickering over to where Tom's arm disappeared beneath the table. "I just want to make sure Harry will come back in one piece."

"Of course; he would be no good to me if his body was in pieces," Tom smiled, and Harry shuddered. He also hadn't missed Tom's use of the word body; if Harry managed to create his Horcrux, and he didn't think Tom would let him leave Egypt until he did, his soul certainly wouldn't be in one piece.

"Well, I suppose it's good work experience," Remus managed to mutter, still looking at his plate as he spoke.

"Do you think maybe Romilda went abroad?" Heather piped up. "She said she had an Italian boyfriend over the summer once; she might have gone and hidden with him."

James and Lily exchanged a weary look, as though they knew Romilda was now ashes. Tom had told Harry that was the easiest way they disposed of bodies, as Nagini could only devour so many at a time.

"Any magical victims the Death Eaters take are brought to my father and I," Tom answered, taking Harry by surprise. "No girls have been brought in for some time, so abroad or not, the girl is likely alive, unless she met death by hands of another mean."

Heather seemed to brighten considerably, but Harry was left somewhat confused. As far as he knew, Tom disliked Heather, and he certainly had no reason to try and convince her to side with him. He supposed Tom must have his reasons though, even if they may be something as sinister as playing with Heather's head.

Lily decided to bring the conversation to a topic less serious, and dinner continued as normal.

Tom had wanted to return to Harry's room after they had finished, but Harry insisted that he wanted to spend time with his family by being downstairs with them. Tom had finally agreed, but warned Harry he would be facing a punishment for making him spend more time with the Potter's than necessary.

Harry pointed out Tom didn't have to stay down there with them if he didn't want to, but Tom had just rolled his eyes and held onto Harry possessively in a chair really only aimed at holding one person, which made reading the book Luna had sent him extra difficult, never mind the fact Tom seemed to be reading it too, only at twice the speed of Harry and tutting every time he took too long to turn the page.

The day had certainly been different to what Harry was used to, and although he had tried to keep his mind off it, he had definitely noticed the missing presence of Sirius.

This made him even more determined to help Tom find the Tablet though, and when they did, Harry would be straight to the Veil to bring his Godfather back.
The next day, a very blond, disgusted looking Tom stood with Harry and his family outside the Weasley home.

"They call this a house?" Tom sneered. "It looks like poorly made shacks stacked on top of each other; I wouldn't be surprised if their bodies were found under the collapsed ruins one day."

"I hope that isn't an implied threat," Lily said shortly, giving Tom the look that drove fear into the heart of her husband and children if they were unlucky enough to warrant it. Tom, on the other hand, was not fazed in the slightest.

"No threat at all; I was merely observing the poor workmanship that has been put into this building," Tom drawled. "As I said before, I have no intention of harming anybody today; I'm surprised you don't trust me." Tom flashed a dazzling smile, and James actually shuddered.

"Yes, I wonder why that's a surprise," the man stated. "And do try to keep your hands off my son while we're here, please."

"Of course; I think Harry quite satisfied my needs last night," Tom smirked, causing James to stutter and break into a coughing fit.

The door then opened to reveal a beaming Mrs Weasley.

"Hello; goodness, James, are you alright?" Molly said as greeting, looking cautiously over the choking man. Her eyes then darted around the open countryside, as though checking there were no Death Eaters standing in wait.

Lily leaned forward, and whispered something into Mrs Weasley's ear, and the woman seemed to visibly relax, and pulled Lily into a hug before welcoming her and Heather into her home.

James ushered Harry inside, standing beside Remus behind him in an odd form of barrier. He would have rather been protected from Mrs Weasley, who drew him into a tight hug as he tried to pass.

"You look in good shape," she beamed at him. "Your poor mother was so worried about you after that fall; fancy Hagrid keeping such dangerous creatures next to the school; it was just an accident waiting to happen. And you must be Sal," she said, turning to Tom. "Lily told me all about you; we're happy to have you."

"Thank you," Tom said quietly, a shy smile plastered on his face.

Harry followed the sound of cheerful banter, until he reached the doorway where he froze and Tom almost had to drag him through.

It seemed like almost all of the Weasley's were gathered, with Fleur Delacour, Neville Longbottom and his grandmother there as well.

Tom's eyes did a rapid study of the room, and Harry saw the quick gleam of contempt before it was disguised.

"Hiya, Harry," Ginny sang, running up to Harry almost bursting with excitement, and she all but pulled him into the corner; Tom had already separated from him and was circling the room like a vulture. "Who's he?" Ginny asked once they were in the quietest bit of the room. "I thought your boyfriend was a brunette called Tom? Mum said he was called Sal."
"Oh, err, that's a funny story," Harry muttered awkwardly. "He's, err, not naturally blond, and when he's dark haired he looks the spitting image of his father whose name is Tom, and me being the drunken idiot that I am decided to call him that, forgetting how much it annoys him."

Harry thought his story was believable enough for something he had come up with at short notice, and Ginny seemed to fall for it.

"Oh, Harry," she grinned. "I thought you'd know all about hating people who comment on how much you look like your parents. Let me see; you look so much like your father but-"

"I've got my mother's eyes," Harry finished, sighing. "Yes, I've heard that exact sentence a million times in my life."

Ginny laughed, covering her mouth with her hand.

It took a moment for Harry to realise Ginny had stopped laughing, but her hand was still in place. Then he noticed the silver band on one of her fingers, with a shining diamond flashing in the light.

"That's beautiful," he commented. "Is it from Blaise?"

Ginny nodded enthusiastically. "Don't worry; we're not engaged; this is a Courting Ring. Apparently it's a tradition for Zabini men to give a diamond ring to their intended. I've told my family it's a cheap fake from a female friend, and as far as I know they believe me. Fleur gave me a knowing look, but she's not said anything."

"That's wonderful news, Ginny," Harry smiled.

He was going to say more, but Tom had returned.

"The eldest, Bill, used to work as a Curse-Breaker in Egypt," Tom told him, not even bothering to say hello to Ginny. "He said he would get some information for you later."

"You've probably made his day," Ginny cut in. "He loved that job; he only moved back here because of the war, but now he's met Fleur I don't think he'll ever go back."

Tom made an 'hmm', but then he also noticed Ginny's ring. "That's a lovely Courting Ring; I hear only men from the most prestigious Pureblood families still use them."

"Err, Sal travelled a lot; he knows a lot about Wizarding traditions," Harry explained to Ginny who looked slightly perplexed.

"It's not something I'm announcing to my family," Ginny said in a low whisper. "He's not from a Dark family or anything, but he's not particularly Light either, and I don't think my family would approve."

"Foolish, really; neutrality often offers guaranteed safety, providing you are prepared to choose a side if needed," Tom mused. "Are all of your brothers here, Ginny? Harry told me a lot about you; he said you were the youngest of seven."

"Yes, and the only girl too, as though being the youngest wasn't enough to be babied. The only girl in seven generations," she sighed. "Only Percy and Charlie aren't here; Percy has been a bit of a prat lately, and Charlie has too much work in Romania."

"Seven generations, you say?" Tom questioned, interest gleaming in his eyes.
"Yeah, but I don't believe in any of that power of seven stuff," Ginny shrugged. "Have you met Harry's friend Luna? Yes, Harry, she is your friend, don't deny it," she said warningly as Harry made to interrupt. "She's really into all that sort of stuff."

"Yes, I have met her; somewhat eccentric, but a brilliant mind. It's a pity she chooses to focus her skill on such oddities," Tom stated, before grinning at Ginny. "Forgive me; my parents were academics and brought me up with similar values."

"Fair enough," Ginny grinned back.

Harry found Tom's fake happiness rather unnerving.

Tom took hold of Harry's hand and pulled him back to the centre of the room, where the liveliness was still continuing. The twins, Neville and Ron were playing a game of Exploding Snap, and even the people watching seemed to be enjoying the game.

"Is Hermione not coming?" Harry asked Ginny, who shook her head.

"Nope; she and Ron are still fighting over Lavender," she answered.

"If she is in love with 'im, why does she not simply tell 'im how she feels?" a soft, French-accented voice drifted through.

"They're kids, Fleur; they don't know what they're doing," Bill smirked from beside her. "So you're Harry? Sal told me you're heading to Egypt tomorrow."

"Yeah," Harry answered lamely.

Tom had turned to speak to Fleur in fluent French, and Ginny wandered away to get snacks.

"I'm not officially allowed to condone people who want to see if they'd be any good at Curse-Breaking without training, but obviously I'm not working for that area of Gringotts anymore, so I can't stop you, but just be careful. Muggle pyramids are usually your best bet, because the Wizards who put curses on their tombs didn't do as good a job as they did on their own. Where abouts are you staying?"

"The outskirts of Giza," Tom answered for Harry, before returning to his conversation with Fleur.

"Probably a good area," Bill nodded. "You're close to Cairo too, although I suppose if either of you can Apparate it doesn't matter where you stay. I told Sal I would Floo some of my old work friends to hand over information once you're there."

"Thanks," Harry smiled.

"It's no problem," Bill grinned. "I reckon you'll be perfect at the job; you don't seem to like people very much for one thing, and it's one of the least sociable jobs there is. Even Charlie has more contact with people than I did, and he works with dragons."

Harry laughed, feeling slightly more relaxed than he had done at first. Tom and Fleur were still chatting animatedly, and Harry gathered that Tom must have an interest in Fleur; her being part Veela would probably be useful, at the very least.

His mood brightened even more when Ginny returned with a plate full of home-made cookies. He was grateful for Ginny's presence; the adults had all but escape to another room, sometimes laughing, and sometimes looking deadly serious, while Heather sat with them but keeping to
herself. The younger Weasley boys and Neville were keeping themselves entertained, and he imagined Ginny would have joined in had she not chosen to keep him company instead. In the meanwhile Tom had certainly bewitched Fleur, and by default Bill. He heard Tom talking enthusiastically about dragons at one point, and how he'd love to get in touch with Charlie. That was a terrifying thought; Tom chasing people around on dragons, setting towns ablaze.

And talking of setting things ablaze; he hadn't heard anything from Marvolo since the last time he had seen him at St Mungo's, and nor had Tom. Harry honestly couldn't decide whether that was a good or a bad thing.

"Are you alright? You look worried," Ginny commented quietly, fixing Harry with a glare that looked like it had been learnt from his mother.

"It's just been, you know, too quiet lately," Harry shrugged, and Ginny nodded.

"I know; it's weird how quiet can actually be more worrying," the girl laughed awkwardly. "Might as well make the most of it, I suppose. Are you any good at chess? It's really only Ron who plays it, and he always beats me."

"I know the basics, but doubt I'm any good," Harry told her, and Ginny grinned.

"Perfect; I might actually win for a change," she beamed, getting up to run to her room and get her chess set.

"Once we're finished here, we're to go straight to the asylum," Tom hissed in his ear, making Harry jump; he had never heard the man approach. "The sooner we leave the better; this place is a sty."

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Tom soon got his wish; his parents had wanted to leave while there was still daylight, and given it was British wintertime, they had left by mid-afternoon.

"I do love Molly," James said happily once he was settled into his own living room. "She's like a doting mother."

"She isn't quite old enough to be your mother," Lily retorted, rolling her eyes as her husband grinned sheepishly at her.

"Harry and I have business to attend to now," Tom announced, grabbing hold of Harry and Apparating before his family even had time to respond.

"That was kind of you; actually telling my parents we were going out," Harry joked, his smile faltering as Tom looked pointedly at him.

"The eldest Weasley child and the part Veela are very intriguing characters; I'm pleased I was able to meet them; they seemed very interested in what I had to say. The daughter seems to have a lot of power, and a dragon trainer would be very advantageous," Tom stated, recounting his findings from the day. "The young Mr Zabini already seems partial to siding with me; I must ask his mother to ensure this happens, and that he brings his intended with him too."

Tom tapped him over the head with his wand, and Harry felt a cold chill run through him, and his skin began to tingle.

"I certainly prefer you with dark hair," Tom mused, but not giving Harry a mirror to see how he now looked. He then grabbed Harry's wrist and dragged him towards a run-down looking building.
The walls were made of old bricks, chipped and cracked, and the doorway hung off rusty hinges. There was a sign, the background faded yellow instead of what was once most likely white, and in flaking letters the sign read 'Mentis Morbo Asylum'.

"Is this a distraction to ward off Muggles?" Harry asked, looking in shock at the shabby building.

"Oh no; the Ministry has little care for those who have been afflicted with illnesses of the mind," Tom drawled, as though he didn't have a problem with the statement. "There is a St Mungo's ward for those who have been damaged by magic, but those who have no obvious cause are locked away and forgotten."

"That's horrible," Harry murmured, looking up at building and trying to imagine being thrown in such a horrid place and left. He knew mental illnesses were taboo in the Wizarding World, but he hadn't known it was to this extent. It was no wonder his mother had been so angry at the Mind Healer trying to diagnose him as delusional; a diagnosis that severe could have meant he'd have been locked up in the asylum, although he doubted Tom would even let Harry go through the door as a resident.

Tom strode through the doors, and walked to the lone woman on the front desk. The inside was just as shabby, with peeling wallpaper and stained floorboards. The receptionist was a middle-aged woman, with dark circles under her eyes, thinning hair, and severely emaciated.

"She's a resident here," Tom told Harry as the woman blankly allowed them through the doors to the resident ward. "She works the front desk, and in return isn't forced to eat anything."

"That's awful," Harry hissed, grabbing on to Tom as some of the residents seemed to leer at him.

"Saves hiring a normal person to work here. The Mind Healers come simply to feed and water them, and make sure nobody has attempted suicide; their main interests lay in diagnosing rather than curing," Tom stated, looking disdainfully at the people in their cell, for that is all Harry could call them, rather than rooms.

Harry jumped and yelped as a man grabbed him through the bars; Tom's wand was drawn instantly, but the man just grinned widely at Harry.

"Somebody's finally come; I knew my journal would help, I just knew it."

Harry glanced at the peeling plaque next to the cell door. It read 'A. Outterridge'.

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Chapter End Notes

Here's hoping the chapter was worth the long wait.

If you read any of my other fanfictions, please note that Left 4 Dead abd Gears Of Love are going on a temporary hiatus. Fear not; this story is not going on hiatus. I may be bad at updating at times, but this story is still my baby. I am writing for two fests due in March and April, but I am planning a Hobbit/Harry Potter cross-over, and I have a poll on my ff.net profile regarding pairings, so can you please go and vote if you are interested, or just drop your choice in a comment.
I also hope you liked my depiction of the attitude towards mental illness in the Wizarding World. They are literally never mentioned (apart from spell damage) yet, in my opinion anyway, Sirius clearly suffered from Depression, and Harry likely did too, as well as PTSD, and who can blame him, the poor baby. I can only hope J. might one day reveal the truth.
Okay; I'm the worst updater in the world at the moment. I'm really, really sorry, because every one of you readers is awesome, and I keep letting you down. Please let me know how I can make it up to you, and I promise I'll try more. I want to go back to the once a week updating I was doing a while back, instead of this awful wreck my updating is at the moment.

Err, there's smut at the end of this chapter, at least. That's a good thing, right?

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Harry stared back at Algar Outterridge, mouth partway open as any words he tried to speak got lost.

The man's face was waxy and sullen, much like that of an Azkaban prisoner. He was drastically thin, with his cheeks hollowed, and his light brown-grey hair was tangled in impossible knots. Surprisingly he was clean shaven, but that didn't make him look any less wild.

Algar frowned, muttering to himself lowly when Tom sent a red warning light at his hand, and he reluctantly pulled it back towards himself, pacing in the cell as he continued muttering to himself.

Tom cast another charm over the bars of the room and pushed Harry through them as he copied the motion, before putting up a Privacy Charm so they couldn't be overheard.

Outterridge paid no attention while Tom did all that, though the resident across from him; a man who sat on all fours, seemed enthralled by the bright lights of the magic.

"Err, so…," Harry started, but Algar ignored him, continuing his pacing. His mutterings were getting even louder, but were beginning to sound less and less like understandable words.

"Cease your foolish actions and listen to me," Tom hissed, sounding horribly like Voldemort. The tone caught Algar's attention too, and he stopped what he was doing to eye Tom critically.

"I don't like you," he stated plainly, and Tom's lip curled.

"Pity," he said softly, yet the contempt was obvious.

"Listen, err, Mr Outterridge-" Harry tried again, but the man cut him off.

"Algar, please," he said, sending Harry a dazzling smile; Tom's hand curled painfully around Harry's arm.

"Algar," Harry accepted. "I was wondering if you could help me."

"When did you find out? How long have you been infected?" Outterridge asked, almost bouncing in excitement. "I can feel it in you; you must be new; why else would you be here?"

"I guess, so, yeah," Harry nodded. "I found out a couple of months ago really, but I probably had
been, err, infected, for a while now." He had been twelve when Tom transferred the Horcrux into him; the Ancient magic must have been flowing through his veins since then.

"Well you need the right scenario to set it off," Algar said thoughtfully, tilting his head from side to side. "You look like an adventurer; are you one? But of course you must be; can you follow maps? I have a lot of maps here." He crouched down on the ground, a faint yellow glow dusting along the floor as he dug through the soft ground with his hands.

"I'm not an adventurer," Harry said, glancing at Tom who looked simply bored. "Look, I just wanted to learn more about how to control it."

Algar let out a high pitched laugh, pausing his digging and looking up at Harry. "Silly; you can't control it; it controls you. I thought I could control it; I tried so hard, but in the end I realised, why bother? It's raw magic; none of this silly wand stuff. Let it flow through you as it wishes, and you'll soon see better results. Aha, I found it."

Harry was going to ask what he had found, but a battered, rolled up map was pushed into his hands.

"I told you I'm not an adventurer," Harry stated, but Algar shook his head, gathering up an old metal compass and a rusty dagger and pushing them into Harry's hands as well.

"Oh, but you are, you are," Outterridge smiled. "You follow that map, and you'll find just what you're looking for. And don't forget; let your magic do what it wants; it knows more than you do. My dear lady Rowena Ravenclaw wouldn't have been caught dead with a wand."

Algar's head suddenly whipped around, staring at a blank spot on the grimy wall.

"Go; you must go," he said hurriedly, making a move to push Harry but being blasted back by Tom's wand before he had chance.

"Tom!" Harry hissed, but Tom sent Harry a glare and tugged him back through the bars. "We can't just leave him in there; he's going crazy here."

"I feel you've confused the words 'going' and 'gone', dear," Tom mused, but he looked thoughtful. "Outterridge," he snarled, "what is coming?"

"The lights. The lights," a woman muttered from a cell nearby, and the man who had been on all fours started howling.

They didn't even get chance to ask what the lights were, because then a blinding white light flashed through the building as a high pitched siren wailed loudly through the corridor. Harry shut his eyes and covered his ears with his hands, but the light and sound still filtered through painfully.

It stopped for all of two seconds, before starting again, and Harry jumped when Tom touched him.

"Does this happen all the time?" Harry said to nobody in particular when the lights stopped again.

"Yes," the on all fours man said, creeping nearer the bars of his cell. "Too much, too much."

"Every night," Algar agreed. "And every day; twice each time, but sometimes three."

"It happens whenever the birdies disappear," a woman said sorrowfully. "I miss them when they go; they sing such sweet songs."

"If you've quite finished making friends with the insane?" Tom muttered to him, but Harry shook
Tom's hand off his shoulder.

"So do any of you here actually like it?" Harry said loudly, and he was met by a loud mass of hisses and snarls. "And it was the Mind Healers who locked you up? Or the Ministry?"

"Both; they both locked us up and torture us daily," a skeletal man hissed, leaning against the bars; he was so thin Harry was sure he could just slip through them. "I hate them, I hate them. I want to rip their skin from their bones."

"Yes; make them bleed," another woman shouted.

Tom was watching Harry passively now, but the fact he hadn't dragged Harry away already meant he was curious, even if he was trying to hide it.

The woman from the front desk was watching them carefully, her hands still covering her ears.

"Excuse me-?"

"Marissa," the woman supplied, her face suddenly smiling brightly.

"Marissa; do the residents here have their wands anywhere?" Harry questioned, and she nodded, hurrying away and coming back seconds later with a small box.

Tom casually aimed his wand at the box, blasting the locks on it open; by now, all the residents were watching with hungry gleams in their eyes.

"I don't like the Mind Healers," Harry announced as Marissa went to each cell, allowing each resident to find their wand. "They tried to lock me in here too."

"But you're a child," one woman declared, horrified.

"A baby," another agreed, making Harry scowl slightly, but otherwise ignored the comment.

"And I'm not happy with the Ministry either," Harry continued. They had lost his support the day he saw a Ministry worker spit at Remus and told the werewolf he'd be better off dead, and they hadn't particularly done anything to redeem themselves since. One look at Tom, who easily read his mind, and then the cell bars were disintegrating, allowing the people inside to shakily stumble forwards and gather around Harry and Tom.

"We'll let you go to the Ministry now," Harry said, smiling at the brief look of pleasure that passed over Tom's face. "St Mungo's and Azkaban are run by the Dark Lord; the Ministry can't send you to either, and I'm going to make sure this place no longer exists after tonight. You'll be free to live life as you want."

A roar of excitement coupled with disbelief went around the crowd, and Harry suddenly felt self-conscious feeling all the eyes on him.

"How?" somebody whispered.

"Why?" said another, and the second question seemed to get more murmurs.

"They treat you like filth in here," Harry answered honestly. "And you're not."

"I am," a frail looking, young-ish woman said, stepping forwards. "I killed my baby; I jumped with her in my arms, and she died but I didn't."
"That doesn't make you filth," Harry said, offering the woman a reassuring smile. She jumped forwards, grabbing Harry's hand and bursting into tears, only stopping when Tom snarled at her. "So go; cause havoc, and then live however you want."

"Can you destroy this place first?" a man asked. "Make it blow up; make those lights go away. Make the lights go away forever."

"Algar, you'll guide me?" Harry said, turning to the man who now had a smirk across his face.

The large group moved outside, the ex-residents all gathering behind Harry, Tom and Algar.

"There's nobody else inside, right?" Harry questioned, and he took the few nods as his answer.

"Remember, let your magic do the work," Algar whispered, his own fingers clenching as though itching to cast a spell. "Your mind and your magic are one; let it free."

Harry's arms rose upwards, mimicking the position Algar seemed to be insinuating.

For a moment he stared straight at the dreary, run-down building, feeling hatred bubble inside him, knowing the horrors that had been carried out within.

Then there was a bright flash of light, and he winced remembering the lights from earlier, but then the brightness moved inside the building, streams bursting through the cracks and casting rays on the dark ground around them, before finally the asylum began to crumble, debris scattering across the ground.

The group cheered, and the sobbing woman from earlier managed to capture him in a hug, while the crawling man sat at his feet and nuzzled his legs.

"I recommend you leave for the Ministry now," Tom announced, waving a Portkey above his head. "This is the time when the late workers finish and the night workers begin; more toys for your pleasure." He tossed the Portkey into the crowd, watching as the mass surrounded it and somehow transporting them all in one go, leaving only Algar behind.

"Did you not want to go?" Harry asked, and Algar shook his head.

"No, no, no," he said firmly. "My heart lies with Egypt; I must return there at once."

"Do you want your stuff back?" Harry said, holding the map out, and Outterridge shook his head again.

"I am too old now," he smiled. "You are the adventurer now; you proved it tonight. Take your reckless attitude and your openness with you, and thank you for setting me free at last." He grasped Harry's hands in a quick form of handshake, before Disapparating without another word.

Tom grabbed hold of him and Apparated before the dust from Algar's Apparition could settle on the ground.

They landed in Harry's room, and Harry was immediately pushed onto his bed with Tom clambering on top of him.

"Your mind is strange," Tom said, his lips just over Harry's, "and you accept the wrong sort of people, but you've proved your place beside me, tonight. Your name and mine shall be feared for eons to come; they will always know us, and know they are below us."
Tom's lips finally descended on Harry's, and all thoughts of Ministry workers being slaughtered were driven straight out of Harry's head.

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A hand roughly shook his shoulder, but Harry squirmed and wriggled away from it, pulling the bed covers over his head.

"Get up," a voice snapped, but Harry wriggled further into his covers. His eyes were far too heavy to open, and he was perfectly content sleeping.

He felt the tip of something poke him through the sheets, and then a jolt of pain coursed through him, so severe that he yelled loudly and fell out of bed, his covers coming with him.

"Get ready; the earlier we leave the better," Tom said firmly, grabbing the covers off him and throwing them back onto Harry's bed.

"What time is it?" Harry said groggily, rubbing his eyes with his fists.

"Four," Tom answered dismissively, rummaging through a pile of books on Harry's floor.

"Four?" Harry repeated dumbly. "As in 'four in the morning' four?"

"Yes, of course in the morning," Tom answered sharply. "That means it's already six in Cairo, and I would like to be there by eight."

"Fine," Harry muttered, trying to throw Tom a glare, but his eyes were too tired to work properly.

He felt his slow movements getting ready was punishment for Tom waking him up so early, but it only took one dangerous look from Tom to make Harry speed up.

At half five, Harry was finally ready, but when Lily knocked on the bedroom door Harry could have almost laughed at the expression on Tom's face.

"I just wanted to see you off," Lily said with a small smile. The others had waited up for Harry the previous night, when Harry eventually got to go downstairs once Tom was done with him, and Harry felt she had an ulterior motive for being there now, given the suspicious look she was giving Tom.

"I'll be fine, Mum," Harry said. "Tom won't let anything happen to me, if that's what you're worried about."

"I know," she answered, almost too quickly. "There was a riot at the Ministry last night," she said after a moment's pause.

Harry immediately tried to not look guilty.

"There was a lot of property damage, and twenty workers were killed," Lily continued. "And I heard the asylum was destroyed last night too. The Order didn't see any sign of Voldemort or the Death Eaters behind it though."

She looked at Tom, and Tom smirked in response to her unasked question.

"No, I didn't have anything to do with it," he told her curtly, and Harry hoped she hadn't picked up on the emphasis on the word I.
"Who died?" Harry asked, trying to distract her from thinking about what Tom had said.

"I'm not sure you'll know anyone by name; oh no, of course you will. That horrid woman Umbridge was killed; not that I'm pleased about it, but the trouble she caused for Remus…” his mother told him, and Harry felt oddly happy that of all people to be killed, Umbridge was one of them. His hand itched subconsciously from where she had forced him to use a Blood Quill; he was fortunate enough to avoid so many detentions that his hand ended up scarred, unlike some unlucky students.

"Anyway," Lily continued, turning to Harry and gesturing for him to come forwards so she could hug him. "Be careful, and make sure you pay attention. Egypt has fascinating history, and you're lucky you get chance to visit. And you, Tom," Lily said, releasing Harry and facing Tom with a stern expression. "If anything at all happens to him-

"You'll attempt to make it regret it, yes," Tom interrupted blandly, and then he sneered. "Fret not; I have no desire to be rid of Harry."

"Mm," Lily muttered, eyeing the pair warily. "Contact me every day, Harry, and be safe."

His mother gave him one last hug before leaving the room, and Tom's face held a distasteful expression.

"What?" Harry questioned. "She's my mother; of course she'll be worried about me going."

"I simply thought she was better at controlling her emotions than that; in the hospital she seemed very strong," Tom mused, and Harry rolled his eyes.

"She is strong, but that doesn't mean she can't worry about me," he said defensively. "She's irritating at the best of times with her constant nagging and worrying, but she's terrifying too; you've never seen her mad, have you?"

Tom raised an eyebrow but said nothing, and turned back to sorting through the parchments he had placed neatly on Harry's desk.

"Tom, can I ask you something?" Harry said after a moment of silence, waiting for Tom to turn around. "So like, those people I set free killed a lot of people."

"Does that bother you?" Tom asked nonchalantly, turning back the stack of parchment.

"That's just the thing; it doesn't. I mean, I despised Umbridge, but that doesn't mean I should feel glad she's dead, but I am," Harry admitted. "I remember a while ago you thought I was too innocent to kill anybody, and now look at me."

"You still are innocent," Tom muttered, scrawling on something with a quill. "You will forever be innocent to me; killing doesn't mean that's taken away. Don't view the world with visions of good and evil, because that's entirely wrong; the world is nothing more than yours for the taking. Innocent doesn't mean being good, because being good doesn't exist."

"But killing people is against the law," Harry tried, already knowing Tom would dismiss the point. To his surprise, Tom laughed.

"We didn't get to write the law; why should we accept it? Come here, lovely," Tom ordered, beckoning Harry to him. He held up the piece of parchment he had been writing on, detailing a rather complicated looking ritual of sorts. "This enchantment is the Darkest of all magic, yet it can bring your Godfather back to you. It is banned by our government, but who are they to deny you
having people you miss back in your lives? Harry, we are going to make the rules one day, and people will follow what we say, and the only way we can get to that point is by doing what we need, instead of listening to the weak fools who think they're running our world. Now go finish getting yourself ready; we're to leave in ten minutes."

The ten minutes passed very quickly, and soon they were ready to leave. Even though they weren't going as tourists, Harry still felt excited about the prospect of going to Egypt. He and his family had travelled to a fair few places, but never out of mainland Europe, so going further afield was new to him. He knew Tom was taking him on nothing more than a business trip of sorts, but Harry hoped he could sway Tom into having at least one day as tourists.

"Have you Apparated overseas before?" Tom asked, holding his arm out for Harry to take hold of.

"No," Harry answered, shaking his head. "Mum prefers travelling the Muggle way, and Dad has a love affair with planes. I thought it was really difficult to Apparate overseas anyway. Wouldn't Floo or Portkey be easier?"

"Yes, it would be," Tom agreed, "but they are also heavily regulated. Apparating is impossible to trace, but I shall warn you that, being inexperienced, the journey shall be rather unpleasant for you."

"How unpleasant exactly?" Harry asked, but Tom dismissed him, and instead shook his arm slightly to encourage Harry to hold on.

The second Harry took hold, Tom Apparated.

The horrid sensation of being shoved through something too small seemed even more intense, and the sensation didn't seem to end. A wild wind was whipping around them, and Harry had to shut his eyes against the force of it, as water began to unwillingly stream from them.

The sensation stopped just as suddenly, and Harry stumbled and fell onto the ground, Tom jerking away from Harry's grip so he wasn't pulled over as well.

Harry decided to stay on the ground until it stopped spinning, and stood up only when Tom looked impatiently at him. He shakily got to his feet, reaching out to grab Tom so he didn't fall again. It was no wonder people didn't bother learning to Apparate long distances and overseas if it felt like that.

He brushed the sand off his clothes, and looked at his surroundings. Tom had Apparated them into the desert, and Harry could see pyramids in the near distance. The sight was rather awe inspiring, and Harry found he couldn't tear his eyes away. It was early, but the sun already seemed to be beating down on him, though he supposed he had just come from the English mid-winter, so it was bound to feel hotter. He couldn't begin to imagine what the heat would be like at midday.

Tom was shuffling around behind him, and when Harry eventually turned back, Harry could see nothing to suggest Tom had made any sound.

Tom gestured for Harry to hold his hand out, and he complied, jerking back when a dagger quickly sliced across his wrist.

"Give me your hand back," Tom demanded, and Harry reluctantly held it out again. Tom dragged him forwards slightly, jerking his wrist until a splatter of blood dropped onto the sand. The blood seemed to disintegrate with the sand, and then a small tent appeared in front of him.

"Blood Warding is the strongest protection," Tom explained as, opening the flap to the tent and
stepping inside. "Not to mention numerous other Wards and Protection charms, combined with
curses who anyone else who tries to enter."

Harry didn't want to imagine the sort of curses Tom might put on somebody, so instead he followed
the man into the tent, and looked around at the impressive lodging.

Like any other magical tent, it was far bigger on the inside, and looked more like a fancy room that
wouldn't have been out of place at Malfoy Manor.

There was a large sitting area, with a wooden pole at the centre, drifting up to the high ceiling of
the tent, and a soft looking sofa at the side. A large wooden desk seemed to have pride of place,
and it already had a stack of books and parchment on top of it. A small kitchen was just to the side,
and Harry heard the clattering of pans; he looked at Tom curiously, but Tom ignored the unspoken
question.

He followed Tom through the rest of the tent; a large, luxurious bathroom next door to a bedroom
which had a four poster bed in the centre with deep green curtains hanging around it.

Orion and Bast were curled up together on the pillows, and Harry couldn't stop a grin from forming
as he ran to greet his cats.

"I've finished with my experimenting on them, and the results were very successful," Tom stated,
standing beside Harry. "They shall be accompanying us on our travels; they will come in very
useful for your Curse Breaking training."

"Why?" Harry asked, but Tom simply smirked at him.

"You'll see in time," came the simple answer. "Now, we shall be out for some time, so I'd advise
that you come and eat something now, or else you'll not be eating until tonight."

"Alright," Harry said with a shrug, following Tom back into the sitting room and onwards into the
kitchen.

A two person table had been set, with plates of a variety of breakfast foods freshly prepared and
cooked laid out.

"I hope Sirs are liking it," a squeaky voice announced.

"Dobby!" Harry grinned, turning to face the little House-Elf. "I didn't know you were coming with
us."

"Narcissa was kind enough to lend me it," Tom said dismissively, taking a seat and snapping his
fingers. "Elf, prepare us some water for our trip today."

"Right away Sir Riddle," Dobby said, bowing to Tom and hurrying to the sink.

"Thank you, Dobby; it looks really nice," Harry told the Elf, who looked at Harry tearfully, though
one glance at Tom and he turned back to what he was doing.

"Sir Harry mustn't be thanking Dobby; Dobby is only doing as he is told," Dobby responded as he
worked.

Tom rolled his eyes, but managed to keep any insults to the Elf quiet.

When they had finished eating, and when Harry managed to calm a tearful Dobby down after
thanking him once more, they were back out in the desert.

Tom had shrunk everything they needed and put it in a small bag inside his jacket pocket, including the cats. Harry had been alarmed at this, but Tom somewhat reassured him by saying that he knew plenty of ways to hurt animals, and using a Shrinking Charm was not one of them.

"We're going to go to a Wizarding tomb first," Tom said, pulling a piece of parchment from his pocket. He handed it to Harry to have a look at; the parchment had a long list of notes on it, and a scrawled picture of an amulet on it.

"Is that amulet important?" Harry asked, and Tom shook his head.

"Not to us; it is for the Dark Lord," he explained with a slight sneer in his voice. "This amulet will be no good when we have what we're looking for."

Tom held his arm out, and Harry took hold, shutting his eyes as Tom Apparated them once more.

Thankfully they only Apparated a small distance, and Harry managed to land on his feet. Tom cast Invisibility and Silencing Charms over them so they could not be seen or heard, and they walked towards a crowd of witches and wizards who were all bustling around excitedly.

They were standing in front of a staircase descending into the desert, yellow brick walls surrounding the top.

A tour-guide seemed to be handing out tickets to the members of the crowd, but Tom led Harry straight past them and down into the tomb.

"Those tourists are only allowed to see parts of it," Tom said as they strode down the stairs. "And of course, any important artefacts are further back where groups aren't allowed to go."

Tom walked briskly through the tomb, but Harry took a slow pace behind him. The air was cool, and a pleasant change from the desert heat. The tomb itself was impressive to look at too; the walls were carved in a way which made the place spacious, and fascinating hieroglyphics were drawn on them. Harry tried to decipher some of them, but Tom told him to hurry up.

Harry managed to sneak a few shots with the camera Remus had given him, but had to break into a slight run to catch up with Tom so he wouldn't get lost.

Harry caught up to Tom just in time to see a silver shimmer fall to the floor.

"I hope they have no curious tourists with them in their groups today," Tom smirked, heading through an opening where the shimmer had fallen.

Harry copied Tom's steps, and stopped when Tom did. Tom had pulled out the bag, and grabbed both the cats in one hand, dropping them on the ground and enlarging them to full size.

Orion looked around the tomb, his eyes flashing red and creating almost a laser look across the ground. The red beam was focused on one wall in particular, and Tom smiled darkly.

"This is the entrance to the treasure room," Tom announced. "I have given the animal the ability to see curses that we can't; of course, it can't do anything regarding taking them down, but it's a far easier method of testing whether a curse is fully gone or not."

"How'd you get him to do that?" Harry questioned, looking from Tom to Orion.
"I happen to find creating new spells to be simple," Tom answered. "A difficult skill for most, but shaping magic is natural for me."

"So how do we take the Curse down?" Harry asked, peering at the wall intently as though the curse may break with just a look; unfortunately no such thing happened.

"Ostendete," Tom cast, his wand pointing at the wall. Immediately faint beams of colours covered the wall in front of them, twisting around each other.

"There's your curse," Tom said, waving his hand in front of him. "When the beams have gone, the curse is broken. Think of it as a puzzle of sorts."

"Where are you even meant to begin?" Harry questioned, edging closer to the magical colours.

"It is possible with a wand, which I shall show you," Tom answered, putting a hand on Harry's shoulder. "Don't get too close, dear; I don't want you dead. The magic in you will also be able to break any curses, but you need to be aware of every option, so you can practice by wand today."

Tom pulled Harry back, and moved to stand in his place.

"You need to look closely at these colours," Tom told him, and as Harry looked at Tom, he could see the man's eyes travelling rapidly across each strand. "See where they connect and where they split. Any lone colours should be taken out first; the inter-woven ones are harder to undo."

"Like the green one?" Harry said, pointing at the emerald light that was untouched by any of the other beams.

Tom nodded, and ghosted his wand over the green light. "Focus on the beams as magic, and imagine bringing them away," Tom explained, as the green started to weave around his wand. When the beam was completely gone from the wall of colours, and wrapped around Tom's wand with an eerie glow, Tom flicked his wand towards the ground, releasing the green light and causing a small explosion on the ground.

"Don't keep the light on your wand," Tom said warningly. "You try with the purple beam now."

Harry stepped forwards nervously, his wand shaking in his fingers.

"Don't be nervous; you need a slight hand or you could deflect the part of the curse and harm yourself," Tom hissed, not helping in calming Harry's nerves.

Harry took a deep breath and counted to ten, before placing the tip of his wand just above the purple strand of light. Much like Luna had told him with the magic in the Vanishing Cabinet, and learning about his inner magic strands from Animagus training, imaging the beam of light as the magic they were was easy enough for him.

He subconsciously gave a small tug, and the purple started to wrap down the length of his wand, causing it to feel heavier in his grip. He could feel the magic pulsing through his wand, and when it was gone from the wall, he cast Aguamenti, hitting the far wall with a stream of glowing purple water.

The rest of the beams were connected with each other, some with only one other colour, and some from two or three. The red beam was connected with only the blue, but the blue was connected with red, black and orange.
Tom explained that removing each of these strands was the same technique as before, but each beam had to be removed part by part; apparently mixing the colours would infect your wand and backfire on you, likely killing you in the process.

It was more time consuming than the previous strands, but eventually they managed to get through it together.

"Make sure it's curse free before you touch it," Tom stated, picking up Bast and forcing her paws to touch the wall, ignoring Harry's protest. "Don't throw a fit over a useless animal; I've managed to create a resistance within the cat to any Dark magic. If it had been cursed, its body would now be convulsing as it destroyed the curse."

"How do you even do these things?" Harry questioned; Tom seemed to know all sorts of magic, some that Harry hadn't even heard of before. "They don't teach anything like this at Hogwarts."

"Of course they don't; the Ministry will only teach children spells necessary for jobs. Anything else is considered too dangerous, and is banned from the curriculum. The last twenty years have been very strict; when I attended Hogwarts, there was much more on offer, but most of what I've learnt has been self-taught; you need to read or study with accomplished wizards if you want to be a skilled wizard. You're fortunate that I know a lot of information, and will be willing to teach you if you'd like to learn," Tom drawled, and Harry's face lit up. "We will discuss this at a later time; now onwards."

The entrance they had broken the curse on led to a room full of treasure and gold.

"Don't touch anything," Tom warned. "Ostendete."

Everything in the room seemed to light up with the same beams of colour as before, and Harry now knew why Tom wanted to leave so early; there was so many curses to break, that it would be a lengthy process. The amulet they were looking for wasn't visible, so it must be hidden behind or underneath something else, meaning random selections had to be made until they spotted it.

Tom set Harry to work on one side of the room, while he brought out the parchment with the notes on it, looking down and examining objects throughout the room.

Hours seemed to go by, and Harry was starting to feel exhausted; he was bored and cold, and he wanted to at least talk with Tom, but every time he tried he got hushed. He hadn't imagined going to Egypt with Tom would be boring like this was.

"I found it," Tom announced eventually, and Harry breathed a sigh of relief.

"Can we go now then?" he asked, hoping not to sound too eager.

"In a moment," Tom told him, holding the amulet above him and turning it around.

Tom tapped his wand against a colour beam that was left on another good, and after a minute strand attached itself to his wand, he let go, and transferred the light to the amulet.

"The curse won't be obvious by any detection spell, and there isn't enough of it to do any damage to the Dark Lord himself, but will slowly drain him of his magic instead. By the time he notices, it will be impossible to trace it back to us," Tom stated, an evil smirk lighting his face. "I apologise for keeping you so long; I needed to reflect over things, and thought having time to practice would be good for you."

"Oh I got practice," Harry agreed. "I'm just really bored now."
"The rest of our trip shan't be like this," Tom assured him. "You look very tired; perhaps we should return to our living quarters."

Harry nodded, and trailed after Tom and back into the desert.

There were even more tourists standing around outside now, and they had to step carefully through to avoid walking into anyone.

"Tom, can we be tourists one day?" Harry asked once they were away from everyone.

"Why would we want to do that?" came the short reply, and Harry shrugged.

"It would just be nice to do some sight-seeing, and I want to go snorkelling," Harry replied, walking into Tom when the man stopped abruptly.

"What's snorkelling? It sounds dreadfully Muggle, and you know how I feel about such things," Tom said, a dangerous tone to his voice.

"Well it is, but it's really good; you use this tube thing so you can breathe underwater, and you can see all the fish and the reef and things," Harry explained, and Tom looked bemused.

"I thought you hated being in water? If you want to do breathe underwater, I can cast the Bubblehead charm on you instead," he said blandly, making Harry laugh awkwardly.

"I don't like deep water, but there's cool enough stuff to see in the shallow parts too," Harry said, looking at Tom hopefully.

"If we've done everything we need to in the time limit, we can go on the last day," Tom said after a moment. "But we're doing it magically, and away from Muggles."

"Thank you," Harry grinned, throwing his arms around Tom's.

To his surprise, Tom hugged him back, but they may have just been to Apparate them back to their tent.

"Dobby!" Tom shouted when they walked inside. "Go and wait outside the tent until I say you're welcome back."

Dobby didn't even ask why; he just bowed and hurried out. Harry looked at Tom curiously.

His answer was Tom's lips against his own.

Tom pushed Harry back until his back hit the wooden pole that was in the centre of their tent, before Tom's tongue pushed forcefully into Harry's mouth, and he kissed him hard enough to bruise.

Tom's fingers curled around Harry's wrists, and pulled them above his head, resting them against the pole. Tom murmured something against Harry's mouth, and then a strange sensation floated around Harry's wrists; they felt like they were being wrapped in something not quite smooth, but not quite rough either, and he felt pricks of slight pain as something just managed to pierce his skin.

He managed to tilt his head back enough to glance up at his arms, and his eyes widened as he saw a stem of roses extending from around his wrists, and moving down, wrapping around each of his arms, the sharp thorns lightly scratching his skin.
He wriggled his hands slightly, but the movement had no effect on the flowers.

"I'm quite aware of the weakness of flowers," Tom said, and Harry turned back to face him. "These are magically woven; they won't break unless I want them to, and that shan't be happening for a while. What a picture you make, entwined with roses."

Tom's lips pushed against his once more, and he pressed his body closely against Harry's. A cold hand buried itself underneath Harry's shirt, while another moved underneath Harry's trousers, rubbing him to hardness through his boxers.

Tom stopped the kiss, resting his forehead against Harry's, and Harry thought he saw a flicker of a smile cross the other man's face for just a second.

"Roses are something to be cherished," Tom breathed, just loud enough for Harry to hear. "As are you, my lovely."

The hand on his chest ghosted down, slender fingers dancing across the Dark Mark scrawled on his stomach. A cold but not unpleasant feeling shook his body on the inside, and Harry shivered, shutting his eyes as Tom's fingers continued to caress him where the Mark lay.

Tom muttered a spell, vanishing Harry's clothing, and the cool air hit his skin instantly.

A cold hand grasped one of Harry's thighs, and he took the hint and lifted both his legs around Tom's hips, making the Dark wizard press even closer against him. The pole pressed harshly against his back, and his arms were starting to ache from their positioning, but Tom's rough kisses demanded his full attention.

The sound of rustling fabric filled the tent, and then Tom pushed inside Harry with one hard thrust, making the teenager cry out in shock.

Tom was a rough lover, and they had slept together the night before too, meaning Harry didn't really need too much preparation, but being taken completely dry was new to him, and he couldn't help but whimper at the slight burn.

Tom, who never bothered caring about other people's pain or discomfort, grasped at Harry's hips, sharpened fingernails digging into his skin, and he thrust harder, biting down on the junction of Harry's neck and shoulder.

It didn't hurt as much as his first time did, but there was still some pain, but when Tom finally hit his prostate, Harry cried out in pleasure as Tom ruthlessly drove against it.

Even with the uncomfortable position, and Tom's bruising hold of his hips, Harry couldn't help but to writhe against Tom, trying to bring him in deeper.

No words were said between them, and the only sounds were that of heavy panting and flesh slapping against flesh.

Tom's hand was fistng Harry's erection in time with each push inside him, and Harry could feel the pleasure building up inside him.

He bit down on his lip as his orgasm washed over him, shutting his eyes as Tom sucked on the faint bruise Harry had left on his lower lip.

Tom released inside of him moments later, breathing heavily and moving his hands up to Harry's bound ones.
Tom pushed something cold, and somewhat heavy, onto one of Harry's fingers, before moving his hands back down to rest on Harry's hips.

His arms suddenly felt free, and the roses fell to the floor beside them, the petals wilting and curling.

Harry slowly moved his arms back down, not even blinking at the small spots and lines of blood dotted about his skin that the thorns had caused.

His eyes lingered instead on the ring finger of his left hand, which had a thick gold ring wrapped around it. It had engraving of a circle made from entwined rope, with a small line beneath it; the shen ring.

X
So, yeah. At least I'm updating, even if it's taking me a while. There's some smut in this chapter, so I hope that makes up for the wait, and it's not just pointless smut either.

I've signed up for a lot of fests, so I have a schedule written up of everything I need to write and when. This means I will be updating quicker, otherwise I mess everything else up LOL.

X

"Tom?" Harry questioned, his voice fainter than he intended.

Tom stayed silent, and waved his wand to re-clothe Harry.

"Do you like it?" Tom finally answered, his voice just as quiet, and the question not seeking an answer; there was only one way to answer, after all. "I trust you are aware of the meaning of the Shen Ring?"

"Eternity," Harry said, staring down at the ring in question. It weighed heavy on his finger, and glinted in the magically induced light of the tent. "Tom?" he repeated his question from earlier, staring into Tom's eyes which were flashing with something Harry couldn't quite comprehend.

"I plan to rule for all of eternity," Tom said, his voice a dead calm. "I have come to the awareness that members of the Wizarding World are weak-minded, and thus can be blinded by love and admiration for a person. But what better combination than to be loved yet feared; nobody would dare cross me, and nor would they want to. A human leader is what they need, on the surface at least, but I must make myself less of a monster to appease them."

Harry watched Tom carefully; the man's face was entirely blank, his emotions, if he had any at that moment, were completely void on his features, but Harry felt like there was something beneath what Tom was saying; he had never mentioned being liked by the public before.

"Why do you care if people like you?" Harry commented, deciding to come straight out with his thoughts. "You can destroy anyone you feel like in a blink of an eye."

Tom laughed shallowly. "I do not care at all as to whether people like me or not, and they will know I could easily destroy them." Tom paused and eyed Harry hungrily. "But a more human leader; a charismatic outer-appearance, would grant me loyalty; I would not care for a revolt. Please, do not mistake this for me valuing loyalty; those who are loyal are nothing but weak, mindless fools, but controlling them would be so much easier. That is where you come into things, my dear."

"Me? Why?" Harry questioned, eyeing Tom warily. Harry had never been a fan of politicians; at least not the ones in the British Ministry of Magic. After all, when you were a supporter of equal rights for magical creatures, like Harry was, it was pretty hard to agree with Ministry leaders who were against it, leaving Harry with a disinterest in Wizarding politics, unless it concerned activism
for werewolf rights.

"Don't you worry," Tom smirked, as though he had plucked the thoughts from Harry's head – on consideration, he probably had. "You will simply give me a way to gain a more human side; you will become my consort and-"

"Consort?" Harry interrupted quickly, ignoring the icy glare from Tom. "As in marriage?"

"No," Tom scowled. "Marriage is a Muggle tradition that got blended in with Wizarding culture. I mean the proper magical form of bonding."

Harry didn't bother to mention that the only thing that made Muggle and Wizarding bonding different was the fact that a spell was cast in magical ceremonies; otherwise they were basically the same, and Tom calling him a consort didn't change that, though he was sure Tom knew that. Then again, Tom probably picked the term consort to denote the power difference between them and –

"Wait; you want me to be your consort?" Harry asked, eyes widening as the meaning behind Tom's words hit him. Harry glanced down at the ring on his finger again; the ring with the symbol which stood for eternity.

"Yes; it should be very good for public image and –" Tom began, but Harry cut him off, throwing his arms around Tom's neck and kissing him deeply.

"Yes," Harry said breathlessly into the kiss. Not that there had been a question asked, but he felt Tom's lips curl upwards.

"It wasn't a question," Tom sneered, though his tone was light. He detached his lips from Harry's, and took hold of his hand, raising it upwards until Tom's lips touched the gold. "Of course, we cannot perform the Bonding Ceremony until you are of age, but you will wear this at all times from now."

"What if people ask?" Harry questioned, pulling his hand back.

"Twist the truth; I know you are skilled at doing that," Tom answered, making Harry flush. "Betrothed to the handsome son of a political leader, for example."

"You're so modest," Harry grinned, but his expression faded under the hungry look Tom was giving him.

"Nobody else in the world could give you as much as I can give you," Tom said darkly, drawing Harry nearer to him. "You will have everything; even everlasting life, and you have the right to show that off. Even if you can only state my physicality at the moment, one day, all those who abused you will learn who you truly belong to."

And as Tom pulled Harry into a possessive kiss, his hands leaving bruises on his hips, Harry gave into the overwhelming darkness.

X

Harry spent the next two days with Tom inside pyramids and tombs, spending hours knelt down on the dusty floor, sifting through ancient artefacts.

Harry found it astounding that he was touching what others had created thousands of years ago. He wished he could somehow travel back in time all that way to see what Ancient Egypt had been like in its prime, but no Timeturner would be able to take anyone back that far. Still, Harry was thrilled
at being able to get this close to the ancient artefacts, which was far better than most tourists would get the chance to do.

It didn't stop Harry from being uncomfortable though, despite the constant use of Cushioning Charms beneath his knees. Tom kept to himself mostly, far too involved in what he was searching for. He had told Harry to look for anything valuable, as it could be an asset for them at a later time. He believed getting plenty of gold would buy over the goblins, who Tom believed could be beneficial to have on his side.

The day wore on, and Harry found that he was getting tired. A wizard only had so much energy, and using so much magic for such a lengthy period of time was exhausting for somebody who wasn't used to it, like Harry. Tom, on the other hand, seemed fine, and looked as though he could go on for hours more.

"One more tomb today," Tom said out of nowhere, making Harry jump.

Tom Apparated them to a final tomb, and he smirked as they stepped inside the old walls.

"The Tablet is here," Tom announced smugly, rushing forwards into the depths of the tomb. Harry trailed slowly after him, Bast and Orion dashing off to run along with Tom.

Harry finally caught up to Tom, who was already carefully pulling strands of magic apart from one of the walls, where the Tablet was engraved into it.

"Do you need any help?" Harry asked, but Tom just shook his head, his lips pressed tightly together as he studied the magic in front of him.

Harry sighed loudly, scowling when Tom ignored him, and instead turned his attention away from his lover and onto the other items in the room.

His eyes were drawn instantly to the jewellery which had been left in the room. Most of Voldemort's Horcruxes had been made out of jewellery, and as a result, Harry found that he would prefer a piece of jewellery himself. Besides, there was plenty of jewellery, and the more of something there was meant it would be harder to find. As the Muggle phrase went, finding Harry's Horcrux would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

Harry briefly ran his sight over the line of jewellery that was lying out, but stopped as it landed on a pair of bracelets. They were golden bands, and rather basic, but were formed in the shape of a snake. What really stood out on them were the eyes of the snake; one had a set of emeralds, while the other had a pair of rubies.

The compass Algar Outterridge had given him had been in his trouser pockets for most of their trip, and Harry had almost forgotten it had been there. But what was it the man had said? The compass would lead Harry to what he needed? And now he could feel the spinner rotating wildly, and the compass itself seem to be vibrating with need as Harry eyed the bracelets.

Harry cast Ostendete, which revealed only a yellow strand of magic surrounding the bracelets. Harry had found that the lighter coloured a piece of magic was, the less harsh the curse would be. He supposed that the terms Dark and Light magic may have been named so because of the literal colour of the magic.

He easily removed the curse from the bracelets, and slipped them into his bag. Tom was still intently unravelling the strands surrounding the Tablet, and Harry huffed again, plonking himself onto the sandy floor.
As Tom worked, Harry drew shapes in the dust with his fingers, trying to keep his mind off what would soon be happening. His soul was split; broken twice, in fact, and he was about to get rid of part of himself. He couldn't fathom what that would feel like, or if he'd even notice. Tom had made one Horcrux and seemed pretty normal, but Marvolo was the result of a few more, and his features were far less human. And Voldemort had made seven, and he was definitely monstrous.

No, Harry was being stupid. He wasn't going to change to the degree that Voldemort had. One Horcrux was all he needed; he didn't crave immortality like Tom did, but nor did he want to leave Tom. He couldn't imagine living without Tom, and Harry didn't know if that thought scared him.

X

It had taken Tom nearly five hours to unravel the Tablet, and he refused each offer of Harry's help. Harry didn't know if that was because Tom was too stubborn and proud to accept help off him, or if he didn't trust Harry to do it properly, but no matter what Harry said, Tom refused to give in.

Harry hadn't even been allowed to leave the tomb and explore more of Egypt, and by the time Tom had finished, Harry was in a bad mood. Tom didn't apologise, and instead seemed simply amused at Harry, which didn't help cheer Harry up in the slightest.

They didn't speak a word to each other until they returned to their tent, and then Tom, still silent, pushed Harry onto their bed, and Harry forgot all about his bad mood.

So, feeling better the next morning, Harry finally told Tom that he had found what he wanted for his Horcrux, and Tom immediately dragged Harry out of the tent, and to a very remote part of the desert. Harry couldn't even see the pyramids on the horizon.

"Do we really need to be this far away?" Harry asked, watching as Tom poured a jar of a gloopy silver liquid in a circle on the ground. "And what is that you're pouring? Why have you been carrying that around with you?"

"Unicorn blood," Tom answered, smirking as a look of disgust crossed Harry's face. "I wouldn't worry over that dear; there is much worse to come."

Harry had no idea how or why Tom had a vial full of unicorn blood on him, but Harry decided he didn't want to know.

"Remind me why I'm doing this, again," Harry scowled, and Tom smirked further.

"Step inside the circle," Tom said, ignoring Harry. Harry complied nonetheless, and stepped over the silvery gooey blood. "Do you have the item you wish to use?"

Harry nodded and brought the emerald decorated bracelet out of his pocket. At Tom's gesture, he placed the bracelet down on the floor in front of him, and looked at Tom expectantly.

"Dip your fingers in the blood," Tom ordered, offering Harry the vial.

Harry grimaced but complied, coating his fingertips in the goo.

"Stop acting so disgusted," Tom said lightly. "I killed the unicorn for you so you wouldn't have to do it."

"Thank you?" Harry muttered, crossing his arms.

Tom rolled his eyes.
"You know the symbol for the Horcrux? Draw it on your forehead," Tom drawled, and then he smiled wickedly. "And the drink the rest of the vial."

"What?! No!" Harry exclaimed, staring open-mouthed at Tom. "That's disgusting."

"And the rest of the ritual isn't? The incantation is 'animam separatam'," Tom stated, throwing Harry his wand. "I am going to leave you alone whilst you do it, to remove the risk of part of your soul entering my body."

"What if something goes wrong?" Harry asked nervously; he hadn't realised Tom would leave him alone to do this. What if he did it wrong and his entire soul left his body? Or the rogue piece somehow missed the bracelet and disappeared into the air.

"You shall be fine," Tom nodded. "Now, I will warn you that it will hurt a lot. The pain will be more agonising than the Cruciatux Curse, but you mustn't leave the circle. I shall return for you later."

Tom grasped Harry's wrist and raised him arm, placing a kiss to the palm of his hand. And then he was gone, leaving Harry alone, with nothing but desert as far as the eye could see.

Harry glanced down at the bracelet on the dusty ground, just waiting for part of Harry's soul to go inside of it.

Harry's hand was shaking, his wand jerking violently.

Harry shut his eyes and counted to ten, trying to calm his breathing. He could do this; he had to. Tom wanted him to do this, and Harry wanted to try and get rid of that broken part of him, didn't he?

He gulped down the vial, wincing as the gloop slid down his throat, and he fought the urge to gag.

Harry forced his hand to steady, and aimed his wand carefully at the bracelet.

"Animam separatam," Harry cast, and a shining light shot from his wand, connected with the bracelet, and then bounced back towards him.

The light enveloped his body, and soaked into his skin.

For a moment, nothing seemed to be happening, and Harry wondered if he had said the words wrong.

But then agony hit him, as though something inside him was trying to force its way out of his skin. It felt like his skeleton was breaking into jagged ends and stabbing through his skin.

Harry's scream got stuck in his throat as liquid coursed up it, and he fell to his hands and knees, heaving as he spat red and silver blood onto the sand.

It dribbled down his chin, and his fingers and arms trembled until his arms were too weak to hold him up, and he fell forwards, collapsing in the sand.

His whole body shook as the pain intensified, and Harry screwed his eyes shut, sobbing as the agony continued.

He screamed out loud as his chest felt as though it were bursting open, and bright light erupted from him and then the pain started to dim, and Harry felt strange, as though he were emptier inside, and
lighter. He also felt something shift inside him, something that didn't truly belong there, but was making itself comfortable.

Harry managed to open his eyes in time to see the bracelet shaking as bright light dissolved into it, but then the light was gone, and part of Harry's soul was gone from his body and in the bracelet.

Harry smiled weakly, his hands still shaking violently.

He didn't know if he was hallucinating, but the last thing Harry saw before his mind went blank, was Tom watching him on the horizon.

X

Harry awoke some time later, his body still throbbing.

His limbs felt heavy, but he forced himself to sit up, only to be pushed down onto the bed again.

"Rest," he heard Tom say gently, and then a wave of tiredness washed over him once more, and he descended into darkness.

The next time Harry woke up, he felt surprisingly better, though he noticed a collection of potion vials on the bedside table.

"You've been asleep for over a day," Tom informed him, forcing another potion down Harry's throat.

"I haven't missed the New Year, have I?" Harry questioned, wiping the excess potion away from his mouth.

"Is that really the most important thing on your mind?" Tom asked with an eyebrow raised, though he sounded amused. "Though for your information, no, you haven't missed it."

"Good," Harry said, and then he smiled sheepishly. "Err, it worked then? The Horcrux, I mean."

"I know what you meant, and it appears so," Tom answered, handing Harry yet another potion vial. "These are all the pain relief potions you can take without taking too much. I'm afraid that's the last of it for now."

"I feel fine," Harry shrugged, although he hated to think how he would feel without the mass of potions Tom had given him.

"I have achieved all I needed to in Egypt, as have you," Tom stated. "We will find you somewhere to hide your Horcrux, and then we have finished."

"You said we could play tourist on the last day," Harry reminded Tom, a cheeky smile lighting his features.

"I did," Tom agreed with a sigh. "I don't recommend you leaving the tent for the next day or two, but after you've hidden your Horcrux, I will allow you your petty wish."

"Thank you," Harry beamed, hugging Tom round his waist. "How long will these potions last?"

"Perhaps four hours. I have plenty more for when you need them," Tom said, gesturing towards a box filled with vials.

Harry nodded.
"Hey, it's your birthday today!" Harry exclaimed, laughing as Tom scowled.

"I don't care for birthdays," Tom muttered, and Harry rolled his eyes.

"I know," Harry smirked, "but I got something for you anyway."

He reached down to the jeans he had left discarded on the floor before, and pulled the red eyed snake bracelet from them.

"My Horcrux has emeralds, but I thought this matched you better," Harry said, holding the bracelet out to Tom. "I would have given it to you anyway," he added hastily. "Birthday or not."

Tom took the bracelet, and Harry thought he saw a small smile grace the man's face.

Tom leant forwards and kissed Harry deeply, pressing Harry into the bed and crawling on top of him. Tom slipped the bracelet onto his wrist, and kissed Harry once more.

Harry wrapped his arms around Tom's shoulders, and, in a fit of inspired confidence, rolled them over, allowing Harry to straddle Tom.

Harry leant down, kissing Tom as Tom's hands trailed down to cup his arse, and bit down on Harry's lower lip, sucking the sore lip into his mouth.

Harry slid off Tom, dropping to the floor and kneeling by the edge of the bed. Tom shifted so he was sat up, unbuckling his trousers and freeing his erection from its confines.

Harry looked up at Tom through his eyelashes, watching Tom fist himself. Harry hadn't sucked Tom off since what happened at the hospital; the thought of what Marvolo did to him while he was unconscious still sent shivers down his spine.

But keeping his eyes on Tom's, he could see no sign of Marvolo in those irises. Tom's eyes held none of the perverse lust or cruelty that Marvolo's did. Though Tom often had harsh eyes, when Tom looked at Harry, he instead looked possessive, and perhaps proud that Harry was his, and the look made Harry feel safe.

So keeping his eyes locked on Tom's, he lowered his mouth down over Tom's erection. He sucked on the head, tongue sliding over the slit, and then he slid his mouth down more, Tom's hands pushing him down.

The cock was heavy on his tongue, and Harry hollowed his cheeks, sucking and licking every inch. Tom thrust his hips, forcing his cock deeper into Harry's throat, causing the teenager to gag. With a newfound confidence, and not wanting to let Tom completely dominate him again, Harry swallowed deeper, until the entire length of Tom was in his mouth.

Harry heard Tom gasp, and then fingers wove tightly into the locks of his hair, tugging hard at the black strands. He pushed Harry's head right between Tom's thighs, and Harry inhaled the musky scent. Harry's eyes were watering, and drool was spilling from his lips, but Harry didn't care. He had never gotten this reaction out of Tom before, no matter how well the man was trying to hide it.

Harry, not able to suck any longer because of how full his mouth was, allowed Tom to thrust and buck into his mouth, and then hot cum sprayed down Harry's throat as Tom pulled out, his cock soaked with spit.

Harry wiped his mouth with a shaking hand, and used the bed to push himself up, allowing Tom to pull him into his lap. Harry tilted his head down and kissed Tom, wrapping his arms around Tom's
neck as firm hands settled on Harry's hips.

Harry gasped as Tom flipped them without warning, Tom pushing at Harry's chest.

"Thank you, my dear," Tom whispered lustfully, his rich voice making Harry shiver. "Now to let me return the favour."

X

Harry was standing back in the midst of an ancient tomb, putting Protection Charms around it. He had placed the bracelet within, and Tom had put his own curses on the Horcrux.

He didn't tell Tom, but he didn't know exactly what he was doing. Algar Outterridge had told him that his magic would know what to do, and he should let it take over. It seemed to be working so far, though Harry knew Tom would have a fit if he knew what Harry was doing.

"Finished," Harry announced finally, casting a dazzling smile at Tom.

Tom smirked cruelly, though Harry knew it wasn't aimed at him.

"Perfect," Tom smiled. "Now I promised you that we would fulfil your silly desires of acting as tourists, and we shall finish the day doing what you want. We will return to England tomorrow, so you can activate the amulet for the Dark Lord before you return to school."

Harry nodded, trying to keep the smile off his face. They had watched the New Year come in, and Harry had kissed Tom without telling him it was a Muggle tradition to kiss at midnight, and then because he had been awake so late, and Tom had dosed Harry up with so many potions, he slept for almost the entire day afterwards. With Tom's timeline, he would have just one day at home before returning to school, and he refused to go back unless Tom brought Sirius back from the veil beforehand.

"I will," Tom drawled, making Harry jump.

"Stay out of my mind," Harry hissed, though he wasn't particularly angry; he was used to having his mind invaded now.

"You need to work on having your mind protected at all times," Tom commented, leading Harry from the tomb. "Your Occlumency skills are adequate, but as you have removed part of your soul, I believe the Horcrux inside you has taken over more, allowing me greater access to your mind. The partial Parseltongue block I placed on you may be obsolete now, too."

"My eyes aren't red, are they?" Harry asked, rubbing his eyes as though he could see the colour of them that way.

Tom slapped his hand away. "No," he answered. "Your eyes only tended to change colour when you did something that was far more likely to be done due to my influence on you. What do you wish to do first?"

Harry hummed. They had seen most of the historical sites, such as the Sphinx and the Valley of the Kings, on their travels, and Harry had been inside plenty of tombs and pyramids now.

"I still want to go snorkelling," Harry decided. "And I want to go to the Egyptian Museum, and maybe eat at an authentic Egyptian restaurant instead of eating whatever Dobby fancies cooking."

"Must you go to the museum? It will be full of Muggle scum," Tom said, a look of disgust crossing
his face. "What can't you learn from books?"

Harry nodded. "Yes, I want to," he stated plainly. "And it's different seeing history; don't look at
me like that, I know we've seen a lot, but I like museums."

Tom sighed. "Anything for you, my dear," he gave in, though he didn't look happy about it. "I will
take you snorkelling in an acceptable area, and do not expect me to join you in the water unless you
find yourself drowning."

Harry grinned. "And the restaurant?"

"We will go to one in the Wizarding district, under Glamours," Tom added, smirking as he eyed
Harry. "You are very childish, you know, getting this excited over such things."

"I'm turning seventeen this year, and then I'm officially an adult. I'm making the most of it while I
can," Harry reasoned with a laugh.

"Yes. Oh, by the way, we are on a time limit, so the more you talk, the less time we have doing
what you want to do."

X

Harry loved the museum; Tom didn't.

Tom spent most of the time barging past Muggles rudely, and at the end of the day, he discarded
the jacket he was wearing.

Tom's Muggle hatred didn't ruin the trip for Harry though. The museum had been so fascinating,
and it was nice to just look at artefacts without trying to un-curse them or steal them. Harry had
been particularly interested in Tutankhamen, who, being a Muggle, Tom hadn't bothered with
during their previous travels.

After about an hour, Tom reminded Harry that time was ticking on, so Harry hurried to the gift
shop, trying not to laugh as Tom picked things up using his sleeve and eyed them with distaste.
Tom would often get curious looks from people around them, but he seemed to be emitting a signal
telling the Muggles to stay away, or else.

In the end, Harry came away with a mini shisha kit for his father and Sirius, who Harry was
determined to see again. He bought Remus and Lily a replica papyrus scroll, a bracelet for his
mother and sister, and a sand filled toy camel for Heather as well.

"You buy people souvenirs on holiday," Harry told Tom, who was looking at him with a
questioning gaze, not looking amused in the slightest.

"You aren't on a holiday," Tom retorted, but he Imperiused the worker and got Harry the presents
for free nonetheless.

Tom Apparated them to the coast once they had finished in the museum, taking them to the Red
Sea. Harry could see a group of people in the distance, but they were far enough away from them to
satisfy Tom.

The water was crystal clear, a definite contrast from the darker shades that Harry was used to, and
the reef was very visible under the surface.

Tom cast the Bubble-head charm on Harry, encasing his head in a large bubble.
"Thank you," Harry smiled, but Tom rolled his eyes.

"I can't hear you," Harry heard Tom distantly say, and Harry felt himself blush. He turned his focus back on the water instead, and slid into the shallow depths. He felt comfortable providing his feet could touch the ground and he was near the shore, and he did feel a slight bit at regret at not being able to go out deeper and see the even more impressive sights.

But even at the shoreline, Harry marvelled at the world that lay beneath the water. Brightly coloured fish swam beneath him and around him, and the coral lay in fascinating shapes.

Something touched his arm, and Harry screamed, creating no sound but ripples in the bubble.

Arms held Harry's flailing ones to the side, and as he was pulled to the surface, he realised it was Tom who had touched him.

Tom was chuckling, and Harry fought the urge to splash the man.

"I thought you weren't coming in the water," Harry teased instead after Tom removed the charm from him.

"I'm taking you to the deeper water," Tom stated, and Harry's smile slid off his face. "You'll be perfectly safe, trust me. You're missing a lot staying here."

"Will you keep hold of me?" Harry asked, berating himself for sounding so childlike.

Tom nodded. "Of course; there's no good drowning you now."

Tom placed the charm back on the pair of them, and Tom grasped Harry's arm tightly, and pulled him deeper out to sea.

Harry couldn't help but kick his legs wildly as they swam further away from the shore, but Tom just gripped his arm tighter and cast him a dangerous look.

Once they reached a point where the sea floor seemed miles below, Tom pulled them underneath the water.

Harry instinctively took a deep breath, despite the Bubble-head charm, but gasped once he was under the water anyway. The shallow water had been beautiful, but the deeper water was just breath-taking. Bright coloured coral and masses of fish went on as far as the eye could see.

Tom pulled him through the water, and Harry allowed him to, all fears forgotten as he took in the amazing sights. It felt like being in another world, and Harry didn't think he had ever seen anything so beautiful.

He was incredibly disappointed when Tom took them back to the shore, and Harry wished he had had an underwater camera or something.

"Thank you for taking me out there," Harry said gently when the bubble popped around his head. "And thank you for coming with me."

"There truly was no point of you limiting yourself," Tom drawled, casting Drying Charms over the both of them. "Admittedly, the waters are far more beautiful than one can imagine from simply reading about it."

The sun was beginning to set now, so, after Tom cast Glamours over the both of them, Tom
Apparated to the Wizarding district of Cairo. It was rather like a mixture between Cairo and Diagon Alley; the Egyptian culture was very much obvious, but there were potions and broomsticks for sale, and Harry's favourite part were the stalls selling delicious smelling food.

Tom chose a restaurant for them, and Harry ordered a dish called Kushari, which was a mix of pasta, tomato sauce, lentils, onions, and chickpeas, and Harry felt a deep sense of sadness as he ate his last bite; he would have to get the recipe for Dobby. Tom permitted Harry to have dessert, and Harry ordered something called Halva, which was made from sesame paste and pistachio, and Harry insisted on buying a load before they left.

"It's a shame we have to leave tomorrow," Harry sighed as they Apparated back to their tent, taking Tom's hand in his.

"There are things to be done," Tom stated, "though I cannot deny Egypt is a wonderful country. I would be happy to return another time with you."

Later that night, after Harry's customary Floo call to his parents, Harry lay beneath Tom, grinding against him as Tom devoured his mouth.

Tom and Harry both started as a loud crack echoed through the tent, sounding again just moments later.

Tom was off Harry in an instant, wand raised threateningly.

Harry heard scurrying behind the bedroom curtain, and he swore he could hear someone muttering to themself.

Tom slashed the wall open with his wand, the curse he cast going high over Dobby's head.

"Dobby must get the tea ready. Master needs his tea," Dobby said, rushing as he clattered pots about.

Tom opened his mouth to question Dobby, but then he paused, and turned his attention to the entrance of the tent.

A red light flew towards it, and then a figure crumbled through the door.

X
Tom strode briskly towards the still figure on the floor, their body covered entirely by black travelling robes.

Harry watched as Tom pointed his wand at the mysterious intruder, but then, to Harry's great surprise, Tom chuckled, grasping the person's arms and hauling them to their feet.

The person swayed, and a lock of blond hair fell from their hood.

Draco? But no, the figure was much too tall to be Draco, being not even an inch shorter than Tom.

Tom's hands rested on the man's shoulders; for Harry doubted a woman would be that tall, and Harry's eyes narrowed.

Who was this person to Tom that he could touch him so willingly?

"Lucius, my friend, this truly is a surprise," Tom drawled, and the name instantly clicked in Harry's head.

Lucius Malfoy; Draco's father who shared the same white blond hair as his son. Harry had thought the man was still in Azkaban.

"I wasn't aware that you were here, my Lord. I simply asked Dobby to bring me to him," Lucius explained, dropping his hood down and revealing a gaunt face framed by straggly long hair.

Grey eyes suddenly found Harry, and Harry shivered under the intense gaze.

"Ah yes, Lucius, you surely remember Harry? And Harry, I believe you have met Mr Malfoy at least once in your life," Tom said, looking between the pair of them. Yes, Harry remembered Lucius Malfoy – it had been him who had given Harry the diary, though Harry couldn't hate Lucius for it, even if Tom's original intention had been to kill the diary owner. "Lucius is aware of my identity; he discovered my diary four years ago, and I ordered him to pass the diary on to a victim of his choosing. Fortunately for you, my dear, your victimisation is not with death."

"Weren't you in Azkaban?" Harry blurted out, not liking the way Tom was still standing so close to Lucius.

"He was," Tom nodded. "I, for one, am very intrigued for the explanation."

Lucius shifted from foot to foot, snatching the cup from Dobby when the House-elf appeared with his Master's tea. Clearly Lucius was stalling, and the only reason to stall around Tom when he demanded something off you, was because he would be angry no matter what was said or done.

In fact, Tom's eyes were blazing red now, and Harry smirked at the nervous blond.

Tom cast Harry an amused look, and then turned his attention back to Lucius.

"Well?" Tom muttered impatiently, tapping his foot on the floor.

Lucius gasped as he swallowed a too-big mouthful of hot tea, and threw the cup at Dobby, the heated liquid narrowing missing the fearful creature.
"You stupid pest," Lucius growled. "You should be ashamed; you can't even make a cup of tea right. Go and punish yourself."

"No, Dobby, don't," Harry said quickly. "Narcissa told Dobby he was to obey me and Tom until we return home," he explained to Lucius triumphantly. That'd show him, having Tom's hands all over his shoulders when he couldn't even obey the man.

Lucius cast Harry a quizzical look, before sneering and turning back to Tom, the fear returning to his eyes.

"There was a raid on Azkaban, my Lord," Lucius finally answered, taking a step backwards. "Not committed by the Dark Lord, but by somebody who called himself the 'true heir of Slytherin'." Harry and Tom exchanged a glance at this, and Tom gestured for Lucius to continue. "The entire jail fell; Death Eaters, thieves, rapists, and murderers; he told them all to join him or die. Of course, most of those who had never been on the side of the Dark Lord were quick to join this man, easily swayed by his promises of fresh prey. Pettigrew and Nott were the only ones from our side who deflected; the Lestrange brothers revolted, trying to fight back against them, and the others joined in, but Rookwood, Dolohov and Mulciber were killed; the other escaped with their lives."

"And tell me Lucius, why are you not with the rest of your comrades?" Tom asked, his voice icy cold. He looked expressionless, but Harry could feel the anger radiating off him in waves.

"The prison was in ruins; I took my chances and fled," Lucius said quietly, hanging his head.

"I would expect no less of you, you coward; you never were one to fight," Tom hissed, but the tone was not as menacing as Harry expected; if anything, it was simply teasing. "How did you come to be here?"

"I told Dobby long ago that I wanted a bond set up between us using House-elf magic, which would allow me to say one word and have Dobby retrieve me from wherever I might be. Azkaban has charms protecting it from House-elf magic, but I managed to swim far enough away that I could call on Dobby. He brought me here, dried me, and led me to your tent."

"And yet you still try to scald Dobby because you drank your tea too fast," Harry muttered under his breath.

"This is not the time to be discussing creature rights, my dear," Tom said to Harry dismissively. "In fact, why don't you go sit with that creature you're so fond of while I discuss some personal matters with Lucius?"

Harry narrowed his eyes, but didn't argue; he wasn't some disobedient coward, unlike some people. He threw a nasty gaze to Lucius, and moved to sit behind the curtain, the voices of Tom and Lucius becoming muffled.

Why did they even need Silencing Charms? What other secrets could Tom have that could possibly be more important than Horcruxes?

Not caring if it was childish, Harry moved to sit right by the curtain, pressing his ear against the thin material. He absent-mindedly petted whichever cat it was that had started to rub against him, straining his ears to hear, but the Silencing Charm was too good.

Oh, Harry much preferred Draco to his father. Draco wasn't slimy, or cowardly, or allowed Tom to have his hands on him.

Harry jerked as the curtain moved aside, and he quickly pretended to be doing nothing, but Tom's
smirk made Harry sure Tom had known he was there before the curtain had even moved.

He beckoned Harry to him with his finger, and Harry quickly pushed himself off his knees, trying not to shiver as Tom bent down and leant in towards his ear. His lips were so close, Harry just wanted to kiss them, and have Tom fuck him until Harry screamed, right with Lucius the other side of the curtain so it would be clear who Tom wanted.

Fuck, he had let his Occlumency shields down in his rage.

"Jealousy does wonders for you, darling," Tom whispered in his ear, turning Harry's legs to jelly. Tom's lips finally met Harry's, bruising them as he kissed Harry brutally. Tom bit down on Harry's lower lip until it bled, sucking the copper liquid into his mouth.

Tom pulled back, and through glassy eyes, Harry saw Lucius watching them, a pale pink staining his cheeks.

"I must attend to my study for some time," Tom said, tongue flicking out to wet his lips. "I'm sure you and Lucius will have plenty to talk about to keep you from getting bored."

Harry pursed his lips together, not sharing Tom's amusement.

Tom left without another word, leaving Harry and Lucius alone at last.

"Riddle tells me you and my son are friends," Lucius said conversationally, taking a seat and clicking his fingers for Dobby to bring him a fresh cup of tea.

"Yeah," Harry muttered, flopping onto the sofa until he was sprawled out on his stomach. He propped his hands on the side, resting his head on top so he could see Lucius properly.

"Oh, yes, I forgot how delightful teenagers of certain kinds could be," Lucius tutted.

"You mean not Pure-blood?" Harry retorted. He just couldn't wait until Lucius knew what had happened with his heir—no! He was not going to use Draco's curse to taunt his father, no matter how arrogant the man was.

Lucius didn't answer him, and just took another sip of his tea, surveying Harry through cold grey eyes.

"Riddle was rather vague about Draco. What is happening in his life?" Lucius asked, and the man might be a prat, but at least he seemed to care about his son. His non-werewolf son anyway; Harry may not be planning to rub it in his face anymore, but if Lucius reacted negatively, Harry didn't think he'd be able to keep his disgust to himself.

"Well because of your failure in the Department of Mysteries, Voldemort has basically passed your punishment onto Draco," Harry told the man who paled drastically, ignoring Harry's jibe.

"How?" he croaked, and Harry felt a stab of pity inside of him.

"He wants Draco to find a way for the Death Eaters to get into Hogwarts, and then he has to kill Dumbledore," Harry pressed on, his hatred diminishing as he spoke Draco's issues out loud; the boy really didn't have it easy, and Harry hadn't even been able to spend the last full moon with him.

"Kill Dumbledore?" Lucius repeated faintly. "How in Salazar's name is Draco going to kill Dumbledore?"
"I think that's the point," Harry shrugged. "If he hasn't done it by the end of this year, Voldemort will probably torture and kill you and your wife in front of Draco before killing him. I'm trying to help him though."

"How can you help him?" Lucius cried, and yes, there was the rage in Harry again.

"I've killed before," Harry said plainly, trying to stay cold and emotionless like Tom, but he didn't think it had worked, because he had really killed people, and it was no wonder his emotions were so messed up.

Lucius opened his mouth, but then shut it once more, eyeing Harry intently.

"Does Draco have any hope of succeeding?" Lucius finally said, his voice so faint that Harry could hardly hear him.

"Yes," Harry said honestly. "I'm going to make sure of it. He's been punished already though; his life had changed a lot as a result."

Lucius would find out eventually, and who better to hear that your son was a werewolf from, than someone who actually respected werewolves as being equals?

"What?" Lucius said sharply, leaning forwards until he was at the very edge of his seat, his steel grey gaze so intense Harry found himself unable to hold it.

"Voldemort wanted to make an impact on him, to show what he expects of Draco, and what Draco can get in return, so he..." Harry trailed off, the words harder to say than he had thought. It was the not knowing how Lucius would react which got to Harry the most. "He, err, got Fenrir Greyback to bite Draco, at the full moon."

The tent fell silent, every noise both outside and in seeming to stop. Lucius' face seemed to fall, his chest moving in and out heavily, and he looked down at the floor hurriedly, but not before Harry had chance to see his eyes shining with wetness.

"He's doing okay; my honourary Godfather is a werewolf, and he's been watching over Draco." Harry continued softly, debating whether he should stand and offer Lucius some comfort, but he decided against it. "His Slytherin friends found out, and they were strange around him at first, but they're getting better with it. The girl he was betrothed to has broken it, but Draco's got a new girlfriend; a Pureblood blonde who knows about his Lycanthropy and couldn't care less."

"She is a Lovegood," Tom's voice filtered through. "I believe you went to school with her father; Xenophilius?"

"Yes, yes," Lucius said quietly. "Well, I'll be getting myself to bed now, if I can, my Lord."

Tom nodded, and waved Lucius through to a separate room that Harry hadn't known was there. As soon as Lucius left, Tom moved over to Harry, laying on top of him and sucking at the skin in the crook of his neck.

"Winding dear Lucius up, are we?" Tom mocked, sliding his cold hands under Harry's shirt to rest on his back.

"He had to know eventually," Harry answered slowly, finding it hard to think with the way Tom's fingers were dancing across his skin. "You wouldn't have eased him into it."
Harry yelped as Tom bit the back of Harry's neck. "You don't seem to mind me the way I am," Tom smirked, thrusting his hips against Harry's backside. "Though you were acting much like me when you were talking with Lucius. Feeling threatened are we, my dear?"

"No," Harry answered too quickly, and Tom chuckled.

"My relationship with Lucius is much like that of yours with Miss Lovegood," Tom mused, moving his hands down where they were resting just above the swell of Harry's arse. "I trust you find no threat in that, or I would take that to mean Miss Lovegood cannot be trusted either and should therefore be eliminated. No, Lucius is much like his father Abraxas, who was an acquaintance of mine at school. Unfortunately Draco has none of their positive qualities, which is why I still cannot fathom how you can stand the boy."

Harry was going to defend Draco as a friend, but Tom's cold hands slipping beneath his trousers distracted him.

"Tom," Harry whined, shutting his eyes as Tom's fingers teased him. "We can't; not with him-"

"What was it you wanted earlier?" Tom interrupted. "For me to fuck you so hard that you'd scream so loud until Lucius knew you were mine? If that's what you need for me to prove my commitment to you, Harry, allow me to indulge you. Lucius will not be able to leave his room, but he will hear everything, and I intend for you to scream until your voice is gone."

And Tom did just that.

X

Tom awoke Harry early the following morning, and thankfully Harry was too tired to notice that Lucius was avoiding eye contact with the pair of them.

Harry arse was sore, his throat ached, and he didn't want to leave Egypt, but Tom insisted they had to, because they had much to get through in the next day, due to the fact Harry would be at school the day after and unable to go places with Tom so easily.

Tom told Lucius to go with Dobby to Godric's Hollow, while Tom took Harry with him. Tom instructed Lucius to Disillusion himself, and meet Tom in the village where Tom would bring him to the Potter's. Apparently Lucius fleeing Azkaban would not bode well with Voldemort, and there was too much of a risk that he or Narcissa may be killed for it. With Lucius in hiding, he could be presumed missing or dead, and Narcissa would be safe.

The Apparating back to England was just as horrible as it had been the first time going overseas, and it took Harry a moment to be steady on his feet.

They landed in Harry's room, and had been back only seconds when heavy footsteps echoed down the hallway and his bedroom door flung open.

He had chance to see a flash of red hair, before he was engulfed in a tight hug by his mother.

He heard Tom Apparate out to get Lucius, but his mother was too preoccupied to notice.

"I've missed you," Lily smiled, finally releasing her grip on Harry. "We weren't sure what time you'd be coming back, but everyone is downstairs waiting for you. You must come and tell us all about your trip. Where's Tom?"

"Err, out," he answered lamely, not too sure about how his parents would react to being forced to
have a new house guest.

Harry followed Lily downstairs, where he was drawn into numerous hugs from his family. Harry distributed his souvenirs, and was partway through describing his PG version of events when Tom returned, Lucius by his side.

James’ eyes narrowed instantly at the sight of the blond man, and Lucius sneered right back.

The others, bar Lily, watched the pair curiously, even Tom, who, although bored, still didn't seem to have expected such a reaction from James; it wasn't like he wasn't used to Dark wizards in his house, and Lucius was pretty tame compared to Tom.

"So was it you who destroyed Azkaban?" Remus asked Tom, looking taken aback when Tom shook his head.

"My brother," Tom said dismissively. "Lucius here refused to join him, but didn't fight for the Dark Lord's cause either and fled while he could. As a result, he is as good as dead in the eyes of the Dark Lord now, and cannot return to his home. Therefore, he will be staying with you."

"Nice of you to ask," James muttered, at the same time as Lily said "but we don't have room."

"Your daughter won't be here during term time," Tom answered, waving his hand towards Heather. "And Harry tells me you are a witch with a particular talent for charms; you would surely be able to sort something out."

"I suppose we don't have a choice in this?" James growled, his eyes still focused on Lucius rather than Tom.

Harry found his father's hatred towards Lucius rather comforting.

"No," Tom answered simply. "Lucius wishes to have a word with you, Lupin."

Remus nodded, and led Lucius to the kitchen, no doubt to discuss Draco.

"Are you alright, Dad?" Heather asked almost instantly, turning to their father with questioning eyes.

Lily laughed lightly, ignoring the glare James sent her.

"He's just bitter about his childhood," Lily teased, and James mumbled something incomprehensible under his breath. "His parents were rich Pure-bloods who knew everyone, and they threw a lot of charity events. The Malfoy family were often invited, and Lucius, who's a few years older than your father, used to tease him constantly."

"He did not tease me," James hissed, a faint blush staining his cheeks. "He was just a pretentious, stuck up git. Now if we've finished talking about me, I want to hear more about Harry's holiday."

Harry lapsed into more details about his visit, with the occasional unnecessary comment added by Tom.

It took until they were up to their last day that Heather noticed Harry had a ring on his finger.

"Harry?" his sister questioned, peering intently at the ring on his finger. "What's that?"

"That is something called a ring," Tom answered patronisingly with a smirk before Harry could reply properly.
James’ mouth opened and remained that way, while Lily just blinked. In fact, it was only Heather who looked excited, despite her glaring at Tom.

"I know; I'm not stupid," she hissed, reminding Harry of the Heather he knew from school, rather than the shy fangirl she was around Tom, "but why do you have one? Is it a-

"Betrothal ring? Yes," Tom answered, keeping his eyes firmly fixed on Harry's father.

"For after I'm seventeen," Harry added hastily, more for the benefit of his mother.

Lily stepped forwards, taking Harry's hand in hers and examining the ring closely.

"It's a lovely ring," she said softly. "Not very traditional, I suppose, but it suits you well enough."

"You're okay with this, Lily?" James asked in a strangled voice.

"We got married young too, James," Lily retorted, a faint smile on her face as she recalled the memories.

"That's only because we found out you were pr-," James started, cut off by his wife's cough. "But I suppose if you're waiting until you're of age we can't stop you, and at least Tom is, err, passionate?"

"Won't that make Voldemort your father-in-law?" Heather piped up, and James choked.

"He'll be dead by then, so it's no matter to you," Tom answered for Harry once more. "Now where did Lucius and the wolf get to?"

"Remus," James corrected, his comment ignored by Tom.

"Harry and I shall leave for the Ministry soon to retrieve the wolf's lover. I trust you can make Lucius feel at home whilst we're gone," Tom pressed on, smirking as James muttered something under his breath. "I'll leave you to your familial duties while I fill Lucius in on what I expect from him while he's staying here."

X

Later that day, Tom called Harry away so they could leave for the Ministry. Apparently Voldemort was furious about the raid on Azkaban, and his amulet could wait until a later time.

Tom and Harry easily made their way into the Ministry of Magic, under the disguise of a Glamour. Getting actually into the building wasn't the hard part, of course; it was getting to the Veil that would be harder, but with Tom, anything was possible.

Their disguises were of their own design; they would have no reason to be suspected by Ministry officials or Dark side members who had infiltrated the Ministry.

In fact, nobody paid them any heed as they strolled through the Ministry. Harry would have thought after the raid by those in the Asylum, security would have been tighter, but the attack seemed to have had a reverse effect.

People seemed…scared, watching the others around them nervously, as though they couldn't trust anyone. Guards stood dotted around, waiting for any signs of fights, but otherwise they just watched everyone suspiciously, not singling anyone in particular out.

It was impossible to know who was good and who was bad, unless they actually cast a Dark spell
at someone in the middle of the Ministry, and Harry hadn't realised until now what impact the not-knowing had on all these adults. It was frightening really, seeing the people who were supposed to be in charge being so unsure of themselves and their surroundings. Despite all Tom had put Harry through, Harry still felt he had been sheltered from the worst of the war.

Tom led them down towards the Department of Mysteries, the area oddly empty. There had been a few guards, but Tom had been able to take them all down with a flick of his wand. They had only been knocked unconscious, and Tom Obliviated them before they moved on. Tom would have killed them, had he not wanted to hide their tracks.

There was one door where a number of hushed voices were coming from behind a door, labelled as the 'Love-Chamber'. Tom smirked at this, but didn't comment, and Harry wondered what the Unspeakables could be doing in there.

They moved further on until they reached the Death Chamber.

The veil stood strikingly in the darkness of the room, the transparent curtain floating in the otherwise still air.

Tom pressed the Tablet into Harry's hands.

"You will go in and raise this above your head. They will fear the power of this, and do anything you command," Tom told him seriously. "Ask for your Godfather only, and then leave.

"Alright," Harry nodded, curling his fingers around the edges of the golden metal.

Tom jerked his head towards the veil, signalling to Harry that it was time.

Harry slowly walked towards it, taking a deep breath before he stepped through the shimmering curtain.

A wave of freezing ice engulfed his body, and the light dimmed until he was left in pure darkness.

He was aware only of his breathing, and otherwise there was nothing but silence.

Harry raised the Tablet with shaking fingers, the metal emitting a bright yellow light, casting golden shadows across the ground. There were symbols carved into the floor, the light from the Tablet causing specks of dust to dance across the mysterious shapes.

"You were told not to come back here," an echoing voice spoke, the sound vibrating through Harry's skin.

"I've come for my Godfather," Harry replied, hoping he sounded braver than he felt.

"Your soul was pure, but tainted by Darkness," the voice continued, ignoring what Harry had said. "But that purity has been broken, allowing the Darkness to spread. Do you really think there will be no price to pay?"

"I don't care," Harry growled angrily. "I want Sirius Black back, and I want him now."

"That Tablet is not what you believe," said the voice, now sounding much closer to Harry. "It will return bodies to their original state, yes, but the soul that once lived in there will be no longer. The bodies will be mindless slaves to your master, and nothing more. They will be dangerous, impossible to trust, and be responsible for mayhem and destruction which you shall be part to blame for. Do you really want than on your conscience? And your Godfather; he may be spared in
that his soul is still in a place where it can be returned to Earth, but his loyalty will be bound to your master against his will."

"Tom Riddle," Harry drawled, enunciating his name to differentiate it from 'master', "has promised to allow Sirius to live as he once did. My family is broken without him, and if the price to have him back is simply for him to be magically bound to Tom, then so be it."

"You are a fool, Harry Potter; so easily tricked and led astray. I will release your Godfather to you, but may the price be on your head."

The golden rays of the Tablet flickered, and then fell into darkness.

The Tablet began to shake violently in Harry's hands, and then a heavy gust of icy wind pushed Harry backwards, and he flew through the air, his body washed over by the freezing touch of the veil, and then he was on the cold ground of the Ministry, a heavy body on top of his.

And Sirius' wild blue eyes were staring into his.

X
Chapter Notes

Warnings for sex, minor character deaths, and violence.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

X

Time seemed to stand still as bright green eyes stared into icy blue. The whispers from the Veil seemed to be screaming at him, but Harry paid them no heed, his attention sufficiently focused on his no longer dead Godfather.

Harry could feel his heart thumping in his chest, amplified by the heavy pounding of Sirius' heart merging against his. Harry hadn't been this close to Sirius for months; hadn't been able to physically feel his Godfather since his death, but now he was here, and Harry didn't know quite how to react.

A pale hand grasped Sirius' shoulder, hauling the man to his feet.

"Sirius Black," Tom drawled, and Sirius immediately dropped to his knees, bowing his head. "I am not relinquishing my ownership over you, however your primary duty is to resume your role as Godfather, lover, and friend."

"Yes, Master," Sirius answered, his voice distant, and hearing Sirius talk to somebody in authority with sincere respect didn't seem right to Harry. But Sirius was bound to Tom now, forever forced to be his obedient servant, even if the role was secondary to Sirius' normal life.

It was worth it though; it had to be. They had lost so much when Sirius left their lives; Remus had been tormented to the brink of craving death, and James could only cope by numbing his senses and blocking out the rest of the world around him. Even if they had learnt to survive now, they weren't the same people they once were, and though Sirius being back would not guarantee to fix them completely, it would bring back a sense of normality to them.

Tom moved away from Sirius to pick up the Tablet, so Harry got up and walked over to his Godfather and embraced him in a tight hug, burying his head in Sirius' chest.

It was still so hard to believe that Sirius was really there, alive and real, and the emotions were overwhelming to the point that Harry had to squeeze his eyes shut against Sirius' shirt to stop the tears from spilling over his cheeks.

Sirius' hands lay gently on his back, and it wasn't the tight hug that Sirius normally grasped him in, and it was wrong but Harry needed just that small touch from his Godfather to prove Harry wasn't imagining this.

Harry did let out a muffled sob as Sirius shifted to embrace Harry properly, squeezing him tightly as he rested his head on top of Harry's.

"Merlin, Harry!" Sirius exclaimed, and Harry sobbed again as he heard the real Sirius speaking for the first time in months. "Why did you do that? You could have died, and just for me."
"You died for me," Harry mumbled back, fingers clenching at the back of Sirius' shirt. "I had to get you back; I had to."

"I know," Sirius murmured softly. "I know."

X

If Harry had been emotional at the Ministry, it was nothing compared to being back at home with Sirius in tow.

Tom had soon dragged Sirius and Harry apart and Apparated them back to the Potter's house. Apparently they couldn't have Apparated to the Ministry because Tom didn't believe in going somewhere without knowing the surroundings first.

And as soon as Sirius stepped through the door of the living room, he was pounded on by both Remus and James.

Tom dragged Lucius away from the 'sickening sight', as Tom called it, and left the newly reunited group alone to take it in turns to embrace Sirius so tight as if they were afraid he would disappear again if they let go.

"It can't really be you, can it, Sirius?" Remus asked, his voice desperate as he clutched as Sirius' shirt and gazed deeply into his eyes.

"I think it is," Sirius answered softly with a light smile, taking Remus' hands into his own.

"But how?" James cried in a strangled voice. "You were dead!"

"Technically," Sirius reasoned with a grin, and despite his recent resurrection and reunion with his loved ones, his usual fun loving attitude seemed to be in place once more, with Sirius not seeming nearly as emotional as the rest of them. Harry supposed Sirius mustn't have experienced their separation to the same degree that his family had had outside of the Veil.

"What did it feel like?" Heather asked in a hushed whisper, and the room went silent as everyone waited for the answer with bated breath. Even Harry, who had a vague idea of the answer, wanted to hear from Sirius himself what it had been liked trapped behind the Veil.

"What did it feel like?" Sirius repeated, his voice just as faint. "It felt long but short; all meaning of time seemed to float away, like I had been trapped for eternity, but eternity was only mere minutes. I couldn't physically feel anything, but I could hear the voices of the others trapped with me, and see the light of the outside world through the door, and through the darkness I could see something even darker; the door leading to the afterlife which was impossible to cross through." Sirius' eyes were wide and distant, his voice far away and emotionless. "I longed to see you all, yet it was easy to accept my death, though despite that, being back in the real world feels like I'd been drowning until I left the Veil."

Silence washed over the group at Sirius' dramatic words, but eventually James broke it with a sharp laugh.

"Blimey, Padfoot, you not going to keep going all philosophical on us, are you?" James grinned, the smile not quite reaching his eyes. "I get enough of that from Xeno Lovegood."

"That hippy bloke who was in the year above us? Merlin, James, I'm only dead a few months and you got a replacement best friend already?" Sirius responded with a bark of a laugh.
Remus gave Sirius a watery smile at that, and James swiped his eyes with the back of his hand furiously as he forced out a laugh.

"A best friend isn't the only thing I've changed," James said lightly, reaching a hand down to tap on his prosthetic leg.

Sirius blinked, and James rolled his trouser leg up slightly so Sirius could see.

"Your leg is gone," Sirius said plainly, and then his eyes widened. "Prongs, your leg is gone!"

"A werewolf in human form attacked me, and the damage was too much," James explained, rolling his trousers back down.

"Greyback?" Sirius guessed, and Remus violently shook his head.

"Greyback is dead," Remus spat, his hatred of the once vicious man not fading after his death. "Good riddance to him, but Ulric is much worse. He's filed his teeth into fangs, grown out his nails and sharpened them too, and he isn't picky who his victims are."

"Sounds a pleasant bloke," Sirius mused. "Did the Order get Greyback?"

"Nobody knows," Lily answered, casting Harry a dark look. "His body appeared in Hogwarts one day; Harry found it."

Sirius turned his focus back onto Harry, the blue orbs still widened with shock, and Harry shrugged.

"An enemy of Voldemort's and the Order killed him, and wanted me to see the body," Harry said, expanding on the vague information his parents and Remus had given to Sirius. "Greyback bit one of my friends and infected him, and this guy wanted to make a peace offering of sorts, I guess."

"How much more I have missed?" Sirius asked faintly, shifting to sit in one of the chairs.

"This could take a while," Lily muttered while the others pulled up their own chairs.

"Harry will be required elsewhere," a cold voice spoke, and Sirius moved to kneel at the sight of Tom, making James choke at the sight.

Tom threw James a nasty smirk, and beckoned Harry to him with a finger.

"Don't be too late," Lily called as Tom pulled Harry through the doorway. "You've got to be up early for the train to Hogwarts tomorrow."

Harry found it somewhat amusing that his mother had given up asking questions whenever Tom was involved.

Tom led Harry to the entrance hallway where Lucius was waiting by the front door, the Tablet tight in his grasp.

"We are going to test this at the graveyard in the village," Tom informed Harry, taking the Tablet from Lucius. "Lucius will keep watch for us."

Harry nodded, not particularly happy that Lucius was going too, but Harry knew there would be no point arguing; if Tom wanted Lucius with them, then that was that.

The graveyard was not a long walk from Harry's house, and the streets were dead.
The weather was icy cold, the sky already dark with only the streetlights lighting the way, but that didn't normally stop the villagers from venturing out.

The curtains of the houses they walked past would occasionally shift as the neighbours spied, but otherwise Godric's Hollow seemed deserted and entirely shut down.

The gate to the cemetery creaked open, the hinges deeply engrained with rust.

Lucius stopped by it, drawing his wand threateningly, and darted his eyes from side to side to check for life.

There was only a shimmer of light from the far away streetlights, and otherwise the graveyard was cloaked in darkness, the grey stone of the headstones barely visible.

"Anyone in particular you wish to bring back?" Tom asked, stopping to study his surroundings.

"Err, I don't know," Harry shrugged. Apparently whoever Tom brought back to life would only be in body and not soul, so should he go for someone he never knew, or go for someone he did know and risk their lack of character seeming strange to him? Would it even matter, or were they just a test for Tom to dispose of after?

Harry opened his mouth to respond, but then a mumbled whispering reached his ears.

He whipped his head around, trying to place the sound but it seemed to circle him, the words not quite making sense.

"What's wrong?" Tom snapped sharply, grabbing hold of Harry's shoulders to stop him moving his head.

"Didn't you hear that?" Harry asked in a hushed voice, straining his ears as the whispering died away.

"Clearly not," Tom muttered. "I have Charms that will go off if anyone comes within a certain radius, and Lucius is keeping watch too; there is nobody here. You are likely paranoid about being in the open."

Harry didn't quite believe Tom, but the older man really didn't seem to have heard anything, unless it was Lucius messing with his head, but surely a middle-aged man had better things to do.

There was a slight breeze, so Harry presumed it must have been the leaves rattling through the wind and tried to push the thoughts of the strange sound aside as Tom gave up on Harry picking a grave and chose one himself.

Tom placed the Tablet onto the floor, using his wand to flick a small amount of dirt from the ground over it.

Tom closed his eyes and began chanting, the Tablet shaking and glowing bright, sending rays of golden light through the ground.

As Tom's chanting sped up, a thick beam of light erupted from the grave, the ground around it shaking and crumbling in on itself.

Harry flinched violently as a woman screamed loudly, and then a pale hand punched through the ground, the body beneath the dirt fighting its way through.
Harry could only watch wide-eyed, the screaming almost deafening, as a woman draped in brown cloth pushed up through the mud.

She turned blank eyes to Tom, and dropped to her knees.

Though the woman looked very much alive, there was something off about her. Sirius had seemed distant and not quite himself, but this woman seemed even more emotionless and real, as though she were nothing but a fresh corpse.

As Harry peered closely at her headstone, it said she had died in 1834.

The screaming had stopped now, subsiding into soft sobs which were carried away with the wind, but Tom still showed no sign of acknowledging it.

"How may I serve you, Master?" the woman spoke, and a wicked smirk crossed Tom's face.

"You have served your purpose," Tom replied curtly, and then he cast the Killing Curse at her, her once again lifeless body crumpling to the floor. "I do not want Muggles in my midst, be they slaves or not."

Harry nodded gently, still slightly shaken from the screaming.

"Was that her screaming like that?" Harry asked, and Tom gave Harry a questioning look.

"Nobody was screaming, dear," Tom replied with a small smirk, but his eyes seemed wary for just a moment. Tom picked the Tablet up from the ground and turned to Harry once more. "I have something I would like to show you," Tom said, offering Harry his hand.

Harry placed his hand in Tom's, allowing the taller man to pull him through the cemetery until they reached a row of headstones from more recent times.

These were the ones with fresh flowers on, and with their writing still legible. There was also far too many of them, and Harry could now see why the village had been so deserted.

"Have all these people died because of the war?" Harry whispered, jumping when Tom's mouth was suddenly against his ear.

"Necessary casualties," Tom hissed, pulling Harry to a row of graves facing the large metal fence, with large leafless trees looming above them. "Read the headstones."

An odd request, Harry thought, but he knew better than to disobey Tom.

The first one seemed normal enough.


But despite the darkness, Harry noticed that some letters seemed to have a dark substance coating the engraving.

Harry pressed his finger against it and was immediately met by wetness. He brought his fingertip to his nose, and caught the scent of blood.

Harry turned wild eyes to Tom, but Tom was hardly visible in the night, and Harry turned back to the grave.

He trailed his fingers along the letters, noting the ones painted with blood, and his eyes widened
even further as he realised the blood was spelling something.

MYHEART

Merlin, Tom was romanticising Harry using blood and headstones, and Harry couldn't keep the
smile from gracing his face.

And going through the row, Harry saw more.

DEAREST DARLING

BEAUTIFUL DARKNESS

ALWAYS MINE

MY DISASTER

"Thank you, Tom," Harry said softly, as large hands wrapped around his waist from behind as he
gazed at the final one.

The gesture would have been strange from anyone else, but Tom wasn't like anyone else, and that
was why Harry loved him.

He turned in Tom's grip and tilted his head up to kiss Tom gently.

As usual, Tom soon took over the kiss, biting Harry's lower lip and sucking on the bruises he left.
Tom's tongue plundered into Harry's mouth, mapping it out.

Tom released Harry to place a Cushioning Charm on the floor, and then pulled Harry down to the
ground with him, settling him onto Tom's lap as he rested against the headstone.

Harry leant back in and resumed the kiss, squirming as Tom's hands slipped underneath Harry's
jeans to grope his arse.

"Tom," Harry whined, wriggling as he rubbed his hardening cock against Tom's. "We shouldn't be
doing this here; it's disrespectful."

"They don't care; they're dead," Tom smirked against Harry's neck, biting down on the sensitive
skin.

"B-but," Harry protested weakly, breaking off as Tom pushed a finger inside of him.

"This would be easier with your clothes off, dear," Tom teased, using his free hand to undo Harry's
zipper.

"We're in public," Harry pointed out, but his hands were already pushing his jeans down his thighs
and fumbling with the buttons on Tom's trousers.

"Nobody will see us, and Lucius will keep himself hidden," Tom drawled, lowering his head to bite
at Harry's collar bone.

Tom brought his hand up to spit on his fingers, and then he dropped them back to Harry's hole,
pushing two digits inside of him and scissoring them to stretch Harry.

Tom withdrew them soon after and freed his erection, and Harry shifted until it pressed against the
tight ring of muscle, lowering himself onto Tom's hard cock.
It burnt as it stretched him, but Harry pressed down until it was inside him completely, with Tom's balls pressing against the swell of his arse.

Tom captured Harry's lips again, his hands gripping hard at Harry's hips.

Harry moaned into the kiss as he moved up and down on Tom's cock, fucking himself and losing himself in Tom.

He gripped hold of the top of the headstone for support, shutting his eyes as Tom's lips trailed down to Harry's neck, sucking hard at the mark Tom had previously made.

Tom thrust up, using his hands to pull Harry's hips down to meet him thrust for thrust, grazing against Harry's prostate each time and sending jolts of pleasure running through his body.

Harry could feel the pressure building up, and Tom moved a hand down to jerk Harry's cock in time with each thrust, and Tom's fingers, lips and cock were too much, turning Harry into a writhing mess as he came over Tom's slender fingers.

Tom pumped into Harry even harder, and then he stilled as he released inside of Harry, kissing Harry hard as he did.

Harry rested his forehead against Tom's, both of them breathing heavily.

"We're so messed up," Harry muttered with a shaky smile, resting his fingers on Tom's chest.

"To most people, perhaps," Tom countered. "But we are the ones who matter."

X

It seemed strange arriving at Kings Cross Station the next day.

The Winter Holidays had been so eventful; even the previous day had been full of drama for Harry, and now he had to leave all that behind to go back to Hogwarts.

Harry didn't particularly want to go back to school; he wanted to stay at home with Tom and Sirius. It wasn't even like he needed his NEWT results anymore, but Tom insisted he had to go back until at least the end of the year.

Sirius joined Lily and James to wave Harry and Heather off, transformed into his Animagus form so that people wouldn't notice the previously technically dead man. The large dog that was Sirius still seemed to gain a lot of attention, mostly from younger students who asked to pet him.

Sirius growled loudly when Xenophilius Lovegood waved at James, and Harry and Heather quickly boarded the train before they got caught in the drama between the quirky man and the canine Animagus.

Heather soon left Harry for a compartment with her friends, and Harry quickly ran into Luna after that. They managed to get an empty compartment near the end of the train, and it didn't take long for Draco to find them, slinking into the small room without a word.

While Luna seemed to be glowing, Draco looked the opposite, his face more pale and gaunt than usual. He had heavy bags under his eyes, making it look like he hadn't had much sleep recently, and because it had been over a week since the full moon, Harry knew it wasn't werewolf related.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked, deciding there was no point skirting round the question.
"Him," Draco hissed, his eyes darting to the door to watch the empty corridor outside. "He's furious about Azkaban; not even my Aunt Bellatrix has escaped his rage since it happened."

Harry wondered if that was why Tom decided to keep Harry from seeing Voldemort for another week.

"My mother is in hospital," Draco continued bitterly, his chest heaving up and down as he spoke. "The Lestrange brothers told the Dark Lord my father fled like a coward, so he took it out on my father's wife. I don't even know where Father is; he probably drowned or got himself captured by Dumbledore."

Harry's stomach knotted at the mention of Lucius, and he hoped the news of the man's whereabouts would cheer Draco up slightly.

"Your father is alive," Harry said quickly, and Draco snapped his eyes to him. "Dobby managed to get him to Tom, and Tom's keeping Lucius in hiding because he knows Voldemort will probably just kill him once he sees him."

Draco's mouth moved silently, and then he shut it, tilting his head to the side suspiciously.

"What interest does Riddle have with my father?" Draco queried, but Harry could already see that a weight had lifted off Draco's shoulders, his expression lightening slightly.

"Apparently your Grandfather Abraxas and Tom were, err, close acquaintances at Hogwarts, and your father reminds Tom of him," Harry answered with a shrug.

"And your Godfather is back for good now?" Luna piped up, making Draco narrow his eyes.

"I saw that dog with you and thought it looked like Black's Animagus form, but I thought he had died," Draco mused, both he and Luna watching Harry carefully.

"Well technically, yes," Harry said with an unsure smile. "He got trapped in the Death Veil at the Department of Mysteries, but Tom found a way to get him back out."

Draco looked like he was restraining himself from asking how.

"Did Tom give you the ring, too?" Luna asked, and both Harry's companions dropped their sight to his finger, so he held it up for them to see better. "Oh, the Shen Ring; that has a nice meaning to it."

"Eternity?" Draco whispered faintly. "Why did he give you that? If I didn't know better I'd say it looks like a Betrothal Ring."

"It is," Harry nodded. "Tom wants me to magically bond with him after I turn seventeen; says it's good for public image or something."

Draco nodded understandingly, but Luna shook her head.

"That might be part of the reason, but Tom could have asked anyone if it was public image only," Luna reasoned, twirling a lock of her hair around a finger. "I think he loves you, but not in the way the rest of us understand love. Love is lovely, and I think everyone can enjoy it in their own way."

Luna cast a look at Draco, whose lips turned up in a small smile.

Draco and Luna were sweet together, and Harry hoped Luna would help bring Draco out of the dark cloud he seemed to be under. Despite their slightly more conventional than Harry's
relationship, Harry wouldn't want to trade Tom for anyone, no matter how cute and loving they may seem.

Last night had proved to Harry that Tom's feelings for him were strong and real, even if they may not be how a typical person experienced them.

They spent the next couple of hours in silence, keeping themselves occupied with reading. As the train journey went on, the sky seemed to fall drastically darker, with heavy rain pelting against the windows.

The trio looked up when their compartment door slid open, and Heather stepped through it, biting down on her lower lip.

She slid the door shut behind her, and sat down next to Harry but kept her eyes focused on the corridor outside.

"Heather, are you alright?" Harry asked his sister, causing her to bring her gaze back to him.

"Maybe," she shrugged. "Did, err, Tom say anything about the Hogwarts' Express?"

"Like what?" Harry questioned suspiciously, and he was met with another shrug.

"I don't know; it's just that some of the Aurors seem to be acting strange, I guess," Heather answered.

The train did have a number of Aurors on it for protection, and Harry hadn't noticed anything out of the ordinary, but then again, he hadn't particularly paid any attention to them.

"How are they acting strange? Tom would have told me if Voldemort was planning an attack on the train," Harry said, and before Heather could answer, the train slammed to a halt, tilting on its side slightly before landing roughly back on the tracks.

The lights flickered off, and Harry looked outside the window to see that they had stopped on the viaduct bridge, high in the air with water below them.

Voldemort may not have planned an attack on the train, but the Wizarding World had other enemies; ones they didn't even know about.

"The Dark Lord isn't behind this," Draco said slowly, drawing the same conclusions as Harry, and apparently Heather too.

"It's his son, isn't it?" Heather whispered, her shaky fingers clutching her wand to her chest.

Harry nodded, slowly walking towards the compartment door. The train seemed to be deadly silent, and it put Harry's nerves on edge. Where was everybody?

He peered through the small window, squinting to see through the darkness.

A terrified face slammed against it from the other side, causing Harry to yelp and jump backwards.

The person's mouth was open in a silent scream, and then they were dragged away and with a scream, a spray of blood splattered against the door window.

"Oh my God," Heather muttered, and the others drew their breath, not daring to make a sound.

The train jolted again, causing Harry to stumble over, saved only from falling on the floor by
Draco's quick reflex.

As the train fell back onto the track, a shimmering blue waterfall of light cascaded down the window.

"Wards," Luna mused, "they must already be on the train."

"Oh my God," Heather repeated, and Harry moved to sit next to her, wrapping an arm around her comfortingly. "Can we get out?"

"I don't know," Harry muttered softly, "but we'll be fine; I won't let anything happen to you."

"Why is it so quiet?" Draco murmured, peering through the blood splattered window from his seat. "Do you think the Aurors or something stopped whoever was on-board?"

Draco's answer was an ear-splitting metallic scream.

The train was rocking again, this time lifting so high that Harry lost his grip on Heather as they fell from their seats, crashing into the wall.

Screams echoed down the corridor as the train began to fall on its side, and the force of it sent Harry flying again, and he yelled in pain as his head hit the window which was now on the bottom of the train.

He could feel blood trickling down the side of his head, and could feel shards of glass stuck in his skin. Luna looked to have sustained a similar injury, and Heather's wrist seemed to be bent at an awkward angle.

Harry could see the water far beneath him from the part of glass which was off the track, meaning the train was resting precariously on the edge of the viaduct. It was a long drop down, and the sight made Harry feel sick.

Creaking echoed through the train, and with a horrifying loud groan, the whole train was dragged further out as screams got quieter and quieter, and through the glass, Harry saw a large splash in the water beneath them, and he could only imagine that a carriage had gone crashing into the water below.

Harry couldn't understand why nobody was helping. There was no Tom, no Order, no anybody. The Aurors on board seemed to have been taken out, and all that was left was a large group of youths, the eldest of whom were barely on the brink of adulthood.

Bangs sounded down the corridor, there were screams being cut off half way through, and Harry could smell something burning, but he daren't move, holding onto Heather tightly as the girl shook, and Draco and Luna were wrapped together as well. They all had their wands drawn, waiting for the attack to reach them, secretly hoping that the attackers would be preoccupied hurting others so someone could rescue them before they reached Harry's compartment.

Harry could almost hear all of their hearts beating; could almost smell the fear in the air, and every noise made each of them jump.

As if to mock them, the upside down door to their compartment was punched viciously, and then again, and then again, and they had to duck as the door flew towards them as it was knocked off its hinges.

Two faces peered down at them; Ulric, who was giving them a bloodied grin, and Marvolo, with a
silver mask covering the left side of his face. Marvolo chuckled humourlessly, his eyes glazing over with a hungry lust, and he gave Harry a dark smile.

"Dearest Harry; what a pleasant surprise."

X

Chapter End Notes

I said Marvolo would be in this chapter, but I never said for how long ;)

No, but next chapter is very Marvolo heavy, and Harry finally has his chance to fight without Tom there.

I hope you enjoyed the chapter. The love notes on the headstones scene was inspired by the song 'Horror of our Love' – the title of the story has to connect to it after all LOL.
X

Even though Harry had strongly suspected that Marvolo was behind the attack, seeing the man had still sent a wave of ice coursing through Harry.

Everyone in his compartment knew at least some of what Marvolo was capable of, and the atmosphere was tense and nervous. Harry could feel the hairs on the back of his neck stand at end.

Marvolo's cold eyes were focused entirely on Harry, and Harry had to shiver at the intensity of it. The look wasn't quite murderous, but it wasn't pleasant either.

Harry felt trapped, the compartment somehow seeming even smaller now. The way the chairs were now stuck out made movement limited, and the two threatening men staring at them from above only added to the hopelessness of the situation.

Last time Harry had seen Marvolo, he had set the man's face on fire, and Harry hated to think about the repercussions of that now.

"I'll try to make this brief," Marvolo said, his voice cold and dripping with venom. "After all, this train doesn't have long left."

Ulric smirked cruelly at those words, and Harry couldn't imagine what else Marvolo had in store. Harry didn't really want to know either, but he didn't think he had a choice.

"You're here to kill me, aren't you?" Harry managed to answer, and Marvolo's eyes flashed over.

Marvolo's face was half-covered with a mask, and Harry could only assume that his attack on the man at the hospital had left serious damage. Surely Marvolo wouldn't forgive that, no matter how obsessed with Harry he might be.

"Not you; just your friends," Marvolo replied casually, sounding as though he might be commenting on the weather. Heather tensed behind him, and he noticed Draco and Luna shifting uncomfortably.

"What's up with the mask?" Harry pressed on, his eyes darting all over the compartment to try and find some source of escape. Marvolo, like Voldemort and Tom, liked to talk; a flaw that could be taken advantage of, and the more Harry kept Marvolo distracted, the more likely they could find a chance for escape.

Marvolo lifted a hand to his face, peeling the silver covering away from his face. The skin underneath was slightly different colour than the other side, with twists and raised lines trailing across it, and the corner of his eye was drooping slightly.

"Ah yes; the damage you caused," Marvolo nodded, while Harry ruled out the door and the walls for escape; who knew how thick the walls were to blast through. "I happen to be skilled in the art of healing, so the burns weren't able to cause much damage or disfiguration, though, naturally, it was not entirely unavoidable."

"Makes you look more fearful," Ulric added gruffly.

"Can't you see I'm talking?" Marvolo snapped at the werewolf, before turning his attention behind
Harry and onto Luna.

"So why not kill me rather than my friends?" Harry asked quickly, trying to step more in front of Heather in the limited room they had. As much he liked Draco and Luna, his sister was his priority. As Heather moved to accommodate the change in Harry's position, her foot pressed onto the glass of the window, and Harry noticed the distance from the viaduct was, though small, just big enough that they could fit through if the glass was blasted away. The only problem was distracting Marvolo and Ulric.

"Your friends and family will be tortured and killed as your punishment for this," Marvolo answered, gesturing at his face. "This is also the reason you will be kept alive. I once believed you were nothing but a whore who spread his legs for anything pretty, but with a power deep inside of you that you weren't aware of. I wanted to harness that power for myself, but I now realise I was mistaken, and that you are very much aware of the power and magic. I must first break you before I can control it, and trust me, Harry, I will break you and torture you in ways you cannot even imagine, until you are nothing but my mindless puppet. Now to begin your torture, who should I kill first? The wolf, perhaps, or blondie standing next to him?"

Marvolo raised his wand, and acting without thinking, Harry swung one hand upwards towards the doorway, trusting that his magic would know what to do, and pointed his wand towards the window, smashing the glass and blasting Marvolo and Ulric backwards at the same time.

Yes, the gap in the window was small, but Heather and Luna were certainly small enough to fit through with ease, and he and Draco shouldn't have a problem either.

"Quick!" Harry urged, pushing Heather lightly. "Go before he comes back! I'll be right behind you."

Heather looked unsure, but Luna tugged at her hand and the two girls sat on the edge together, casting worried looks behind them before sliding through and fleeing into the water.

A hand grasped at the doorway above them, and Draco cast a look at Harry, seeming both unsure and desperate to escape at the same time.

Harry nodded to let Draco know it was okay to go first; at least Marvolo wouldn't kill Harry if he caught him. Draco took a deep breath and lowered himself through the gap, dropping into the water below.

Harry's heart was pounding heavily in his chest, echoing through his ears. He didn't want to fall the distance, or go into the water, but he couldn't risk Marvolo abducting him.

He knelt on the floor, ready to slide through the gap, but then the compartment shook as somebody jumped inside, and a body tackled Harry to the floor. Harry managed to twist somewhat as he fell, and the person on top of him forced Harry's body off his side and onto his back until they landing with Ulric crouching over Harry.

Ulric was beastly, with unnatural sharp teeth and wild amber eyes, and drool spilled from his lips as he gazed hungrily down at Harry.

Through the corner of his eye, Harry saw Marvolo drop into the compartment, and forgetting his wand and running entirely on adrenaline, Harry brought his knee up into Ulric's crotch, causing the man to growl in pain.

Oddly enough, Harry was helped by Marvolo, who was pulling Ulric off Harry at the same time,
telling the man to get off 'his prey'. In the confusion of the situation, Harry managed to jump to his feet, kick out at Marvolo's legs, and send a Stinging Hex into Marvolo's eyes. It wasn't much, but Harry was speedy, and took the momentary distraction to grab hold of the doorway and pull himself up, kicking at the person who grabbed his legs. He felt a spell brush past him as it narrowly missed him, but then he was in the upturned corridor of the train.

Knowing he didn't have long to choose what to do next, Harry cast a quick look at both ends of the train. One end was open, the train having been torn apart, and the other had thick flames and billowing smoke coming from it, meaning Harry really only had one choice.

He sprinted towards the open exit, jumping over the doorways as he went. He leapt over the jagged metal of the ruined train, dodging the wires that had been caused from the split, and breathed in deeply as the fresh air hit him. His heart was pounding even heavier than before, and he just seemed to be running on adrenaline and energy.

There were people on what was now the roof of the train, with bronze masks covering half of their faces as some sort of contrast to the mask Marvolo wore. They were firing spells into the water, where obviously a lot of students had escaped to.

Harry heard footsteps behind him, so he ran again, going around the back of the train and throwing Stunning Spells at the people on the roof to stop them cursing the students. A man jumped down in front of him, but Harry Stunned him before the man could even think about cursing him.

Just when he thought he was on a spree, a body collided with him from above, and a large man was pressing him into the track which dug into Harry painfully; not to mention the heavy weight on top of him made him feel like he was being crushed.

The man grabbed Harry's wand off him, and Harry started to struggle until he felt a sharp metal tip at the back of his neck.

"Off him!" a voice screeched, and Harry had been saved by Marvolo once again. "He is mine! How many times do I have to tell you morons?"

"Sorry, boss," the man muttered as he got off Harry and clambered to his feet. "I didn't know it was him."

Harry jumped to his feet and wrestled his wand out of the large man's hand, Stunning him and blasting him off the bridge.

"He'll drown, you know," Marvolo commented, not sounding like he cared in the slightest, and honestly, Harry didn't either. "Now what are you going to do? You can't run forever."

No, he couldn't, and he raised his wand as Marvolo raised his.

But then an echo of cracks sounded through the area, and then there were people on brooms above the water, and people further down the track, breaking down the shield on the train.

Marvolo roared in anger, turning and casting the Killing Curse at one of the random wizards. Despite knowing Marvolo would be able to break it in mere seconds, Harry cast Incarcerous at the Dark wizard and dived off the bridge without a second thought, squeezing his eyes shut as the forceful wind hit his face.

He didn't know if the new arrivals were Voldemort's followers or the Order of the Phoenix, but he trusted somebody would be there to help him out of the water before he drowned.
And he was in luck; almost as soon as he hit the water a hand grasped hold of him and pulled him onto a broom. He recognised the rider as Tonks, though her usually bright and cheerful eyes were serious and angry.

"There's a Portkey to Hogwarts here," Tonks informed him, her tone sounded gentler than her expression. She reached into her pocket and pressed a small key into Harry's hand.

Before it activated, Harry heard Marvolo's scream of rage, heard an explosion with a bang so loud it rattled his ears, but then Harry was gone, landing roughly in the Great Hall.

The landing was rough on Harry's already abused body, and all the pain that had been forgotten came rushing back to him.

His head stung from where it had slammed against the glass earlier, and his body just hurt.

Judging from the looks of the other students, Harry's injuries weren't all too bad. There were people covered in blood, and others with limbs twisted the wrong way round, and there were definitely far less people than there should have been.

Harry jerked when a hand touched his shoulder, but he calmed down when he met his father's fierce hazel gaze.

"Dad? Where's Heather? Is she okay?" Harry asked, firing questions at James, and Harry felt a tension he didn't know was there leave him when James nodded.

"She's fine," his dad said with a faint smile. "Just a few cuts and bruises, but she was healed in an instant. How are you? Is anything hurt?" James pressed a hand gently against the cut on Harry's forehead, and he seemed to relax when Harry shook his head. "I'll get your mum to take a look at you in a minute."

Harry expected James to leave, but he didn't, and instead led Harry to a bench and sat beside him, and wrapped his arm tightly around Harry's shoulder.

"His brother?" James asked quietly. Harry nodded, and the grip around his shoulder clenched, but soon relaxed once more. James moved his head down rested his cheek against the top of Harry's head, and Harry felt safer than he had in a while.

Lily bustled over soon after, her wand already out and scanning Harry for injuries. She was one of what looked like three people helping Madame Pomfrey, and other professors were filtering in and out of the students to help as well.

Harry's mother pressed a Pain-Relieving potion into his hands to drink, and swabbed something on his head which made the stinging sensation on it go away.

"Your dad will look after you, sweetheart," Lily said gently. "I'll be around here if you need me."

Lily made to move towards a student who was cradling a bloodied arm to her chest, but then Tonks appeared in the middle of the crowds, her robes splattered with the blood.

"The train exploded," she whispered in a hushed tone, but her voice seemed to carry to the far ends of the hall. "All the attackers disappeared and everyone else up there must be dead." Then Tonks collapsed, and Lily and another witch ran towards her to help.

"It was a trap," James mouthed, his eyes heavy with despair.
Unsure quite what to do to comfort his father, Harry threw his arm around James' middle and buried his face into his chest, hoping that it would make his dad feel better, even though Harry could no longer feel the warmth of his father's embrace.

Harry wanted to cry, to scream in rage, to do anything, but he just couldn't do it. So many people had died, and so many were injured, most still considered children in the eyes of the world, and deep down, Harry was upset and desperate to grieve, but it felt like there was a blockage within him, stopping those emotions from getting out.

Or perhaps not a blockage, but a hole that his emotions couldn't cross. A hole where a part of his soul had been, only to be ripped away and placed in some inhuman object and locked away from everything. Harry couldn't even feel regret.

But then it hit. All the emotions that had been trapped within him all broke through at once, and Harry quite literally burst into tears, the tears spilling from his eyes fast and flowing before he even knew what was happening.

James' arms both wound around him instantly, and he began muttering soothing things in Harry's hair, and though Harry couldn't actually pay attention to what was being said, the tone was comforting.

It was strange; like a dam had burst inside him, with the brickwork giving way to all of his emotions, but he could feel himself trying to close back up, and his cries turned to light sobs as he got control over himself after a few minutes.

"Just breathe through it," James was murmuring. "You're safe; I've got you."

Harry nodded into his father's chest, focusing on his breathing and the rise and fall of his chest. He felt better now, the sorrow inside him there, but neither impossibly strong nor hidden deep inside. It was as though he had been pulled and stretched to both extremes, only to be snapped back to his normal state.

"Attention, students," Professor McGonagall's voice rang through the hall. "Can those who are able to please line up in both house and year order. Thank you."

Soft murmuring ran through the hall at this clear attempt to check who was safe and who was still missing. Harry wondered if anyone he knew would be gone.

"Are you alright to go?" James asked Harry gently, and Harry lifted his head up from his dad's chest.

"I'm fine," Harry nodded, offering his father a shaky smile. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, and James ruffled Harry's hair, which always got a proper grin out of the both of them.

"We'll be around for a while. You and Heather know where me and Mum are if you need us," James said, getting to his feet and offering Harry a hand to help pull him up.

Harry passed Luna on the way, saw Draco standing with Pansy and Blaise, and saw Ginny and Heather just in front of him, and he felt relief at knowing at least all of his friends were okay. Parvati Patil was the only one missing from the other sixth year Gryffindors, but her absence seemed to weigh heavy over the Gryffindors in his year. Lavender was sobbing hysterically,
clinging to an awkward looking Ron, and nobody knew quite what to say. There was a chance she was still alive, but that chance was very slim.

McGonagall passed by them solemnly. Her lips pressed into thin lines, and her knuckles were clenched tightly around a piece of parchment that she was scrawling names onto. Her eyes were filled with grief, and she patted Lavender's shoulder gently to try and soothe the girl.

Nobody seemed to be speaking, and the only sounds were the footsteps of the professors and the sobbing of the students. The sky in the ceiling above was stormy and bleak, and even the ghosts floated around silently, watching the scene in distress.

Everyone turned to the doors when they pulled open, and Dumbledore walked through them briskly, his purple robes floating dramatically behind him, the bright colour a strong contrast to the atmosphere in the hall.

"You are free to do as you wish now," the Headmaster announced, looking around at them all mournfully. "Please remain in the castle, but of course, you are otherwise at liberty to recover in any way you need. Professors and Aurors will be available at all times for both security and support, so please do not be afraid of speaking up if you need help. A special assembly will be arranged for tomorrow evening, but for now, take the time for yourselves."

It was strange, hearing the sadness in Dumbledore's voice, for he always seemed so cheerful, but now he sounded like a weary old man, nothing like the man Voldemort was afraid of.

The group of students started to disperse, and Harry decided to join the majority who were heading out of the Great Hall. He thought it would be too risky to try and get to Tom tonight; the students were likely being monitored, and Tom would probably be busy with Voldemort anyway, so Harry was perfectly happy to collapse in his bed and try and sleep this living nightmare away.

Or so the plan was, until Harry saw Dumbledore beckon him to him.

"Harry, may I please have a word in my office?" Dumbledore asked pleasantly, but a wave of dread washed over Harry despite the friendly tone.

A million thoughts ran through Harry's head all at once. Did Dumbledore somehow know Harry had created a Horcrux? Did he know about Tom? Or was it far less dangerous, and had somebody simply seen Harry with Marvolo and so the Headmaster just wanted to interview him about that? Or was he going to be blamed for the attack?

Harry couldn't picture any scenario going well, so he mutely followed Dumbledore down the corridor, trying to ignore the mumbled whispers coming from the ancient stone walls.

Harry wondered if perhaps splitting his soul had sent him crazy, or if Marvolo had once again trapped him in a nightmare. But though it seemed a nightmare, the faint throbbing of pain in Harry's body told him that he was very much awake, and being aware of the reality only seemed to make everything feel worse.

Harry followed Dumbledore all the way to the Headmaster's office, quietly taking a seat when Dumbledore offered one.

The elderly wizard took his customary seat opposite Harry, his eyes only somewhat twinkling behind his half-moon spectacles.

"Lemon drop?" Dumbledore offered, but Harry shook his head, feeling far too nauseous to eat.
Dumbledore took a lemon drop for himself nonetheless, and then linked his hands on the desk, with his ring facing towards Harry; that surely had to be deliberate.

"What's wrong, Professor?" Harry asked cautiously, and the dread increased as the twinkle completely vanished from Dumbledore's eyes.

"Far too much, my dear boy," Dumbledore answered sadly, observing Harry as he spoke. "I'm afraid I must ask you for some information that I am aware you would rather keep to yourself, and you may do so if you wish, but it would help my greatly if you could comply."

Harry nodded, feeling sicker with each passing second. Dumbledore clearly knew more than Harry had realised, and Harry should have known that his Occlumency shields could never stand up to Dumbledore. As much as Tom hated to admit it, Dumbledore really was the most powerful wizard alive, but considering how frail and weak the man looked, he wouldn't be alive for much longer. Harry at least hoped Dumbledore wasn't going to die any time soon, or else the Light side really would be in chaos.

"What Horcrux is this new variant of Tom Riddle from?" Dumbledore asked bluntly, and Harry winced.

"The diadem," Harry replied after a moment, seeing no point in denying anything. Contrary to Tom's feelings towards Dumbledore, Harry didn't actually hate the elderly Headmaster.

"So the diary and the diadem have been released, and the ring destroyed, which leaves Nagini, the cup, and the locket," Dumbledore mused thoughtfully. "I gather the Tom from the diadem isn't on the side of Voldemort and the Tom from the diary?"

"No, and his name is Marvolo Slytherin," Harry told the Headmaster, staring at the ring on Dumbledore's finger. Would Harry be able to just grab it off the man's finger, give it to Voldemort, and then save his family from at least one murderous maniac?

"Ah," Dumbledore nodded understandingly. "Now the other Tom; the one I believe you are most acquainted with, how is he faring with Lord Voldemort?"

"He's trying to kill him," Harry said, bringing his eyes back to Dumbledore's face. "But he's getting his Horcruxes into a place where you and Neville will be able to destroy them."

"Clever, but I never expected anything less," Dumbledore mused. "Harry, I must stress how dangerous Tom Riddle can be, however for now, he is a lesser threat than both Lord Voldemort and this Marvolo Slytherin. May I ask you to pass on a message to Tom? I don't believe a truce between us both would work, however if he and I may work together through you to help bring both Voldemort and Slytherin to justice, it would greatly benefit the Wizarding world. I would also allow him to peacefully leave the country, with the promise of never returning, if he assisted the Light side in this."

"Why would he do that?" Harry queried; surely Dumbledore knew what Tom was like? Tom might side somewhat with Dumbledore to kill his alternate selves faster, but he wouldn't just run away to some desert island afterwards. Harry, on the other hand, would much prefer that option, but he doubted Tom would agree.

"Because he now has you to influence him," Dumbledore said with a small smile, the twinkle returning to his eyes.

"I guess I can ask," Harry shrugged, his eyes falling back to the ring on Dumbledore's injured
finger. "Why aren't I in trouble?" Harry pressed on, curiosity getting the better of him. The old Headmaster clearly knew at least some of what Harry was involved in, so why wasn't Harry being strapped down and tortured for information on the Dark Lord?

"When I was a young man, I fell in love with one of my dearest friends," Dumbledore answered carefully, watching Harry intently. "I am afraid that love blinded me, and my friend took advantage of that, prompting me to do terrible things. That man, as you may know, was Gellert Grindewald. Eventually I chose to do the right thing, though the consequences were tragic, and had I changed sooner, that would have been avoided. You still have time to change, Harry, and I believe you will. You have a good heart and a good family, and for Tom to allow you into his life as he has done makes me believe that the part of him that is good has opened up for you, ready for you to find. You can save two lives; it is not too late."

Dumbledore really couldn't know everything; how else could he think that both Harry and Tom had goodness left in them? Tom had killed for years without once feeling remorse or guilt, and Harry had allowed that Darkness in Tom to filter into him, too. Surely Dumbledore had to know that? How could he find goodness in everybody? It was that hope that would be the man's downfall.

Harry and Dumbledore sat in silence for a few moments, with Harry not quite sure how to act. Should he argue? Should he make a grab for the ring? Should he grovel?

As he was debating his options, Dumbledore cleared his throat and pushed his chair backwards.

"You are free to return to your dormitory," the Headmaster said with a sorrowful frown. "I am sorry to bring all of this on you at such a time, but I will once again be away for a few days, so I needed to ask now to help in our investigation."

"That's okay," Harry answered quietly, getting to his feet.

He made to walk towards the door to leave, but he couldn't go; not yet.

"Voldemort wants the Hallows," Harry said, and Dumbledore didn't look surprised. "He wants me to get your ring; otherwise he's going to kill my family."

The Headmaster studied Harry for a moment, and then slid the ring off his darkened finger and held it out towards Harry, and Harry couldn't believe what his eyes were seeing.

"Do not wear it, in case the curse is still lingering," Dumbledore warned him. "But tell Lord Voldemort the Resurrection Stone is his."

X
Warnings for self-harm mentions and sex. I felt like writing angry sex between Tom and Harry, so that's what you're getting. If rough sex isn't your thing, feel free to skip the end of the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

X

Harry returned straight to his dorm room after his meeting with Dumbledore, planning entirely on sleeping until everything finally started to make sense again.

Tom and Voldemort could wait. There would be so much difficulty in trying to sneak out of Hogwarts now that there were tighter security measures in place, and Harry just couldn't be bothered to risk it tonight.

He didn't even bother to conceal his scowl after seeing the pitying look that Neville and Hermione were giving him, and instead stormed up to his room, placed the ring under his pillow, and drew the curtains shut around his bed. Harry was asleep almost instantly, the stress of the day having exhausted him without him even realising it.

Unfortunately for Harry, he woke up what only seemed like minutes later.

It had almost felt like his bed had been shaking, but everything seemed to be back to normal now.

At least, it was until he heard Seamus shout something incoherent.

Harry blinked the sleep out of his eyes and yanked his curtains back, the dark sky outside the window revealing he must have been asleep for two hours at least.

Seamus was standing by the window, staring open-mouthed out of it.

Harry heard the other boys open their curtains too, and, realising something must have happened to make them all wake up, he opened his mouth to ask Seamus what was wrong, but his words were drowned out by a loud bang that echoed off the stone walls and made the floor shake violently.

They all scrambled to Seamus's side, where clearly visible in the distance were bright orange flames and thick black smoke spreading across the landscape, clear despite the night sky.

"What is that?" Dean muttered astounded, his voice still sleepy though his eyes were wide and alert.

Seamus shrugged, but they all turned with a start when footsteps echoed outside their door.

The door swung open, revealing Hermione in a pink dressing gown and with her hair bushier than usual. She ran over to them, covering her mouth with her hand as she took in the sight of the flames.
"That's Hogsmede!" she whispered, horrified.

It was impossible to see what was going on from how far away they were, but the fire seemed to be spreading, and muffled screams were being carried down the wind.

Harry felt so useless, standing in his dorm room while watching people lose their homes and possible their lives. How was so much evil happening in such a short space of time? Harry, like any teenager would, hadn't truly realised how serious the war was, but now it seemed like the Wizarding World was crumbling before their very eyes.

Green smoke started to rise into the air, forming into the shape of a snake and skull, and Ron swore loudly.

So Voldemort hadn't wanted to be outdone. That had to be it; Marvolo struck the Hogwarts Express, so Voldemort struck the village just outside of the school. If the two Dark Lords could attack the children, the parents would panic, and chaos would descend from the inside. They didn't need to get inside Hogwarts to ruin it.

Neville suddenly gasped loudly, clutching his hands over his forehead. His eyes seemed to roll back in his head, and Ron grabbed hold of him, dragging him off to the side and shaking his shoulders.

Harry tore his attention off Neville and back onto the destruction of Hogsmede. His eyes fell on the Dark Mark that was glittering in the sky; it was almost as if the blank holes for eyes were truly there, staring right into the fractured piece of his soul.

Yes, the Wizarding World was falling apart, and Harry knew now more than ever that he had to do everything he could to ensure that the sole victor was Tom.

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The following morning, the mood throughout Hogwarts was tense and sombre.

Students walked to the Great Hall in tight packs, whispering in hushed tones with one another, and glancing around nervously.

Dumbledore gave an inspirational as he could speech, but the task was made more difficult by the constant flow of students leaving the Great Hall while owls dropped constant letters, all requests of parents for their children to pack their things ready to leave. Harry couldn't understand why they would want their children to leave; now they were actually inside Hogwarts, they were as safe as they could be, from Voldemort at least.

Draco caught Harry's eye and inclined his head, and when they were finally able to leave the Hall, Draco and Luna hung back. Thankfully Harry got the hint, and also took his time, meeting up with the pair once everyone else had departed for their Common Rooms.

"Do you want to go for a walk?" Draco asked, and Harry nodded.

"Not outside," he answered; it just didn't feel safe to leave the confines of the castle walls.

Draco nodded in agreement, and slid his hand into Luna's. Luna gave Harry a serene smile, her eyes gazing lovingly up at Draco. Despite everything that had happened, seeing Draco and Luna so happy and comfortable together seemed to put Harry at ease.

They walked silently through the deserted hallways, until they came across a classroom that was
far away from every House location, which would save students seeing them and wonder what they were doing.

"Mother sent me a letter," Draco told Harry as Luna placed Silencing Charms on the door. "The Dark Lord was apparently furious that the Wizarding World's attention was on the train attack which was perpetrated by somebody else, so he got the Death Eaters to invade everyone's home in Hogsmede and kill the occupants in their sleep before blowing up the village."

"Did anyone survive?" Harry asked, although he had a sinking suspicion he already knew the answer.

"No," Draco answered, confirming what Harry had suspected. "The Aurors didn't get there fast enough."

"Nobody will feel safe anymore," Luna added, her eyes sorrowful. "Really, the Dark side have already won; all they need to do now is take out the people who might take their prize away from them."

"The Ministry is falling, and the prisons and hospitals are already lost," Draco agreed. "Once the school goes, the Light have nothing but their determination."

"But it's been a joint effort between two Dark Lords," Harry reminded them. "They won't exist peacefully side by side forever, and sooner or later they will attack each other, and that gives the Light side an advantage."

"And Tom will be waiting until that moment, won't he?" Luna nodded, twirling a lock of her dirty blonde hair around her finger. "They all underestimate him because he's young, but that means nothing. Patience is Tom's weapon."

"He will win," Harry said confidently, though his inner feelings did not reflect that statement. He knew Tom was powerful and determined, but Marvolo and Voldemort were both forces to be reckoned with. With Dumbledore weakening, the Light side didn't really stand a chance, but Marvolo wanted Tom dead, and Voldemort would as soon as he didn't need Tom any longer. "What will happen if the school shuts before you complete your task?"

The thought hadn't occurred to Harry until just now, but Draco didn't look thoughtful; rather he looked away quickly.

"Draco?" Harry pressed on, and the Slytherin pulled his gaze back to Harry.

"Before we left for Christmas, Luna and I went to the room to have some, ah, alone time, but Luna had a sudden idea about the Cabinet," Draco answered quietly. "We-we managed to fix it."

"And I take it Voldemort doesn't know?" Harry questioned; keeping that from Voldemort over the holidays must have been dreadful for Draco.

"No," Draco shook his head. "If I let Death Eaters in, then I have to kill Dumbledore on the same night. I'm- I'm not ready for that at the moment. I want to be; I need to be, but I just can't do it yet."

"Couldn't your mother hide? Your dad is wanted by Voldemort anyway, so why not the both of them? Then you don't have the pressure; I could get Tom to keep you safe," Harry told the other boy, doubting his own words; Tom would only ever do what he wanted, and he didn't care for Draco.

"No; we'd lose everything," Draco said, hanging his head. "The manor, our gold, everything; it
would all go to Aunt Bellatrix, and she would hand it over to the Dark Lord in an instance. No, I have to prepare myself; it's the only way."

Draco sighed, and wrapped his arm around Luna, who rested her head on his shoulder. They seemed so serene and peaceful, and for a fleeting moment, Harry wished he could have a normal relationship where he could just hug somebody and feel safe and warm, but he couldn't imagine what things would be like without Tom. Harry knew that their relationship was twisted, and as much as Tom claimed he could be, Harry was never going to be equal to Tom, but his love for Tom only seemed to grow stronger day by day. Harry just hoped that was enough to keep him going while everything else Harry knew was shattering around him.

X

The week seemed to move on slowly.

Classes resumed on the Tuesday, with Dumbledore deciding that if they were going to fight to keep Hogwarts open, then they should treat it like a school rather than a sanctuary. Returning to lessons, even in smaller numbers, allowed a lot of the students to continue on as normal; their pretence that everything was okay in some ways allowed them to believe that that was the truth. Harry knew that deep down, nobody really believed it, but it was a coping mechanism for them.

Harry couldn't quite understand how some people could laugh and chat when people from their dormitory had been dragged from Hogwarts by their parents, or when people they used to see on a daily basis had perished in the train attack.

It was strange; Harry seemed to go through phases where he'd be upset but coping, while other times he felt strangely apathetic, but it angered him to see other people with that same void. Harry wasn't sleeping well either; he'd been having nightmares about the attack on the train, hearing the screams of the dying students echo through his head. Sometimes when he woke up, he would still hear them screaming and begging for help.

It was no doubt a mix of both his lack of sleep and anger that finally made him snap on Friday morning.

He arrived in the Great Hall just in time to see Heather sprinting out of it.

Harry would have gone after her, had he not seen the look of revulsion on Seamus's face as he watched Heather leave.

Feeling far braver than he could ever remember when speaking to his classmates, Harry stormed over to Seamus and demanded to know what he had said to Heather to upset her so much.

"She's got cuts all up her arm," the sandy-haired boy had replied with a tone of disgust. "I don't want anything to do with a nutcase."

Harry could feel the eyes of what felt like everybody staring at them, listening. Heather must have felt humiliated.

How had Seamus had the nerve to mock Heather in public like that? People were dying, and all he cared about was mindless gossip. Had he even considered to try and help Heather? True, Harry hadn't either, but that was because he didn't know how. At least he hadn't shunned a girl who clearly needed support.

Harry's fist smashed into Seamus's nose before he could even think about what he was doing.
He heard everyone around them gasp, and heard Seamus's howl of pain, but all Harry could focus on was the warm blood that was dripping down onto his clenched fingers.

Harry shivered as a wave of lust washed over him, before dissolving into horror. Merlin, how had that felt good, if only for a minute?

Harry spun around and ran from the Great Hall, ignoring McGonagall calling after him.

Without even thinking about where he was going, Harry ran as fast as he could to Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, hitting the door open so hard that it swung and hit the wall with a loud bang.

Heather was sat between two sinks, slouching against the wall with her knees drawn to her chest and arms folded on top of them. Her face was buried in her arms, and she didn't even look up at the sound of the door slamming open.

Myrtle was watching mournfully with pearly white tears flowing silently down her cheeks.

"Heather," Harry announced softly, moving over to kneel in front of his sister. "It's alright, Heather; if anyone says anything to you they'll regret it."

Heather didn't respond, so Harry placed a hand over one of hers, moving his fingers in circles.

"I already knew," Harry continued, feeling the need to fill the silence. "I found out just before the Christmas holidays, but I didn't know what to say or do, and I didn't want Mum to hear anything. I'm sorry I didn't try hard enough to help you. I should have done something."

"No, you shouldn't have," Heather said finally, looking up at Harry with teary eyes. "It's my problem; you shouldn't have to worry about me."

"You're my little sister; of course I'm going to worry," Harry said firmly, managing to produce a shaky smile for Heather. "I just don't like to see you hurting like this."

Heather didn't answer, instead gazing into space.

"It's just so difficult," she said after a moment, her voice quiet and distant. "There was so much pressure to be perfect, and I couldn't take it anymore. I had all of these friends, and was doing so well in lessons, but it had to stay that way, and after the end of last year, it just got ever harder. I know Romilda is probably dead, no matter what Tom says, and all of these other people just keep dying, and I feel so selfish for doing this to myself when other people are suffering, but I don't know any other way to cope anymore."

"You're not selfish," Harry stated quietly. "We're a world at war, and you've had to grow up so fast to deal with it; I've seen how you've changed this year, and not just you; all of us. You're fourteen, Heather; nobody expects you to be an adult, even if it feels like you have to be. You don't have to talk to me if you don't want to, but please, I'm asking you as your brother, please talk to somebody. I'm not expecting you to stop right away, but the thought of you feeling the need to hurt yourself, well, it's difficult to think about. Nobody should eve feel that way about themselves; you're better than that."

Heather nodded, leaning forwards to wrap her arms around Harry. They stayed like that for a while, Harry allowing Heather to cry into his shoulder until she felt at least somewhat better.

But there was that rage bubbling again, a newfound hatred for Seamus coursing through his veins. Seamus had made a mockery of Heather, which meant he had made a mockery of Harry too; Seamus had to pay.
It took Harry far too long to realise that those twisted thoughts in his head were speaking to him in Tom's voice.

X

Another night passed without Harry sleeping well, and on Saturday morning he woke up with a desperate urge to see Tom.

He hadn't minded not seeing Tom for a few days, but all of a sudden he seemed to miss the man terribly, but had no idea how he would get about going to Malfoy Manor. The only option he could think of was to ask his dad, who was still helping in the castle on Order duty, to help him sneak out.

On his way through the dungeons to get the Portkey from Draco, he spotted Heather and Theodore Nott talking in hushed tones with one another. Theo had a hand over his covered wrist, which made Harry imagine they could only be talking about one thing. Harry liked Theo, and if Heather had chosen to confide in the quiet Slytherin, Harry really had no issues with it.

Harry used the Marauder's Map to ensure that his mother wasn't around; he doubted she would let Harry leave, and then knocked on the door to the room his dad was staying in.

James smiled when he answered the door, and quickly ushered Harry inside.

"Everything alright?" his dad asked, and Harry nodded, deciding to cut to the chase.

"I want to see Tom," he said bluntly, and James blinked. "I have a Portkey, but I need you to cover for me if anyone asks."

"Do you want your mum to kill me?" James muttered, but he sighed and nodded. "You know, in my day, we used to sneak out of Hogwarts to do things much more fun. Listen, just be back by the morning."

"Thank you," Harry grinned, hugging his father tightly before activating the Portkey. He hadn't told Tom he was coming, but he didn't think Tom would be too busy that he'd have to send Harry away. Besides, he had the ring for Voldemort, plus the amulet still needed activating, so it wasn't like his trip would be wasted on the off-chance Tom wasn't available.

The Manor was quiet when Harry arrived so he called for Dobby, who gladly led him to where Tom and Voldemort were. Harry genuinely did like the House-elf, and he felt sorry for Dobby having to work for a family who abused him and treated him like dirt.

"Dobby will inform Sirs of your arrival," Dobby told Harry, and Harry was surprised when Voldemort answered the door rather than Tom.

The Dark wizard seemed to look more threatening than usual, towering over Harry and looking down at him with flashing crimson eyes.

Thankfully, Harry had had the ring in his pocket, and brought it out into the light for Voldemort to see before the man could question why he was there.

Voldemort snatched it off him, the skin of his fingers icy cold against Harry's. The Dark Lord turned the ring over in his grasp, presumably checking that it was genuine.

"How did you come by it?" Voldemort snapped, and once again, Harry was relieved that he was prepared.
"Dumbledore gave it to Neville, and I stole it from him in our dorm room," Harry lied. He didn't think Voldemort believed him, but the man said nothing and stalked back into the room, with Harry close on his tail before the door shut in his face.

Tom glanced up at Harry, but quickly turned his attention back onto the book he was reading. Voldemort was handing the amulet out to Harry, making Tom's reaction understandable.

Harry took the amulet from Voldemort, careful not to touch the ice cold skin of the Dark wizard again, and shut his eyes, allowing waves of natural magic to wash over the amulet. Harry snapped his eyes open when the amulet began to shake, watching in awe as it glowed gold, sending glittering dust falling to the floor.

As the colour and shaking died down, Voldemort snatched it off Harry and placed it around his own neck until it disappeared beneath his robes.

Tom caught Harry's eye, and Harry read the smirk behind the gaze; he had almost forgotten Tom had cursed the amulet.

"Dismissed," Voldemort stated with a wave of his hand, and Harry was quick to comply before Voldemort's mood changed for the worst.

He heard Tom get up and follow him, but the man said nothing until they reached their bedroom.

Harry was about to say something, but as he crossed over into the threshold of the room, the whispering started again. Unlike the other times, when the words were hard to make out, this time he could hear what the whispers were saying clearly.

"Wardrobe. Wardrobe," the voice said, and Harry had no idea what it meant until his eyes focused on the tall mahogany wardrobe in the corner of the room.

Ignoring Tom's questioning look, Harry very nearly ran to the closet and grasped hold of the handle to open it.

He jumped back in shock when an obviously dead body crumpled at his feet.

"A gift for Nagini," Tom murmured, speaking for the first time. "Very freshly dead; she likes them warm." He waved his wand and sent the corpse back into the wood, shutting the door to block out the sight of murder.

"Tom, what's happening to me?" Harry asked, his voice smaller than intended. "What am I hearing?"

"I really have no idea what you mean, dear," Tom answered blandly, though his eyes were watching Harry intently.

"I hear whispers. I heard that-that man tell me where his body was," Harry told Tom, his voice hushed as though he daren't speak of it any louder.

"How long has it been happening for?" Tom questioned with mild interest.

"I don't know," Harry shrugged. He knew it hadn't been that long, but he couldn't remember the exact day. Oh wait-it had been when they visited the graveyard; the day after getting back from the Veil. "Fuck," Harry muttered, clutching his hands to the side of his head. "The Veil! They said there would be consequences for bringing Sirius back, and now I'm hearing the dead!" Harry groaned, hitting the sides of his head repeatedly.
"Calm down," Tom snapped. And there came that rage again.

"Don't tell me to calm down," Harry hissed, and Tom looked taken aback for a moment. "I have been hearing dead people whisper things to me. I have had Marvolo Slytherin try to kill my friends and attack me, and I have had these stupid emotions that go up and down and are starting to make me feel like I'm going crazy."

Harry's chest was heaving with anger, so how was Tom able to just stand there and look bored?

"For one, try listening closer to the whispers and see what they have to say. You obviously can handle yourself, otherwise you would be in Marvolo's clutches right now, and did you honestly expect to split your soul and have things carry on as normal?" Tom stated, his tone sharp as if he were a professor reprimanding Harry for a stupid mistake he had made in class.

"What? You knew this would happen?" Harry asked, shocked, and Tom looked at him as if he was an idiot.

"I didn't realise you wouldn't," Tom said plainly.

"How could I possibly know that?" Harry snapped, and with strength he didn't know he had, he stormed towards Tom and slammed him against the wall. "Why have you done this to me?"

Tom had the audacity to smirk. "You chose to create the Horcrux yourself, Harry. You killed for it, you split your soul. You're the one who allows your emotions to run away with themselves. You have nobody but yourself to blame."

"I hate you," Harry spat, punching his fists against Tom's chest. "I hate you so much."

"No you don't," Tom disagreed, and Harry let out a sob, because Tom was right. He couldn't hate Tom, no matter what Tom did or said. He needed Tom like he needed air, and he'd given him his heart and soul, and what Harry really hated was that he couldn't ever hate Tom, no matter what he did.

Feeling like he was about to burst into furious tears, Harry instead pushed up on his toes and kissed Tom hard.

Tom kissed him back harder.

No, Harry could never hate Tom, not when his kisses were as addicting as breathing, and when Tom's fingertips felt so good digging into Harry's skin. The mixture of pleasure and pain that Tom created in Harry was exhilarating and the only thing that remained the same in Harry's breaking world.

Harry let out a shout of surprise when Tom pushed out and switched their positions, shoving Harry into the wall face first, and pressed his chest against his back. Harry could feel Tom's arousal pressing into his lower back, grinding against him, and he groaned as Tom bit down hard on the lobe of his ear.

"You would be lost without me, darling," Tom hissed, pressing a hand against the back of Harry's head. "You would destroy yourself until you were nothing but a rotting carcass of flesh and bone. I guide your destruction to make you perfect for me."

Harry hissed as Tom pulled on Harry's hair to yank his head back, and then pushed his face back into the wall, not quite hard enough for anything to break, but still enough to send a jolt of pain across his forehead and nose.
"You. Need. Me," Tom hissed, slamming Harry's head against the wall after every word.

Ignoring the pain, Harry elbowed Tom sharply in the side and span himself around, grabbing the back of Tom's neck and pulled him into another bruising kiss. Tom was standing flush against Harry, his hands sneaking under the waistline of Harry's jeans and pressing his nails into the skin there.

Harry moaned and lifted his legs to wrap around Tom's waist, their clothed erections rubbing against each other frantically. Tom's hands moved to quickly tug Harry's jeans down and lower his own trousers, and then Tom's hands were grasping Harry's thighs and lifting him up slightly, dragging his sharp nails across the curve of Harry's arse.

Harry gasped and threw his head back against the wall as Tom entered him roughly. One of his hands grasped at the fabric on Tom's back, while the other pulled at the buttons of Tom's shirt, tugging until Tom's smooth skin was visible, the strikingly pale skin contrasting beautiful with the black of the shirt. Tom was like that though; a beautiful contrast between light and dark, and the body of an angel with a heart made from sin.

Harry pressed his hand hard against Tom's warm chest, his fingers clenching as Tom moved in and out of him furiously, filling Harry completely with Tom.

Tom dropped his head to attack Harry's neck, biting every inch of skin that was on offer. His cock was pounding roughly against Harry's prostate, biting down on Harry's neck time, giving him constant pleasure with jolts of blissful pain.

Harry closed his eyes, and then cold lips were on Harry's, a tongue forcing its way inside his mouth, plundering and domineering. He moaned into the kiss, thrusting his hips to meet Tom's, and then Tom bit down hard on Harry's lower lip, and a taste of copper filled Harry's mouth.

Tom sucked at the wound as he thrust harder, and once again the feeling of blood sent an unexplained wave of lust and arousal rushing through Harry.

He opened his eyes as he heard Tom hiss.

"Watch your claws, my dear," Tom said darkly, and Harry dropped his eyes to Tom's chest, where small droplets of blood had formed underneath Harry's fingers. Harry drew his hand back, licking the red from his fingertips. The claws, a result of his Animagus crawling out of him in the heat of the moment, sliced perfectly across his bitten lip, and Tom's mouth was back, claiming Harry and his blood once more.

Tom began to thrust even harder, the force of it slamming Harry's back into the wall every time. One of his hands stopped its clawing at Harry's thigh and wrapped around his cock instead, stroking him every time Tom slammed into Harry's prostate.

"You are mine!" Tom hissed. "You are nothing without me; you don't even have a soul to call your own. I complete you, and you belong to me!"

Harry released with a cry at Tom's words, spilling himself over Tom's fingers. Tom thrust violently as he came, filling Harry with his release. Tom bit back down on Harry's sore lip, tugging it into his mouth to suck on the wound.
As Tom pulled back, his hand dropped from Harry's thigh, and the other came up to Harry's face. Harry took the long digits into his mouth and licked his release off of them, and then Tom's fingers were gone and his mouth was back on Harry's.

"My corruption has changed you," Tom commented, pulling Harry's hand off his cut chest. "Your innocence is still there, always lingering, but the taint on your soul is divine."

"I thought you liked how innocent I used to be," Harry muttered, not sure if he truly meant the resentment in his tone.

Tom smiled darkly, pressing his fingers into the cut on Harry's lip.

"Your innocence was sweet, but my sin tastes sweeter."

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Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed the chapter. Next time, Tom will be revealing just how he feels about a certain fellow named Marvolo.

I always believed that creating a Horcrux isn't just a simple case of committing a horrific ritual and leaving it as that. There must be more to it than just one period of pain, otherwise every Dark witch and wizard would have Horcruxes. Rowling showed us how over the years, Tom's appearance changed with each Horcrux, and how he seemed to descend into insanity the more he split his soul (and Voldemort being both insane and a genius is what makes him so terrifying.)

So the emotional impact of splitting one's soul must be incredibly difficult to both live with and control. I feel sorry for Harry because the main reason he has a Horcrux is because Tom wanted him to have one, and what Tom wants, he gets. And of course Tom wasn't going to tell Harry all the horrible details about the impact of creating a Horcrux, because he couldn't risk Harry rejecting the idea. Tom was Harry's only source of information on how to do it, so everything Harry knew was just what Tom wanted him to know, and Harry accepted it because he trusted Tom.

So yes, I somehow ended up giving myself lots of TomxHarry shipper feels while writing this chapter.

And on a very wonderful note, how excited are you all about the new Harry Potter movie that Rowling is screenwriting for? I'm literally bouncing around with happiness.

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