Possession

by Jade Tatsu

Summary

It's Harry's Fifth Year, and the Dark Lord has been resurrected and Harry's summer doesn't go as planned. Sure he dreams of the Dark Lord, but his scar does not hurt. Voldemort knows what belongs to him and he has decided it is time to take possession but that may take longer than he thought, and lead to betrayals he never suspected. And with the power that he wields, who would dare?

Notes

Warning: This fic contains (and this list is limited) child abuse, hetero and homosexual non consensual and consensual sex, graphic descriptions of torture, rape and a whole host of other things.

If any of these things are going to bother you, click the back button now. I am not responsible for any distress reading this may cause.

Individual chapters DO NOT have individual warnings.

This is the first time this fic has been posted on AO3 but not the first time it's been posted elsewhere. So if you think you have seen it somewhere else, the answer is yep, probably.
He's Mine

Possession
Chapter I - He's Mine
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He's mine you know.

He's always been mine.

I'll admit, when I was younger and had far less understanding I wanted to kill him. I killed his father, I killed his mother and I would have killed him but for that woman's magic. I do not wish to kill him now.

I have changed. And with my change I can see the truth.

I need him. His power is the same as mine. I felt it when he was born. That Muggle loving fool Dumbledore felt it as well. I do not know the extent of his power. That is something I will examine when he stands by my side. He might be more powerful than me, he might be my equal or he may not be as powerful. I doubt that last though. With his bloodline I fail to see how that could be true. Still I no longer fear his power...

Fear... Yes, that's right. I did fear him, what he could become but no longer. He's mine and he will not hurt me.

I have evolved... I have grown... His power no longer concerns me except in that it is appropriate. I do not claim lesser beings. If I did not exist he would be the most powerful, stronger even than Dumbledore but he is mine and his power is mine so I am the one.

I have hurt him, I know but it has been necessary. Even for a Dark Lord there are certain expectations. One cannot be seen to go from hate to affection. He is mine. My Death Eaters know that and they will not touch him. Oh, they may hurt him but nothing that is irreversible. They will not kill him. They know he is mine and they think I have claimed that right for myself.

How little they know...

He is mine but the pleasure he will give me is not death. He will give me what I want. He will do so willingly. It might hurt but the pain will be the lesser part and he will enjoy it.

I have hurt him. I know he sees me when he sleeps. I know he sees me, I know he sees my followers. Does Dumbledore really think I was unaware of the connection between us, the connection I forged on that fateful night when a child reduced me, a full-fledged Dark Lord, to nothing? Does he really think that such an act would leave either of us unchanged?

I am aware of the bond. And I am aware of the pain my actions cause him. It is one of the reasons I have not yet attacked. I have been careful.

Careful with him.

They think I do not torture, do not kill because the victim is beneath my notice. Not so. I have restrained myself. It is an honour for me to kill but it is something for the moment I have refrained from. It hurts him. The pain the victim feels he feels and I do not want to damage my prize. In time it will no longer hurt but my restraint is necessary for now.
The things I have ordered my servants to do, the ceremonies I have allowed him to witness through our bond have all been for him. He learns. With everything that he sees he learns. It is fitting that I educate him while Dumbledore trains his magic, fitting, and necessary, for I cannot afford weakness when he stands by my side.

He will stand by my side. Lucius, the Lestrangers, Nott, Crabbe, Goyle, McNair, Avery, Snape, Parkinson, Zabini... They all seek my favour but he... He who almost killed me, he who holds power is the one who will stand by my side.

He is mine. He fights me now but it will not be much longer. The plan is in place. It is already moving forward. Each day he learns more of the truth and when he comes to seek me I will be ready. *He* will be ready to stand by my side. He has the knowledge. He took from me far more than my body and I will give him the desire.

It's beautiful really. The curse his mother rebounded back on to me required both her sacrifice and his power. And in surviving that curse the path was opened within him for more power. Powers not of this world but powers only one of his blood can wield. They say Salazar Slytherin's blood is dangerous. Hah! They never considered the powers of the other lines. There was a reason there are four Founders to Hogwarts. They all had their own powers but Gryffindor and Slytherin... two powers that were considered deadly. But only Slytherin's is reviled as such when Gryffindor's could destroy the world. That's why I wished to kill him. I knew this power would come to him. But in moving to kill him it was I who caused this path to be. In my time at Hogwarts I was considered the most brilliant student. I passed all of my classes easily. Perhaps they should note that I even passed Divination. I saw my death in his life. I saw the power he would wield but I did not see the path to that power.

How was I to know that I would be the cause? Ironic. But he is mine and his power will serve me.

Soon he will submit to me and I will show him the pleasures of darkness and he will take his place at my side. The Minister does not believe that I have returned. How dare he doubt my mate? Perhaps I will present the man's head to the boy as a gift. It's only what any good Dark Lord would give their leman at the moment of our ascension.

Soon not even that Muggle loving fool Dumbledore will stand in my way.

I have returned and soon he will be mine.

May the world tremble.
Vanishing Pain

Possession
Chapter II - Vanishing Pain
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In the smallest bedroom of Number 4 Privet St, Little Whingeing, fifteen-year-old Harry Potter started awake, breathing heavily. Gingerly he raised one hand to his forehead, rubbing his scar before tracing it out with one finger. It didn't hurt.

That was the problem...

Over the past weeks of summer, his scar had exhibited a dull throb and each night he usually awakened, muffling his cries as he clutched his head, desperate to ease the pain. But while the warmth of his hands brought some respite, nothing could stop the visions...

Voldemort... He was back and he was stronger than ever before.

Thanks to you...

Harry shook his head angrily. It wasn't thanks to him that the Dark Lord had returned. It wasn't! Dumbledore had told him as much. His friends spent the best parts of their letters trying to convince him it was fact.

Whose blood flows through his veins then? The voice of his conscious, the part that was determined to blame him, was merciless and seemed oddly amused by his efforts to deny its words.

"It's my fault," he whispered solemnly.

That's better... Doesn't it feel better?

"Yes." It did feel better... It always felt better when he agreed with the voice. It was his fault. Bringing back the Dark Lord was the least of his sins. Everything was his fault.

You should never lie to yourself, Harry.

Harry shook his head and the voice fell silent, as he was lost in the memory of his latest dream.

Voldemort had been lounging in his throne and the room had been dark but not so dark that Harry hadn't been able to sense the Dementors flanking the throne in some twisted parody of guards. Several masked Death Eaters had lined the walls at regular intervals but these one's weren't usual, their masks were blood red and their robes were crisp. These were Lord Voldemort's Elite. They weren't like Lucius, McNair and the others... Harry knew that... What he'd seen in his dreams all summer had shown him that.

Voldemort had several 'classes' of Death Eaters. There were the ones like Lucius and the others. Well known, respected people within the Wizarding Community but while they were loyal, to a point, their actions had caused suspicion to be cast upon them. Lord Voldemort knew that various people like Dumbledore knew they were his servants and if it ever came to it, Lucius and the others would be sacrificed without a second thought. But they were useful to him. They showed the wider world that he existed, no matter what the Ministry might be saying and they provided a means of recruiting.
The other Death Eaters though... They were far more dangerous. They were hidden and very few of them knew each other. Only Voldemort knew who they all were... Well... Only Voldemort and Harry Potter. While the boy didn't know their names, he knew their faces... He had seen them all summer, seen them torturing Muggles and Wizards with equal facility as their Master watched on. These Death Eaters though... They were useful to Voldemort, fanatically loyal and the fact that they were hidden and unknown added to the fear that surrounded his forces. Where Lucius and the others were known and could be guarded against, how could you guard against the unknown?

And tonight had been no different... Except his scar didn't hurt...

Two of the elites, their masks off but Harry didn't recognise them had been torturing a small family of Muggles while Voldemort had looked on with an indulgent expression, his blood red eyes strangely compelling. The two parents had screamed and pleaded but they were held firm by magical bounds created by one of the elites as the other had used various hexes and curses on their daughter. Crucio wasn't one though... The girl was no more than five, not old enough that her body could withstand the rigours of that particular curse for long and Harry knew, from night after night of experience that Voldemort never liked to cut his 'entertainment' short. That didn't stop him using it though, but only as a finale, to watch the child scream with pain that was nothing like the previous torture before the child drowned in its own blood, as their lungs collapsed, their body unable to endure any longer. And all this while the parents were forced to watch.

It was the blood, splattered over the child's face; pooled on the floor and smeared all over everything that was the worst. After watching for night after night, it was the blood that disturbed the parents the most and Harry was only thankful that most of them had slipped from sanity before their child was killed, so much so that very few ever struggled as they were sacrificed to the Dementors.

Tonight had been different though. Their eyes had been sane the whole time they had begged and pleaded that they be the ones to suffer, right up until then end when the mother had somehow broken loose of her restraints and intercepted the Crucius curse. She'd screamed, they all screamed but there had been a glow of triumph in her eyes as she had endured.

Harry had expected Voldemort to be in a rage but the Dark Lord had been amused and he hadn't even punished the Death Eater whose spells had failed to contain the woman. His eyes had lit with pleasure and his almost lipless mouth had creased in a grotesque smile. He'd banished the Curse as he looked closely at the woman and in a voice that had been chillingly cold but velvety smooth he'd spoken to her. It was the first time Harry could recall Voldemort talking to any Muggle all summer.

"It hurts, hmm?"

"...yes..." the woman managed to gasp, struggling weakly towards her daughter. She never got there. With a flick of his wand, Voldemort had re-established the magical bonds on her while her husband sobbed weakly.

"I have done this many times," he started again, ignoring the looks of revulsion both adults gave him. "And you are the first Muggle to ever break such bonds to respond to their child..." He congratulated the woman as she drew a shuddering breath. "I'll tell you what..." He broke off, laughing softly before he continued. "In recognition for your deed, I will allow your fates to be exchanged."

"You are going to kill us both!" The woman hissed, suddenly lucid and angry.

"No, no, no," the Dark Lord shook his head. "I wasn’t going to kill you at all," he reassured her. "I was going to kill your daughter and then, after playing with you a bit longer, I was going to let you go... But I am prepared to be generous. You are the first Muggle to break their bonds and as such deserve a reward."
"NO! Take me!" The husband had found his voice.

Voldemort had looked disdainfully at the man. "You," he said, the emphasis on the word clearly stating that he thought it a grave insult that he be forced to respond, "have done nothing but hang there. You do not deserve my mercy." He had turned back to the woman. "This is the only time I will make such an offer. Do you want your daughter to live?"

The woman didn't even consider it. What parent would, if offered a way to save their child? "You will not kill her?" she questioned again for reassurance.

"She will suffer the fate that was to await you," the Dark Lord responded.

"Then let me suffer her fate," the woman's voice was firm, no lingering trace of the Cruciatus curse evident.

"So be it," Voldemort said, gesturing towards the Dementors.

The two black robed beings glided forward, one heading towards the man who was now sagging in the bounds that held him, and the other went towards the small girl, who lay curled into a tight ball on the cold stone floor.

"What? What are you doing?" The woman asked, looking confused. "You said you'd let them go!"

Voldemort merely looked over to her with a condescending expression while the two elites sniggered.

"She will suffer your fate," one of the elites explained for his Master.

"But you said you were going to let me go!" The woman sobbed, desperately seeking answers.

"A demonstration is in order, I believe," Voldemort said, amusement showing in his tone. "Your husband..." he instructed the Dementor, freeing the man from the bonds.

Emancipated hands caught the body before it fell and Harry saw the dark creatures eyes glow before it lowered its hooded face to the mans mouth and sucked out his soul. The Dementor then released the body; allowing it to fall, slack jawed and glassy eyed to the floor.

"Wha..." The woman found herself released from the magical bounds and with a quick movement she was at her husband's side.

"He is not dead," Voldemort assured the woman.

"What did you do?" She gasped as she confirmed that her husband was still breathing and his heart was beating but he was otherwise unresponsive.

"My allies have peculiar tastes," the Dark Lord launched into the explanation knowing that the truth would complete his torture of the woman. "They eat souls."

"No!" She surged forward but was caught in a chilling grip as the Dementor who had taken her husband's soul grabbed her.

With deliberate precision the second Dementor draped itself over the body of the girl and with torturous slowness lowered its hooded face. The woman screamed and struggled, begging for her daughter to be spared, promising that she would do anything if the child was spared but Voldemort simply laughed as the Dementor sucked out the soul of her child.
When it was over the woman collapsed to the floor, sobbing as she feebly pounded her fists into the stone.

"Now..." Voldemort purred. "It's your turn."

"You promised..." she whispered.

"And I have kept my promise," he said, raising his wand.

"...you'll pay, Riddle... you'll pay..."

Even Voldemort paused at that whisper. "What?"

"...you'll pay, Riddle... you'll pay..." The woman repeated, her voice weaker this time as the events and proximity to the Dementor began to tell on her.

"How?" he hissed, sounding like the snake that was his totem.

"...my sister..." the woman began. "...my sister is a witch..."

Voldemort smiled. "Squib?" He questioned her.

She shook her head. "She was born different."

"Mudblood," one of the elites said.

"Well... that is not our concern now," Voldemort said, raising his wand again before he stopped.

Harry watched the events silently, knowing from experience that it didn't matter what he did. What he saw was reality but for him it was a dream and he couldn’t interact, he could only watch and remember. While he was loath to remember, he knew he would be the only one to truly know all the Dark Lords victims and they needed, history needed them, to be remembered. So it was resolutely that he looked back to the woman, trying not to focus on the wand that had also taken his parents lives, Cedric and so many others...

But the Dark Lord had stopped again and was looking around the room with narrowed eyes. Finally his gaze had settled on the corner where Harry customarily watched. "Ah... My little one," he hissed in Parceltongue. He had paused then, almost seeming to consider what he was seeing... Harry just stood there, weeks of seeing the same thing meant he could meet the Dark Lords gaze without flinching, secure in the knowledge that his presence went unseen and unheard.

"It's nearly time," he continued, placing his wand back down. His eyes roved over Harry's form and then for the first time in weeks blood red eyes locked with green. "You're mine."

And that is what had awoken Harry. 'You're mine.' Voldemort had never spoken directly to him before. The Dark Lord had spoken of him but never to him and the tone of his voice... While the words had still been in Parceltongue, their tone had been gentle, seductive, inviting. The tone he would have used to speak with Cho if the Ravenclaw Seeker would even look at him after he got Cedric killed.

The tone and the absolute lack of pain...

Harry looked out the window. The sky was slowly lightening, signalling the dawning of a new day. It didn't hurt... Why didn't it hurt? Although he hadn't actually seen the woman die, her husband and daughter had both suffered for Voldemort's pleasure, so why didn't his scar hurt as it had for so many
nights before?

A tapping on the barred window drew his attention and as he drew back the filmy curtains a chill passed through him. A large black eagle hawk was scrambling to land on the sill, every few seconds it would fall off, resulting in a flapping of wings, and clawing at the bricks as it sought purchase again. In one claw was a black envelope that Harry could see was marked with a blood red Dark Mark. As the hawk noticed him, it fixed him with a stare that said quite clearly that it would try to deliver its letter all day if necessary so no matter how much he didn't want it, he should just look at it and the bird would leave.

Quickly Harry opened the window as far as it would go, wondering how the bird could possibly be reading his mind. How did it know he had seriously been considering just closing the curtains and ignoring it? And he would have except for the fact that the Dursley’s would practically kill him if the bird remained there during the day, when anyone could see it? What would the neighbours think at outright proof of his abnormality?

At the movement the bird took off again, releasing its letter that magically flew thru in the tiny opening, before with a soft screech, it flapped powerful wings and disappeared into the thin dawn light.

The letter landed on the floor seeming to glow with its own sickly light. It was addressed with a simple 'HP' and for a moment Harry was tempted simply to rip it up and pretend that it never existed but he knew, from years of experience in the Wizarding world, that things would only get worse if he did that. So it was with strangely steady hands, he reached out and picked up the letter, turning it over to see its seal. The wax was red and the seal was a crest bearing the Dark Mark surmounting a stylised 'LV'.

Harry shivered as he broke the seal and drew out the parchment, unfolding it slowly he noted a tiny lumos spell on it meant that he wouldn't need to turn on the light. He looked over the spidery red script, not seeing it before closing his eyes, taking a deep breath to calm himself before he opened emerald eyes and began reading.

All the while, his scar didn't hurt.
Dear Harry,

I am pleased to see that you have received my letter. It is a sign that you are nearly ready for me, that you are nearly ready to accept the truth and to stand by my side at the pinnacle of the world...

Ah... But I sense you do not understand...

You will.

In time.

For now though I must ask you to be patient. Nothing happens at the speed either of us wishes it to occur but it is the way of the world and the reward will more than compensate for such a small sacrifice. But how can I expect you to make such a sacrifice when you do not know the truth...? And at the moment, I know you do not have a concept of what is the truth... So let me start with your training.

Dumbledore is training you. He trains your magic, carefully nurturing you so that you may achieve greatness. But it is I who am truly educating you. I have shown you the truth of the world, not the sugar coated fantasy others believe. I have shown you power and such power is yours to command, you merely need to reach out and take it. I will help you there. I will take you through the difficult times of the first few but then you will truly understand, as you have always known, that I am right. The difference between knowing and understanding is subtle but I am patient, I will lead you through such rites until you are whole.

This is a truth you already know, Harry... I have shown you this for many weeks now. You need not fear me, for I will walk by your side and I will be there until you are ready to stand alone by me.

But there is another truth that you must understand and know, that you must accept before you can accept me. It is difficult for me to relate this to you because at the time, I did not understand myself and it is only now that I am much older do I see the necessity of the actions and their purpose...

I killed your parents...

I know you know that. It was one of the first things you learnt about me. That and the reason the Wizarding World looks upon you with such awe, and expectation.

I tried to kill you too... And I nearly succeeded but for your noble Mother's sacrifice.

You know that too.

But you do not know how much I regret it.

Not for what happened to me, but for what has happened to you, Harry.

And you do not know why I came to kill you that night.

Harry James Potter...
I know your Muggle relatives think it nothing more than a nasty common name. How narrow their perceptions are... They have the whole of the Wizarding World laid out before them through you but they try to beat it out of you... But your name is central to the reason I came that night however for you to accept and understand your own name, you must also know mine.

Tom Marvolo Riddle...

Another nasty common name but one from which I have crafted greatness.

I am Lord Voldemort.

Voldemort Salamir Slytherin.

Voldemort, for that is who I am.

Salamir, for the line that bears the Slytherin inheritance.

Slytherin, for the man whose powers I wield and whose ideals I will see recognised.

And now for your name.

Harry James Potter

Harry, for you. For the man you will become.

James, for your father, who died valiantly but in vain.

Potter, for the line that bears the Gryffindor inheritance.

I know your confusion Harry but I do not lie. I felt the same when I learnt that Salamir was my true name. Within your veins flows the blood of Gryffindor and it was that which I sought to kill. I suppose I could justify it by saying that Gryffindor and Slytherin are hereditary enemies and that the Heir of one line trying to kill the other is nothing special... But that would just be denial of the truth.

I feared you Harry.

That is the truth and that is the entire reason I came to kill you.

But why should I fear a babe who was still in swaddling cloths? Especially when your blood inheritance ran through your Father's veins as well. Why should I fear the child and not the man?

Because you are not your Father and you are the one who has inherited the true Gryffindor lineage.

You do not know the truth of that lineage, not yet and it is not quite time to reveal that information. Harry, I would ask you to think though, there were Four Founders to Hogwarts and each had their own unique power.

Hufflepuff had the power to feel the Earth and to know the truth.

Ravenclaw had the power to control the spirits of the Dead.

Slytherin had the power to commune with all Serpents.

And Gryffindor had the most dangerous power of all.

It is visible through his sword and in his hat whose enchantments have not worn off even after a
thousand years. But I will tell you more of his power anon... When you are ready to hear it.

His power... Your power... I felt it at your birth but I had to be sure and that's why I waited. I had to know that it was you who would wield that terrible Gift and when I got confirmation, I came for you...

I no longer fear you Harry, and not just because I have taken your blood so that I might truly live again. Things between us have changed and they have changed more than you know. I told you, we are the same. Your power is the same as mine, for as you now bear Slytherin's Power through my Curse, I bear Gryffindor's Power through your Blood.

All the easier to kill you... I can see that thought, Harry.

But I no longer desire to kill you. You bear only a part of Slytherin’s Power and I bear only a part of Gryffindor's. Enough that I can see how powerful you can become, Harry, that I can see what powers you will command in time.

Let me tell you how I know you will command those powers. And this knowledge is the overriding reason I wanted you dead. After all Slytherin and Gryffindor lived in relative peace together, why couldn't their Heirs? I could not live with you because of what I foresaw...

You know I was a brilliant student. Dumbledore, I'm sure has mentioned as such. Like you I studied Divination and like your Mudblood friend, I also took multiple electives so that I would not miss learning anything. But my story revolves around Divination.

Taken seriously and when practiced by a true Seer, Divination is the most powerful magic there is. However true Seers are very rare, and their prophecies are usually so vague that they can only be interpreted after the event. Powerful wizards though, such as yourself can sometimes glimpse the future and it was in my sixth year that I saw you. By then, as I have told you, I was well into my study of the Dark Arts and I knew the visions to be true.

I had two visions.

The first one was of a green-eyed Phoenix marked by lightning fighting another Phoenix before the two ceased battle and the green-eyed Phoenix left to fight a black Basilisk. The two were equal until an ethereal white Stag with a shield made from a necklace of Lilies entered the battle and the Basilisk was driven back, horribly wounded. It retreated to its lair where smaller serpents set upon their King, turning serious wounds into fatal wounds. When the King died though, the serpents fought amongst themselves until the Phoenix and Stag appeared and killed them all.

The second one was of the green-eyed Phoenix fighting with another Phoenix where it is cruelly defeated. The green-eyed Phoenix dies but in it’s burning, which the other tries to prevent, it is reborn as a Basilisk, with the mark of lightning upon its brow. The black Basilisk nurtured this young Serpent King and in time, the green-eyed Basilisk killed many of the lesser serpents before they could harm the black Basilisk who was wounded from a fight with a Phoenix. Together, the young and old Basilisk defeated the Phoenix and the lesser serpents had no choice but to submit.

Two visions... Two futures... Two futures that showed I was still dependent on others.

I recognised myself as the black Basilisk but the green-eyed Phoenix's identity eluded me for many years... That Phoenix is you Harry. And the Stag and the Lily your Father and Mother. But where do the visions diverge? The vision depends on the young Phoenix's fight with the other Phoenix. That much is simple to determine. I suspect I know the identity of the older Phoenix but since the battle has not taken place, I cannot be sure. It could also be argued that the first vision will come to pass
now as your Father is now most definitely an ethereal Stag and perhaps that is true but who is the older Phoenix?

Of course, these visions could be nothing more than the hallucinations induced by a bad potion batch, or they could have been completely changed by my rebirth. But they are the visions that caused me to seek you out. I would destroy the second vision, to avoid risk of the first. And I would destroy both so that I would not be dependent on others. By killing you I would have succeeded but we both know how that night played out. I gained something then... Despite my destruction, I did gain the nullification of both visions. And if I did not, I gained the ascendency of the second. You have my Gift for Parcelltongue and while you do not know it, you have my knowledge from that time.

The black Basilisk nurtured this young Serpent King.

My Gift has helped you and my knowledge has given you strength to endure. I have nurtured you through the long years where you knew nothing of truth.

Neither vision concerns me now, Harry for since my rebirth I have had a third vision.

The black Basilisk comes for the green-eyed Phoenix and the Phoenix submits to the Basilisk. The lesser serpents jealous of the Phoenix attack it. The Black Basilisk desires revenge but can do nothing and it is a fire serpent that joins itself to the young Phoenix who saves the firebird. At it's burning the young Phoenix's fire touches both the Black Basilisk and the fire serpent and it emerges from the ashes as a Basilisk with the crest of a Phoenix. The lesser serpents attack the black Basilisk but the green-eyed Basilisk unleashes the darkness for the black Basilisk. Those serpents that were loyal survive and in return for the power the young Basilisk used, the older Basilisk presents the younger with many tokens of thanks...

I would go further but you are not ready, yet, to hear that.

This is the vision that will come to pass. I will make it come to pass.

Soon, I will come for you so that you may stand by my side.

You will do it willingly Harry. I do not know the true path yet but you will turn from what you have known. You will give me what I want; Harry and you will do so willingly. You will give me such pleasure...

Know that I will come for you Harry. Know that nothing will stand in my way.

You are my little one, Harry. You are my Phoenix crested Basilisk and I will come for you.

Wait for me, my little one, wait for me.

You are mine.

Lord Voldemort.
Harry looked down at the letter in his hands. It made absolutely no sense. It had been signed under the seal of Lord Voldemort but its tone was nothing like he had ever expected.

In fact, it was so unexpected that he had almost thrown it away, not believing that the Dark Lord had written this.

His ‘noble Mother's sacrifice’? Since when did the Dark Lord consider his mother's actions noble? He had considered them unnecessary, he had considered them useless and he had considered them bloody hinderingly awkward but he had never considered them noble! From Lord Voldemort's stance, what could be considered noble or good about the actions that lead to his downfall?

And his Father! Dying valiantly... That just didn't make sense. James Potter's actions had been in vain but they had been from the heart and they had been the last ditch effort of a Father to save his family but to the Lord Voldemort they had wasted precious time and energy. They had been futile and pathetic. There was nothing valiant about certain death.

But other bits had been interesting... Very interesting.

His name for example... Both their names.

Everyone spoke of Voldemort being Slytherin's Heir but no one had spelled it out so clearly. And everyone expected him to be exceptional... Now he knew why... Even without being central to Lord Voldemort's downfall the expectation would still be there.

Potter, for the line that bears the Gryffindor inheritance.

But what was Gryffindor's inheritance and why was it more dangerous than the others?

Harry smiled... He bet Ravenclaw didn't know about their Founders Power... It sounded so creepy and the picture one got of Rowena Ravenclaw was some know it all, who was never tolerated lateness to class, some one straight laced and proper who didn't go about violating the peace of the dead. Someone like McGonagall without the sly approval of brave antics. Hufflepuffs ability didn't sound too bad though... To feel the Earth and know the truth...

He wasn't too sure about that whole 'to feel the Earth' bit but he could sure use 'know the truth'... Dumbledore was covering something up. Something big. The Headmaster had assured Harry that he would tell him when he was old enough but when was that going to be? If he had Hufflepuffs power he could know already and then he wouldn't need others to define his truth...

Wait... What was he thinking..? Dumbledore had never lied to him, he had just never told him whatever the information was. Withholding information was not the same as lying...

But what if he is lying? How could you tell that? You don't even know what he knows.

He will tell me when I am ready!

So when will that be?
Probably about the same time Lord Voldemort thinks I am ready to hear the other things he only hinted at.

The voice was silent at that rebuke and Harry allowed himself a small smile of triumph. It wasn't often he got one over his conscience.

He looked back at the letter. The first bit made sense. Twisted sense but it was obvious Voldemort wanted him to join the Dark Lord in his conquest of the world. The bit about him not understanding was very reminiscent of Dumbledore but Harry didn't dwell on the similarities now, instead he moved on towards patience and training.

Since he still didn't know what the Dark Lord was referring to patience wasn't going to be hard. He wasn't anticipating anything so time would move as it always would, glacially slow during summer, lightningly fast during other times of the year. Training though... Hogwarts was training his magic but Voldemort didn't really think he believed the world was how the Dark Lord saw it? The Dursleys were bad Muggles but not all Muggles were bad. And what was that about the first few difficult times? Difficult times of what?

Harry shook his head and continued. Their names were interesting but since they'd both already been hinted at there was no surprise. No matter how grand the name, he couldn't help whom he was descended from. He was more concerned over what this power was meant to be. As for the Dark Lord fearing him, he would have had to fear something for him to be so intent on killing baby Harry. What else truly motivated evil but the threat to their own power?

But what was this about him bearing only a part of Slytherin's gift? Slytherin could talk to snakes... That was it, wasn't it? And if it wasn't, why hadn't Riddle revealed the whole gift in the Chamber? Harry shrugged his shoulders, so he'd only gotten part of Slytherin's abilities. Part was more than enough to turn the whole school against him and to have the world think him dark merely because he could talk to snakes... He didn't need the lot, the part he'd got had done enough damage already, thank you very much.

And the next bit... Voldemort no longer desired to kill him. Yeah, well, it would be a cold day in hell before the Dark Lord ever meant that, wouldn't it? Unless of course, he really did think access to Gryffindor's inheritance was worth keeping Harry alive for. But that line of reasoning just lead back to the question of what was Gryffindor's power.

But it was the visions that interested Harry the most. Upon first reading they seemed incredibly straightforward. In the first one, he fights Voldemort and is eventually helped by his Father thus winning the battle. The Death Eaters turn on their Master and in the ensuing chaos he and his dad finish the job. The second one, something happened that turned him towards the darkness and he defends the Dark Lord from his own minions before helping him win over the Wizarding World. And the third one, while not being complete, Voldemort forces his compliance before they have to fight the Death Eaters, winning that battle and then... Voldemort hadn't relayed how that vision had ended.

They seemed easy to understand but Dark Lord had been correct. Who was the other Phoenix? It appeared in all three visions. The first as a seeming ally, the second as an enemy and the third as what..?

Harry blinked. If he had to guess then he would say that the other Phoenix was Dumbledore. It would all fit together nicely then but could a vision really be that easy and did the Phoenix have to represent a single person? While the third vision was new, there was nothing there that negated the first two. After all, in both the first two he had his famous scar and in the third... Harry looked back at the parchment. The third vision said nothing about his scar. Had the Dark Lord merely forgotten to
mention it, or was it possible that the third vision referred to something else entirely? And what was that darkness that was meant to be released?

He shook his head. The visions were interesting but he couldn't make sense of them. Bits seemed to fit together but not the whole. Maybe he should give them to Trelawny, tell her that he foresaw this over the summer and needed her help in interpreting them. He could see the old bat now. She'd find a way to say that the dark was his death or something like that... It would almost be amusing to see her fumbling with them. He supposed though that he should tell Dumbledore but after a moments consideration Harry shrugged. What would telling the Headmaster really achieve? They already knew Voldemort was acting to some twisted scheme only he saw and these visions were probably only figments of the Dark Lords imagination. They didn't mean anything, despite what Tom Riddle might wish.

Harry looked back at the last bit of the letter. Well, Voldemort might want the third vision to come to pass but Harry definitely liked the first. He would see his Father again. But it seemed the Dark Lord would be intent. 'I will come for you.'

He felt a small shiver pass through him before he remembered. The only reason he stayed with the Dursleys was so that the ancient magic would be induced. Magic like the Fidelus charm but without the need for a Secret Keeper, magic that went further than that and provided solid resistance against the Dark Arts. At least, that's what Dumbledore had told him when he had asked. The Headmaster had also assured him that the Magic was completely involuntary. It didn't matter how the Dursleys felt because their feelings had nothing to do with it being invoked. The other thing he had been reassured about was the fact that if it came down, there were further, more conventional magic wards cast around his house: anti-apparition wards, alarms and shields. Nothing as elaborate or as long term as those surrounding Hogwarts but formidable enough in there own right. He'd actually caught a glimpse of them for the first time, this year on his return from Hogwarts and had been surprised at their strength.

While he might not like the Dursleys, he was quite safe here. Voldemort could try to come but he wouldn't get very far.

_Or will he? ‘Know that nothing will stand in my way.’ Do you really believe a bunch of aging wards will keep out the Dark Lord?_

Harry gulped. Why did he have to remember that line now? Especially with what the paragraph before had said.

I will not go to him willingly!

_What makes you think he's going to give you a choice?_

Harry's eyes snapped open at that. It was true, wasn't it? Imperio wasn't the only way to control a person, just the only way that was guaranteed to get you into Azkaban. The Dark Lord didn't care about that, but he did know that Imperio wouldn't work on him. But how many other ways would a Dark Lord know to control someone? How many potions or spells could be used? Harry didn't know but he had a feeling Voldemort knew and had already planned which method he was going to use. And that would make the third vision very likely.

But could a vision tell the difference between his willing submission or his coerced willing submission? And was there a difference? Submission was submission.

Harry shivered as his eyes lingered on the last part of the letter.
You will give me what I want, Harry and you will do so willingly. You will give me such pleasure...

Know that I will come for you Harry. Know that nothing will stand in my way.

You are my little one, Harry. You are my Phoenix crested Basilisk and I will come for you.

Wait for me, my little one, wait for me.

You are mine.

The words stated it clearly and suddenly Harry knew it was true. The Dark Lord would come for him and one way or another would gain his submission before the first lines would come to pass. The whole letter had been written for them.

You will give me such pleasure...

Not from the torture of submission but in the servitude after. Servitude that would go far beyond any other Death Eater's and would be so personal that he could never escape. The letter had been written, long winded and strangely gentle, just to purvey this one line and the hidden meaning it contained.

Voldemort didn't want Harry to serve him, the Dark Lord wanted him to sex him

The Dark Lord wanted Harry to stand beside him as his wife.
Voldemort smiled indulgently as he felt Harry finally work out the true meaning of his letter. That parchment carried far more than a lumos spell but the other spells had remained inactive until the boy had picked up the letter. There had been no other way to slip the letter through the Wards.

The Dark Lord was alone at the moment, in his most private chambers. The rooms were large and were warm. Nagini was coiled on the hearth matt, made from the skin of a lion, soaking up the heat from the fire. There were two large armchairs placed before the fire with a small table, bearing fine liqueur and crystal glasses, between them. A large four-poster bed was in a dark secluded corner, its sheets silken, the same green and black that coloured the chairs and the tie backs silver. A large trunk was at the foot of the bed and on one wall two shelves of books framed a door. The final wall had one door on it, but one door that like the trunk had many locks.

The Master of this room stood near the centre gazing into a large crystal ball that hovered in the air. But this crystal ball wasn't normal. It had a definite green tinge to it and running laterally, from top to bottom was a split, like one would see in the eye of a cat, or a snake. Voldemort was staring intently into it as it focused the visions from the parchment.

He knew exactly where his prize was now, well to within a few houses. While the Wards had destroyed the tracking spell on the eagle hawk the bird had gotten close enough that he knew it was Little Whinging, Surrey. And when he went to fetch the boy, the bird would lead him right to the place. The Dark Lord shook his head as he went back to his considerations. The spells on the parchment allowed him to see Harry and allowed him to see the magic that was active. The Wards had been made that way. You couldn't see what spell had been cast from the outside but once you gained entry, it was easy enough to determine the exact spell.

The Warding itself wouldn't stand long against him, and the alarm spells would be almost pitifully easy to disarm. The Anti-Apparition Wards would take another half flip of his wand to dispel and the shielding on the house, protecting it from physical harm wouldn't require his attention. He wanted the occupants, not the house. Which left the ancient spells, inherent in blood ties and any spells that were on the boy himself.

With narrowed serpentine eyes he looked back at into the ball, focusing sharply on the boy. The blood ties were there but his red eyes opened wide when he saw how weak they were. These Muggles were Harry's closest relatives and even though they had no magic, blood magic was meant to be stronger than that! When invoked it was meant to be well nigh invincible...

Harry's Mother's shield was still there... What was her name..? Lily... The shield was still around the boy and it still glowed perfectly white, to indicate her willing sacrifice, to his magical senses. And it, despite it being fourteen years since her death, was stronger than the spells that were meant to be reinforced every time Harry saw his relatives...

Voldemort smiled... This was going to be easier than he thought. He had been anticipating a struggle against that magic, and had even prepared various potions that would force the Muggles to relinquish their unknown hold on that ancient power but it looked like they wouldn't be necessary. It was almost going to be too easy.
He looked again at the shielding as he shook his head. Stupid Muggles... They must hate the boy with a passion for the shielding to be that weak. Dumbledore was a fool, to place his trust in such people. Muggles. Weak minded pathetic individuals who did not know the value of the boy placed in their care.

"Well my little one, show me what other spells you have..." The Dark Lord whispered as a mist obscured his vision for a moment. When the mists parted, he saw the world only in terms of magic.

Harry filled his vision. The boy's magic had a brilliant glow, surrounded by ancient protection spells and one... memory spell?

Now why would the boy have an active oblivative on him? One that was tied into the very warding of the house. One that you wouldn't even notice unless you possessed the level of magics only a select few ever achieved. What was it hiding?

A soft laugh escaped him and his eyes glittered with reflected mirth. This was going to be too easy!

The only other thing the Dark Lord had truly worried about was the best way to claim his prize. The boy was stubborn and strong willed. Appropriately so but annoying when seeking his compliance. Imperio didn't work and he had doubted that other lesser enchantments would have worked. Pain would have eventually compelled obedience as would blackmail but both were poor techniques and he would have noticed the boy's resentment. Potions could be used but only sparingly. Harry's natural magical levels were formidable and eventually he would have grown immune to even the most potent potions Severus could have devised. No... While the Dark Lord was willing to use potions initially, eventually the boy's willing co-operation would be necessary.

He had planned on seducing the boy. A pleasurable endeavour but one that would have taken precious time and while it was still a distinct and most likely option, whatever that oblitative spell was hiding would help immensely in convincing his pet that he was the one Harry should follow. Finding evidence of Dumbledore's duplicity was difficult and this had just fallen into his lap!

Red eyes glowed in triumph. He looked back to Harry, shifting his vision back to the corporal world. The boy was still holding the letter, staring into the distance as he considered the words on the parchment.

"It is nothing less than the truth, Harry," Voldemort said softly, purring the name. "You will give me such pleasure, my little one, such pleasure. And you will unleash the darkness that is your birthright. All for me."

Once again he saw in his mind's eye the ending of the third vision he had been graced with. The young Basilisk, upon seeing such tokens of thanks had bowed it's head to the black Basilisk, in a traditional display of ritual submission and acceptance and then the two had mated, twining together until it was uncertain where one began and the other ended.

He smiled, the other Phoenix had flown away but he had vowed to hunt it down. "If it's you, Dumbledore... If it's you, I swear you will scream for mercy before I grant you death."

Voldemort collected himself and waved his hand at the crystal after taking one last look at Harry. "Soon, my little one," he murmured by way of parting before striding from his chambers as the crystal vanished.

"WORMTAIL!" The Dark Lord called as he strode through the corridors of his fortress. "WORMTAIL!"
"Y... y... yes, My Lord?"

"Summon Lucius, McNair and Flint. I wish them here by 1800. The plan goes ahead tomorrow."

"My Lord?" the little rat questioned. All three bore their Master's Dark Mark, wouldn't it be easier for him to summon them?

"I do not wish the signal to be intercepted," Voldemort explained, reading the rat's thoughts as he fixed red eyes on his balding servant, running his tongue over his lips. Wormtail shivered as he recalled his Master's latest threat to eat him whole.

"Yes, My Lord!" Wormtail snapped and scurried away, breathing a sigh of relief when he wasn't hit by a _Crucio_ spell. His Lord was really looking forward to capturing the Potter boy to let him get way with a slip like that!

Voldemort watched as Wormtail scampered away. Lucius, McNair and Flint would be adequate for the task but his loyal servants, the servants only he and Harry knew, would back them up unknowingly. And he would accompany them himself. "Nothing will stand in my way... Wait for me."

But first he had orders to issue and spells to prepare. The blood magic would fall before him but the obliviate may require some more work. It was nothing he couldn't handle.

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Harry gulped as his Aunt's shrill voice broke through his reverie. Lord Voldemort didn't want to kill him... He wanted something much worse...

He wanted Harry to stand beside him as his equal, to be his mate. To sleep in the same bed and to...

Harry frowned. How did two men do... it... together?

NO! He shook his head frantically. He did _not_ want to know!

"Harry!" His Aunt called again and as he heard her footsteps on the stairs he quickly stuffed the envelope and letter under his thin pallet and ran to the door.

The sound of locks being undone forced him to give his room a quick final inspection, to make sure that nothing was out of place before he stood to attention.

Petunia stepped into the room with a sniff that clearly stated that she didn't want to be here, having to deal with him. "Go down to the kitchen, boy," she said coldly after looking over everything. His bird was still caged and everything appeared in order. The window wasn't open and a quick inspection revealed that he hadn't been attempting to pry or destroy the bars by force. While his magic gear was locked away, you could never be too careful when dealing with someone of his obvious ill breeding. "Prepare breakfast for Vernon and my dear Duddlykins. Then I'll give you your chores for today."

Harry nodded not really listening but forcing himself to look alert even as his mind slipped back to the Dark Lord's words. Petunia's orders were the same every day. "Yes, Aunt Petunia," he intoned as he slipped past her and headed downstairs. She locked the door again after he had left so that he couldn't retreat and slack off.

It was not a good day for Harry. The Dark Lord's letter and its implications weighed heavily on his mind and he was midway through cooking breakfast when the immediate tone of the letter struck him. The egg in his hand cracked and fell awkwardly into the pan and the yoke broke. Harry cursed
softly. Dudley refused to eat eggs that had broken yokes and he would get the blame but it was only an instant before thoughts of the Dark Lord consumed him again.

Soon I will come for you.

Those had been the exact words. What was soon though? Harry had an uncomfortable feeling that it would be far earlier than he could ever imagine.

After the breakfast fiasco was over - Harry had survived it with a badly bruised arm and no food when Vernon had grabbed his arm, squeezing viciously as he made Harry promise not to waste any more food - he moved onto his chores.

A broken plate, a shattered glass, a sudsy flood in the laundry, followed by a burnt shirt, a chipped garden gnome, a broken spade, badly pruned rose bush, a ring barked prize azalea bush, paint splattered on the side walk, bubbling and peeling vanish on the door from when he split the brass polish on it, a shattered vase and an unrinsed and dangerously slippery shower and Petunia had finally noticed that something was on her nephews mind and had relieved him of the remainder of his chores sending him to sit in his room with a slice of bread and a glass (plastic) of water.

Harry was only thankful that Vernon hadn't been home otherwise he would have been black and blue before he was even half way done. As it was, he was dreading his Uncle's return but not as much as he was dreading Lord Voldemort’s arrival.

He was only fifteen years old! Sure he had faced off against the Dark Lord in his first, second and fourth years but that had been different... First the Dark Lord had barely been alive, second it had been only a memory and fourth...

You helped the darkest Lord ever revive himself...

Harry shook his head savagely, giving half his bread to Hedwig. It didn't matter what had happened then, it had been different. The Dark Lord had wanted to kill him and now he didn't...

Now he wants me to be his mate.

Harry stared out the window, unable to get past that thought, feeling a rising sense of dread fill him.

The Dark Lord was coming for him... And that had changed everything.
Harry snapped out of his dream at the noise his uncle was making. He'd vaguely noted the car arrive back and then the muted conversation between Petunia and Vernon but then it had almost seemed as if his Uncle had exploded.

"BOY!"

Harry shuddered at the voice. Wasn't that being a little loud? What would the neighbours think?

"BOY!!"

Was it humanly possible to yell that loud?

"BOY!!!"

With that final yell the door burst open and Harry winced. If he'd been standing where he was supposed to be, he would have been clipped by the door and slammed into the wall. That would have hurt.

Harry looked up at the man. Vernon was literally purple with rage, and his chest was heaving from the relatively short walk up the stairs. His beady eyes peered out from his face and his chins bounced. "Uncle," he said uncertainly.

That appeared to be the last straw. Harry never even saw the blow coming but he felt its effects and he crashed into the small chest of draws against the wall, hammering his bruised arm painfully. Hedwig hooted from her cage.

Vernon wasn't done though and with a rough swipe he backhanded Harry back on to the bed as he struggled to rise. Harry sprawled half on the bed, half not before Vernon kicked his legs and Harry cried out before scrambling frantically. His Uncle didn't care though and continued to hit him, sending him crashing into what furniture there was in the room but thankfully never into Hedwig's cage. Occasionally Vernon would kick his legs out from under him, sending him crashing to the floor where Vernon would kick him until he stood again. From the doorway Dudley watched, pig eyes wide with excitement as he squealed encouragement to his father.

Harry spat blood, shaking his head to clear the stars as he struggled to push himself upright. He felt his arm buckle and he crashed back to the floor. He hurt... Everything hurt but he didn't have time to contemplate this because Vernon had kicked him again, slamming him into the wall. Harry curled up instinctively but his Uncle didn't stop.


Harry cried out, drawing his legs up to his chest and using his arms to shield his face but his Uncle always seemed to hit his target, driving his foot directly into Harry's abdomen, each blow driving his back painfully into the wall.

"Yeah! That's it Dad! Harder!"
Harry couldn't help but glance over at his obese cousin and immediately wished he hadn't. The boy was dressed, as usual, in clothes that were stretched almost to breaking across his more than ample frame, so there was nothing hiding the bulge in the front of his trousers. His fat fingers also rested there, lazily and gently tracing up and down his confined, engorged length. His face had a dreamy smile that was at odds with his intent eyes. The over grown whale was jerking off to Harry's beating and with each blow Vernon landed, he spasmed, clutching the door frame for support with his free hand. His breath came short and fast as he panted with exertion and his face became flushed.

"That's it, Dad! Harder!" The fat bastard implored again as Harry cried out in pain.

"You Little Whore!" Vernon repeated, landing a blow with each word. "You wear Dudley's clothes, eat my food, sleep in my house and this is how you repay me!" He screamed, gesturing vaguely. "You break Petunia's plates, burn my shirt and destroy Dudley's inheritance. You should be thanking me for taking you in!"

"Yeah!... Harder!" Dudley gasped, almost as if he was in pain.

Harry could barely even hear Vernon. He didn't care what his Uncle was parroting but he figured it was the usual speech. He hurt too much and he was sure several bones had been broken. How was he going to explain this? More blood dribbled from his mouth but he made no move to wipe it away. He could barely feel his legs and his stomach was just one sea of pain. He really hoped the internal bleeding wasn't too bad.

Vernon kicked him once more for good measure before turning and storming out. "And don't think you're getting fed for a week! I'm going to have to take the day off work tomorrow just to fix the damage you've caused."

Harry looked up, just before the door slammed shut and was rewarded by another glimpse of his cousin. The boy was beet red and there was a wet patch on the front of his trousers but he meet Harry's green eyes squarely, a superior smile on his face and a look of contentment in his eyes. As the bolts slide home in the door, Harry curled up further, trying to nurse the worst of his injuries before he even attempted getting to his bed. He wished he'd just lose consciousness but he still heard his aunt and uncle in the corridor.

"My baby Dudleykins! You're almost a man!" There was a weird note of pride in Petunia's voice. No doubt she'd seen her little boys reaction to watching Harry having the living daylights beaten out of him.

"Now, now, Pet," Vernon cautioned her, but his voice too betrayed pride for his son. "He's not a man yet. Not until he takes some girls maidenhead which will probably been sooner that we know, eh, Dudley?"

Harry drew a shuddering breath... It hurt... He tried focusing through the pain... Five... Five ribs hurt... and there was a dull ache from the right side of his abdomen. Harry frowned, idly wondering if there was anything important there... It had been a long time since he'd done even basic human anatomy in school... His shin hurt too and through the pain he couldn't tell if his leg was broken or not.

Hedwig hooted softly at him from her cage, fluttering her wings against the bars as she watched her master rock himself gently.

He groaned and spat blood, shifting really carefully as he tried to find a position that didn't hurt as much. At least the floor was cooling and it eased the hot abrasions he had on his arms. Vernon had never done this before. No matter what he had done Vernon hadn't hit him before. Locked him
away, starved him, verbally abused him but never had he hit him before. He'd always been too afraid of what the neighbours would say but something had changed.

Harry blinked back the dark but it slowly encroached upon his vision. His last thought, more a realisation than a true thought was to wonder why Vernon's words had seemed... true.

Strong hands coolly caressed him in the dark, soothing words were whispered in his ear as Harry slept and he felt safe.

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Voldemort shifted his gaze over the Warding with a chill smile. "Soon," he whispered. It was night and to his vision the Wards glowed a soft, almost imperceptible white. Dumbledore had certainly called upon the best to help him cast them. Anyone could cross them in innocence but if you knew about them and your magic level was high enough, you could not bear any ill will against Harry Potter and pass through them unscathed.

Lucius, McNair and Flint were with him as were two more of his elites but they were hidden and would act only if called upon. He could taste Flint's nervousness but this was the boy's first mission accompanying him. It was a bit of a risk to bring him but perhaps a familiar and less threatening face would calm his prize.

He stepped forward, raising his wand. "Quietus alarnis," he hissed softly, flicking his wand. Further study of the alarm spells had shown him that they couldn't be so easily removed, but they could be muffled. "Nullificat!" and another flick of his wand, took care of the Wards and with a firm step he moved forward, surveying the enclosed houses for any further surprises with eyes that saw the magic streams.

Harry's house was alive with Magic. It almost seemed to have a heart beat but Voldemort recognised the magic streams as nothing more than the structural reinforcing that would ensure the house remained as it was, no matter what physical force was thrown at it. Other houses were dull and lifeless, except for...

"Lucius... It appears Mr Potter has a minder... Be so good as to fetch her," he instructed as he recognised the unmistakably controlled glow of a first class Auror.

"Yes, My Lord," the elder Malfoy bowed slightly before moving to the indicated house. Only the Dark Lord could 'see' magic and it was a gift that allowed him to be well nigh invincible. A gift not even Dumbledore possessed.

Voldemort watched as the blond Death Eater hurried up the garden path but before he got close to the door there was a surge of magic and Lucius was thrown backwards. The Dark Lord hid a smirk. At least Dumbledore had chosen someone who was good but he could not afford a prolonged battle here. He raised his wand and whispered the word, aiming for the bright aura of the woman. "Stupify." The spell manifested itself as a shock wave, passing through the walls of the house with ease.

There was a small crash from within the house and Voldemort turned away as the woman's magical signal dulled. Lucius could handle her now.

With a nod at McNair and Flint, who arranged themselves flanking him he swept towards Harry's house. How sweet... The boy was asleep... His magic was very dull. With a firm hand, Voldemort knocked, absently noting the blistering paint on the door and the half polished number. It certainly was an interesting effect.
Inside he heard grumbling but eventually there was the sound of heavy steps coming closer. He wrinkled his nose. These people *smelt* vile but he would not be here long. "No killing... Not yet," he re-iterated the instructions, for his own benefit as much as that of his servants. He wanted to save these Muggles for Harry.

The door opened a crack but that was enough. With brutal strength McNair and Flint drove themselves forward, slamming whoever it was into the wall. As Lucius emerged from the Auror's house, her limp form hovering behind him, Voldemort stepped over the slumped form of what appeared to be a small whale. He heard a woman's hysterical shrieking before it was quickly silenced and man's hoarse bellowing that was silenced by a sharp slap. He cast his eyes quickly to the second floor but Harry had not moved. "Sleep well, my little one," Voldemort murmured before he stepped forward to see Harry's relatives. The blood binds had to be removed before he could claim his prize.

Lucius entered the house behind him. "My Lord, the Auror did not have time to activate any alarms," he reported as he followed.

"Good," Voldemort purred, walking into the Muggles kitchen, seeing for the first time Harry's relatives. McNair and Flint stood behind them, wand levelled at the man, while the boy had chosen a more direct method and had a knife against her over long neck.

The woman... she was meant to be related to Harry's Mother?... Well, it was obvious Lily had inherited everything from her parents, leaving nothing for her sister. The woman's neck was far too long and next to her husband she looked positively undernourished. The man was almost purple with outrage and his cheek bore a welt. Neither of them had much magic, even for Muggles, they were weak.

"Excellent," Voldemort complimented his servants as he transfigured one chair into a throne and sat. "Now, Muggles, you are going to answer my questions."

"The boy's upstairs! Just take him and go," the man huffed.

"No... I cannot take him until he is released from you."

"What do you mean?" Despite the knife, the woman's eyes had narrowed. Flint released the knife slightly but kept her under a close watch.

"You are tied to him," Voldemort explained shortly.

"What!?"

"I gather you don't want this."

"Of course not! We want nothing to do with *his* abnormality!"

The Dark Lord's crimson eyes narrowed dangerously. *For Harry...* he forcibly reminded himself as he re-examined the Muggles. The blood ties were there but they were almost non-existent. All he'd have to do to break them was to take the boy while they were unaware. "I can help you there. Magic is a curious thing and I can break this spell quite easily. You must simply desire it."

"Anything to get rid of that ingrate!"

Voldemort raised his wand, flicking it sharply to the right. "Siees taas," he commanded before rising and sweeping from the room before the Muggles had even hit the floor.

He mounted the stairs quietly. "Flint, get Mr Potter's school things, they're in the cupboard under
"here," he said as his two servants moved to follow him. "McNair, Malfoy, seal the house and leave."

"My Lord? Is that wise?" It was Lucius who questioned him.

"I wish to be alone with Mr Potter," Voldemort said softly. "Take the Auror with you and leave her imprisoned until I see her."

"My Lord..." Lucius wisely bowed, asceding to his Master's wishes and the threat inherent in the quiet tone.

Voldemort waited, a tall and imposing figure in the Dursley corridor outside the littlest bedroom until he felt the spells around the house completed and his three servants and their captured prey left. With Harry still sleeping, Flint would not be necessary. There were two shimmers in the corridor and two red masked Death Eaters appeared, bowing slightly towards their Master before they took up flanking positions at the door.

The Dark Lord ran his wand over the locks destroying them. The Muggles would pay for keeping his prize like this but that was something he would allow Harry the pleasure of. He pocketed his wand as he opened the door, stepping into the room.
The Truth

Possession
Chapter VII - The Truth
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Even for a man possessing superlative senses it took a moment for him to assess what he was seeing. He tasted the blood before he saw it, smelt it's sharp tang the moment the door had opened and his crimson eyes scanned the room for it's source, finally falling on the half covered form of Harry Potter.

The boy looked to be asleep but now that he was closer he could see that his magic wasn't dormant with sleep, it was all that was sustaining him. The Dark Lord growled and red energy radiated out from him in tangible waves.

The Muggles... They had done this...

"Bind them." His voice was soft with barely controlled anger his pale skin dappling in a pattern that almost looked like scales.

"My Lord?"

"The Muggles," he ordered. "They are coming with us."

"At once, My Lord." Both red masked Death Eaters moved towards the stairs, wands held at the ready.

Lord Voldemort stepped further into the room, consciously calming his magic. He may have disarmed all the shields but the usual Ministry scanners could still detect him. He didn't quite own enough people there yet.

Crimson eyes examined the boy closely. Harry's magic was directed towards his abdomen, focused on his spleen. It had formed a tight barrier against the injuries and was slowing down the rate of toxin spread but it could not sustain him forever. It was too diffuse. There were too many injuries.

Hedwig hooted softly and Voldemort glanced at the bird as he moved to Harry. "Quiet," he whispered. "I will help him." The owl seemed to nod before sitting still on its perch. He pulled out his wand, looking down at the thirteen inches of yew with an ironic smirk. Harry's would have been better for this but it was gone now.

He closed red eyes for a moment, gathering himself for the spell before pointing his wand towards the worst of the damage and murmured the words. A soft hazy light emerged from his wands tip, hovering in the air for a moment before surrounding Harry. The boy sighed as the energy surrounded him quickly, meshing with the green-eyed boy's own magic accelerating the healing process. It took care of the ruptured organs. Now the bones needed to be healed - ribs, arm and leg. A few more muttered words and Harry was sleeping peacefully, his magic smoothing itself out in rest.

"My angel," Voldemort whispered as he watched for a few minutes. Downstairs he heard the woman's shrill scream before a few dull thuds. The Muggles had been taken care of. He suppressed a tight smile. It appeared his servants had woken them too before binding them. It was appropriate that the Muggles should think upon his displeasure even while they were unconscious.

The Dark Lord reached out stroking a few stray hairs from Harry's forehead. The boy's skin was like
silk, smooth and creamy. The famous lightning scar was a soft pink that only seemed to enhance the whiteness of his skin. "My mark," he murmured. "Thus have I claimed you."

The bird hooted again, very quietly. "He's fine now," Voldemort said and he drew himself back into the present. He couldn't be transfixed by Harry's beauty just yet. He still had spells to break so it was with renewed focus he looked back at the Obliviate that was on his prize.

It wasn't Dumbledore's. He could see that immediately. It had nowhere near the amount of power any spell of Dumbledore's would have had. Harry had almost broken it several times but it had drawn upon the power of Dumbledore's wards to reinforce itself. And while the boy was at Hogwarts it drew on the protection spells around the school... Now that was a very pretty piece of work... Pity whoever had done it had almost certainly forfeited their lives by touching his prize. After all they must have done something to Harry to warrant placing such a complicated Obliviate on the boy. Still he couldn't help a small feeling of disappointment. It would have been convenient if the spell had been Dumbledore's.

"What are you hiding?" Voldemort whispered to the spell, raising his wand once again. Now this was a spell his was suited for. "Envisu, obliviate, fractus!" His eyes glowed and reality wavered as he saw what Harry was forbidden to see.

He was four years old, waiting with his Uncle and Cousin while his Aunt gossiped in the store. His cousin, at four and a half the size of a full grown horse was poking him occasionally but he was doing his best to ignore it, and kept his Uncle between them. It was boring but then a man had come up to his Uncle and the two adults had begun talking. He'd moved off a little, careful though to keep his eyes on his Uncle so that he wouldn't get lost. Not that his Uncle would care.

Eventually the man had shaken hands with his Uncle, turning to smile at him before the stranger moved off as his Aunt returned.

Little Harry had thought nothing off it, his Uncle had lots of acquaintances he didn't know, until the same man had come around to the house while his Aunt was at bridge. Again there was nothing really out of the ordinary with that, what was not normal was the fact that his Uncle had lead him and the man up to Dudley's spare bed room closing the door behind them.

Voldemort snarled at the memories. The man had touched Harry, smiling at him and murmuring how beautiful he was. He'd undressed the boy, despite the protests, running his hands all over Harry's creamy skin. Harry struggled, trying to kick and claw at the man but the adult was stronger, trapping the boy's legs in a lock but not bothering with his arms. He just laughed and encouraged Harry's struggles.

Harry screamed when the man entered him, ripping his young body cruelly. The man's only reaction was to cover Harry's mouth, muffling the noise the boy was making, as he pumped harder. The man's face showed nothing but ecstasy and he continued to murmur to Harry, telling the boy how beautifully tight he was. Blood poured from the boy's torn anus and tears streamed from Harry's eyes but the man simply continued until his own release, crying out as he reached it.

After it was over, he pulled out, patting Harry gently before dressing, leaving the crying boy. Vernon escorted him out of the house, after a small wad of bills had changed hands. Before the man left though, he spoke to Vernon again. "He's good. He is so sweet. I'd like the other's to try him. How about it - for the same amount and same time next week?"

Vernon had looked apprehensive for a moment before the mention of money drove all concern from him. "All right," he agreed quickly.
"You are a very lucky man, Vernon." The stranger had nodded pleasantly to Dudley before he left.

The Dark Lord pulled back from the memories and looked down at the sleeping boy. Harry looked so peaceful sleeping in the bed that had caused him such pain. But he didn't remember any of it. "My little one," he murmured, stroking one long white finger over Harry's scar. "My poor little one."

Those Muggles were going to pay! Harry could have their deaths but he would have everything else. Unfortunately he still didn't know who cast the obliviate on Harry. He couldn't leave Harry's pain with just the memory of the first time. He would have to release the whole spell before he knew the truth.

Muggle after Muggle, week after week, they used him. All the men coming and returning while the woman was at her weekly Bridge Club meeting. Vernon took the money and looked the other way until Harry was eight.

The man, the one who had first used Harry had just left after commenting again that Vernon was so lucky when the fat oaf had looked into the room. Harry had been struggling to dress again, the tears still evident on his face. There was no blood, not any more. His young body had been torn and healed too many times but it was still sensitive and it still hurt. Vernon's eyes had narrowed and after glancing the clock he had stepped into the room closing the door firmly.

It was the look of fear that Harry gave him that the Muggle would suffer for the most, Voldemort decided immediately, watching Harry's memories. The boy had quickly worked out what his Uncle had been about to do and despite four years of continual abuse he had still fought back. It had been no use and the large man had fallen on the boy after hitting him a few times.

It took a long time. Vernon was not as fit as the other men and he didn't know any of the techniques to keep the damage down and so Harry was once again ripped from within, despite the stretching the other man had forced upon him, as his Uncle violated him.

Eventually, it was over. Vernon was bright red and panting but he seemed happy. In a gesture reminiscent of the very first time, he had reached out and patted Harry, complimenting the boy.

After that day, the abuse was continual, anytime Harry's Aunt wasn't there. The men still came once a week but Vernon took Harry at every other opportunity. As Dudley became older, he knew what was happening and while he had never touched Harry himself, except for physical abuse, his father had allowed him to watch several times to see the correct way of punishing ingrate losers. He'd laughed in glee at Harry's tears.

Voldemort shook his head, keeping a firm control on his magic although visible waves still radiated from him. They had dared to hurt his Harry... They had dared... He would personally ensure that everyone who had touched his prize would have a very long time to regret their actions but he still hadn't seen what he needed. He hissed feeling the split in his eyes and his skin itching... The snake wanted out to avenge it mate. About twenty different men had used Harry but none of them were Wizards. "Where is the wizard, Harry? Show me which one is the wizard..." He said as he gently cupped Harry's face, wiping away the sweat that was on his brow.

Three more years... It had continued for three more years with the Wizard appearing when Harry was almost ten. The wizard knew who Harry was and had seemed to take further pleasure in the fact that the one who had beaten the great Dark Lord Voldemort had been reduced to nothing more than a sex toy by Muggles. Voldemort growled, a feral smile on his face, and his sharp teeth catching his lip. "I will know you," he whispered. The wizard was one he didn't know but that had never stopped him. He knew what he looked like... That was enough for the snake...
There was one more memory though... of the time when the spell had been cast. It had been just after the first Hogwarts letter had been sent to Harry. The wizard had come to the house late one night with someone else in tow; a vampire by the looks of things. They had stunned the Muggles quickly and then had gone to Harry.

The Vampire had commented on how beautiful Harry was and had made the offer to turn him but the wizard had shook his head. "As much as I regret the loss of my toy, it is necessary."

The Vampire had nodded before stepping up to the boy, sweeping back his hood and weaving the magic. The Dark Lord looked closely at the Vampire... There was something familiar there... With the level of power Voldemort could sense even through Harry's undeveloped senses it had to be an elder although that raised the question of how the wizard had paid the being. Elder's, if they agreed to work for you were not cheap. Ah... He remembered now... Xeoaph Casitial... Vampire elder, over two thousand years old, and one he had once approached for blood and one of the few Vampires who know wizarding magic. At least having a Vampire perform the spell answered Voldemort's other question on how it had escaped detection for so long.

"But you have not escaped me. I will show you true darkness," the Dark Lord purred as he broke the obliviate spell completely. Xeoaph would know it but would have no reason to pursue the matter and even if it did, he knew how to deal with their kind.

Harry frowned as the obliviate vanished and even in sleep he knew that something had changed.

The Dark Lord sat lightly on the side of the bed. With Harry remembering everything, it would be almost impossible to claim him. He would have left the spell in place but Harry had to be whole to claim his birthright. Seduction was going to be difficult now, the boy had too many bad memories... Unless...

Voldemort smiled, looking down at Harry. "My little one..." He hissed. "Let me show you what it means to be loved..." With a gentle move he leaned down brushing his lips against Harry's, tasting, teasing...

He drew back, crimson eyes hooded as he raised his wand once again. "You will give me such pleasure," he whispered, "such pleasure."
Voldemort raised his wand. "Confu," he said the charm quickly before adding a second one. "Easasum." If Harry knew who his partner was now he would probably fight but that couldn't be allowed to happen. The boy had to enjoy this and the second charm was to relax him. Harry would know what was happening but would only be able to remember who he was with when he was ready to accept the truth.

The charms in place, Voldemort stood, pulling off the covers that half covered Harry and shedding his own outer robes before taking off his soft half boots. As an after thought he added a silencing spell on the room before sitting back on the bed.

Harry was so beautiful. Long black lashes curled on his cheeks as he slumbered. His lips were pursed in a small smile and he sighed softly as Voldemort cupped his face again, wiping away one crystal tear that had escaped when his memories had been released. "My little one," the Dark Lord whispered. "I will not let them hurt you again," he added the promise.

He leaned close again, lying next to Harry and began to kiss the boy's smooth skin. Long fingers slid under Harry's shirt and caressed the boy's abdomen and chest. It was almost like undressing a doll as Harry continued to sleep but no doll had ribs that poked out sharply and the Dark Lord suppressed yet another burst of anger. Someone was going to pay dearly for this...

Voldemort gently held Harry as he eased the oversized shirt off before continuing to caress his prize, paying special attention to Harry's nipples, making them surge with blood. He leant in again to kiss the boy, deepening the kiss and sliding his tongue into Harry's mouth as the child responded unconsciously.

Voldemort smiled against Harry's mouth and looked into green eyes as his destined mate awoke but what surprised the Dark Lord was the way Harry responded. The boy's tongue moved against his own and Harry began sucking gently at him. His arms reached out to embrace the man lying beside him and his hands began to run up and down Voldemort's back, caressing him through the silk of his shirt. And most surprisingly, Harry spread his legs before wrapping them loosely around the Dark Lord's thighs, forcing their genitals to rub together pleasurably.

Voldemort pulled back, intending to admonish the boy gently, telling him to enjoy what was to be given but Harry's next words and reaction made him freeze.

"Heprah..." The boy had gasped the name but not in pleasure, in fright and he had tensed up, despite the relaxation charm, his muscles hard with anticipation. He was obviously expecting punishment.

"No," Voldemort hissed in parceltongue. "I'm not him," he continued. "I won't let him hurt you again." With his hands he stroked Harry's back, soothing the boy hiding his smile... So the Wizard's name was Heprah...

Harry's magnificent eyes opened wide as he saw soft crimson eyes looking back at him fiercely. This wasn't Heprah, that wizard had blue eyes and as he breathed deeply he could smell and sense that the man with him wasn't the wizard who had attacked him. "Who...?" He questioned, unconsciously replying in parceltongue.
Voldemort smiled again as he felt Harry relax but in the back of his mind he promised himself that Heprah would live for a very long time under the finest tortures he could devise. "It's not important, Harry," he said, extending the Confu charm and kissing the boy's nose gently.

Harry sighed slightly and his eyelids drooped. This man felt... safe.

"No Harry, not yet... You may sleep later," the Dark Lord began stroking Harry again. "For now just enjoy..." He lowered his face again, kissing Harry gently and was pleased to feel the boy return his kiss. But this time Harry's response was more natural, less practiced and infinitely pleasurable. He didn't need or want Harry to be his trained concubine. Any of his followers would have offered themselves or their children for that. Even a well-trained Muggle could fulfil that role. He just needed Harry to be his. The boy was intoxicating just the way he was.

With deliberate precision Voldemort began to kiss and lick his way down Harry's neck. He nuzzled into the boy affectionately, laughing softly as the boy mewed under his touch. He licked Harry's nipples, nipping teasingly before he sucked at one, while his long fingers rubbed at the other. Harry ran his small hands over his back, clawing weakly at the enjoyment he was getting. Voldemort's spare hand traced its way over Harry's firm stomach, travelling down to Harry's pants. He didn't enter them yet; instead he just let himself rub Harry through the fabric.

The boy squirmed at the touch and it was delightful. He laughed again, the rich sound wrapping around them both as he applied a little more pressure, calculatingly tracing out Harry's length. His angel moaned, pushing small hands against his shoulders frantically clawing at him. Voldemort could hear the scrape of the boy's nails against his shirt.

He moved up again, taking Harry's mouth as he removed his shirt. The blood red silk slithered off the bed as he moved his hand's to Harry's hips hooking his thumbs into the fabric of Harry's pants and sliding them down. The boy was fully aroused and Voldemort smiled at the sight of the pink flesh. He licked his lips, giving Harry a toothy grin.

"You are so beautiful," Voldemort sighed, feeling his skin begin to mottle and began kissing a direct path down to Harry's engorged length. He licked the tip, dipping his tongue into the small centre depression before taking the head in his mouth and sucking gently, swirling his long tongue over it. Harry whimpered but it was a sound of unbearable pleasure rather than pain. Voldemort pushed himself down, swallowing Harry's whole penis as the boy continued to squirm beneath him. The Dark Lord moved his hands to Harry's hips, guiding his movements as he moved up and down, running his tongue and lips over every vein on Harry’s length. The taste was divine, and for a being like him, whose sense of taste was also defined by smell, that was saying something.

Both Harry's hands gripped the sheets beneath him as he struggled not to force himself deeper into the exquisite warmth that surrounded his cock. None of the men liked it when he did that... Not really... They all hurt him after wards, saying that he'd hurt them... But it felt so good!

It appeared his unknown lover sensed his reticence and pulled back, blood red eyes meeting his green. "Let go, Harry..." the deep voice surrounded him. "Enjoy... You will not hurt me, and I will not hurt you. I will show you what it means to be loved."

Harry nodded uncertainly, feeling anxious but the man had kept his gaze, red eyes looking into his very soul. After a moment, apparently satisfied with his response the serpentine man smiled at him again before batting his cock playfully with his tongue. Harry moaned. "More..?" The smiled changed from being reassuring to truly pleased and Harry felt the warmth return and he sighed blissfully.
Voldemort reapplied himself to Harry's length with a vengeance. *That the boy should have to hold himself back...* He growled softly, turning the noise into further pleasure for his pet as he felt Harry begin to push himself upwards. That was a more normal reaction! *Everyone* was going to pay for scarring his prize... And every reaction Harry gave him only added further time to their suffering. But the boy was coming around and he was enjoying this. His black hair was dishelved and scattered across his pillow as he trashed his head around and his emerald eyes were clouded with desire.

After he had established a good rhythm with Harry moaning appreciatively at every stroke, he moved his hands, moving one around behind Harry to gently stroke his opening, as the other moved upwards to the boy's mouth. He inserted one long finger into the boy, keeping the motion gentle and slow so as not hurt his prize. Harry's eyes opened wide as he felt the invasion but after a moment he relaxed again, opening his mouth to suck eagerly on the long digits there.

He began to thrust into Harry with the motions of his mouth as he delicately felt for the boy's prostrate. Imperceptibly Voldemort frowned. Those men had hurt his prize, tearing him horribly but there was no evidence of it. The boy was whole and unscarred. The Dark Lord blinked as he realised the explanation. The Hogwart's Nurse... Given the number of times the boy saw her, it wasn't really that surprising that his scars were no longer there. She would have cast a general healing spell on him as some time and that would have healed everything. Well... She had just unknowingly earnt his mercy. If she refused to join him, her death would be quick.

The Dark Lord smiled around Harry and hummed, closing his eyes gleefully as the boy cried out. He swapped his hands around, driving a second long saliva slicked finger into the boy, slowly stretching him as Harry bit lightly on the digits in his mouth.

He added a third finger bushing against the boy's prostrate before he pulled back, surging upwards to kiss Harry, muffling his prize's scream of release. Voldemort drew back, smiling at Harry as he collected the boy's semen, spreading the sticky substance over his fingers and driving them into the boy again. Harry cried out, gasping at the intrusion but his eyes were happy.

He continued to kiss Harry and after the moment of release faded, the boy began to kiss him back as his free hand undid his pants and his own erection bobbed freely. He positioned himself carefully against Harry, noting the small flash of worry that showed in his prize's eyes before the boy relaxed again, smiling trustingly up at him.

"Let me show you what it means to be loved," he whispered the words again in askance.

Harry nodded at him, biting his lip gently but still smiling. Voldemort took one of Harry's small hands in his own, squeezing it reassuringly as he wrapped his free arm around the boy, drawing him close. With a slow thrust he entered his prize and for a moment he was lost, throwing his head back in ecstasy with a muted gasp of pleasure. Harry was *so* hot and tight. It was an incredible feeling.

Harry looked up at him as he looked back down. There was an echo of pain in his green eyes and Voldemort immediately berated himself. Only Harry's pleasure mattered... He quickly twisted himself within his prize hitting Harry's prostrate.

The pain in Harry's eyes vanished, the clouded desire reappearing. Harry reached out with his own free hand, pulling the Dark Lord down to kiss him passionately as he thrust upwards to meet the hips of the man above him.

Voldemort pulled back before beginning to thrust into Harry with long smooth strokes. Harry pushed back, crying out as his lover drove himself deeper with every thrust. It was wonderful. The body beneath him was so tight and the mewling cries Harry was making were just spurring him on. With every motion he hit the boy's sweet spot, loving the way his treasure was now clawing at the scaled
Harry was panting but his brilliant eyes glowed and the Dark Lord decided that Harry had never looked so beautiful. Messy hair, full red lips, sparkling emerald eyes and a thin sheen of sweat covered him. He licked at Harry's neck, nipping the creamy skin before taking Harry's mouth. Their tongues met fervently and for a moment they seemed intent on devouring each other before Harry threw his head back, exposing his neck and gripping Voldemort's shoulders with desperate strength as he cried his release. Hot fluid flowed between them binding them together before Voldemort thrust upwards once more, deeply into Harry, biting down on his lover's neck as his own release struck. "Harry!" His magic, a tangible aura that always surrounded him flooded into the boy, passing through him, merging with Harry's own magic and supporting him.

For a long minute they lay together. Harry lowered his head, closing his eyes as he muzzled the crown of the man's head. The slit red eyes were familiar, he should know them but at the moment all he could feel was pleasure - the afterglow of his own release, the soft gentle touch of the other man's magic, the way his unknown lover fitted into him and the wonderful feeling of being filled with the other's essence. Hesitantly because he didn't want the feeling to end he unwrapped his legs from the other man.

Voldemort lay perfectly still atop his prize. He could taste the faint coppery tang of blood again and he realised that he had broken Harry's unmarked skin. The boy didn't seem to be in pain though. In fact, it seemed Harry was as shell shocked as him with the intensity of the events they had just been through. It had been exquisite.

The Dark Lord pulled out of the boy with a soft wet noise and immediately Harry moaned, feeling strangely empty... A slight frown passed over his face as his eyelids threatened to close once more... It was strange, that empty feeling... He had never felt that way before... He'd never wanted it to continue...

The man with him leant down again, kissing him gently but not deepening the kiss. "It's all right," the voice came from everywhere. "I won't ever leave you. I love you, my little one."

Harry smiled, feeling the truth of the words as he lost his battle with sleep. Feeling tired but replete and for the first time ever loving the smell of sex and the feeling of the other man's essence within him he fell asleep, cradled by his unknown lover's aura and realising only at the very end, that this was what it was like to be loved.

Voldemort held Harry gently as the boy finally succumbed to fatigue. His body was healed but the boy's magic had been working over time to protect him and that would naturally leave him exhausted without the further physical exercise or the strain of having the Oliviate broken. It had been worth it though... Harry was so tight... so virginal... so beautiful...

The new memories he had given Harry now would compete with the old but at least now the boy knew what sex was meant to be like. And once Harry realised who had given him this feeling, realised who had shown him the truth... Voldemort smiled... That was a day he was already looking forward to.

The Dark Lord rose, pulling his shirt and pants back on before picking up his robe and wrapping Harry in the dark fabric as he lifted him off the bed. The boy was strong but he was still dangerously underweight and that only became more evident at how light he felt to the Dark Lord. He bent over and kissed Harry gently on the forehead before undoing the silencing charm with a flick of his wand.
Another flick of his wand removed the sealing charms on the house and Voldemort's crimson eyes flashed as he realised his mistake.

He could put up as many charms as he wanted but the Alarm Wards were keyed to be activated by the removal of any charm within their boundary! The Main Wards earlier hadn't been a problem because he had specifically countered their Alarm Ward and the Obliviate while being tied to the Wards wasn't meant to be there but any other charms... Harry stirred in his arms and Voldemort shrugged...

It didn't really matter. Dumbledore, the Ministry - they would all be too late. With a regal air he swept from the room and proceeded down stairs where his loyal Death Eaters were waiting, the bound Muggles arrayed before them. They bowed slightly at their Master hiding smiles at the satisfied feeling his aura was generating. They followed their Master from the house, levitating the Muggles behind them but pulled up short once they were clear of the house.

"Go!" The Dark Lord murmured the order to his servants, noting absently that they didn't question him, they merely Apparated, taking the Muggles with them.

Voldemort looked at the force arrayed before him with a soft smile that caused many of them to flinch. Dumbledore was there, as was Remus Lupin, Minerva McGonagall, Arthur Weasley, Mad-Eye Moody and what looked to be about half of the Auror Department, interspersed with one or two Unspeakables. A large black dog growled fiercely at him but was restrained by the Werewolf.

"Tom..."

Voldemort shook his head suddenly. Dumbledore insisted on calling him that but it didn't anger him anymore. "No, not anymore," he replied, meeting the aged wizard's eyes squarely. "Not for a very long time."

Dumbledore and the others stirred at his tone although none of them lowered their trembling wands. "Regrets?" The Headmaster questioned intently.

The man known throughout the Wizarding World as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named looked down at the bundle in his arms before turning back to Dumbledore with a smile. "No, not anymore," he repeated his previous answer.

"Give Harry to me," Dumbledore ordered, looking intense.

Voldemort laughed. "No." His response was short, causing the entire Auror battalion to aim their wands, curses already half voiced. "I don't think so," he elaborated. "You've had your chance to protect him and you've failed."

Only one or two of the group picked up on his true meaning. "How?"

"The walls have memories," was his only response as he vanished, a small slip of parchment falling from his robes.
Dumbledore sighed softly as Tom disappeared and half the Auror's collapsed. Time had certainly mellowed his driving ambition but he was still as dangerous as ever.

"Was that really...?" One of the younger Auror's asked the question, trailing off as he received glares from his companions.

"Yes, that was really him," Alastor confirmed gruffly as he cast one or two charms on the parchment that had been left behind. Once he was satisfied it was safe he summoned it before softly cursing. It was a letter, sealed with the Dark Mark and labelled in neat red script, 'HP'.

"I think you'd better see this," the old Auror murmured passing the letter to Dumbledore as an Auror team stormed into the house, ready to take on any traps or ambushes waiting for them.

Dumbledore read the letter, his blue eyes grim, their customary sparkle dulled by the significance of the events. After a moment he shook his head, refolding the letter and placing it in his robes. "It at least explains how he got past the security here," he said before following the Auror's in.

"Albus...?" Remus questioned not content with no explanation as Snuffles nipped him before turning brown eyes to glare at the Headmaster.

"There were spells on the letter that let Voldemort see the Warding in the house," Moody explained. "Mr Potter is far stronger than he looks. He'll be all right until we can find him. For now though, Mr Lupin, I believe we need to know the truth about the failed protection or not."

Dumbledore stood in the centre of the smallest bedroom, looking round through narrowed eyes. There was blood on the floor and the furniture bore signs of scuff marks. Hedwig hooted at him from her cage but the poor bird was so thin and untidy that he almost didn't recognise her.

"My God...!" Remus murmured as he stepped into the room, covering his nose with one hand.

"What do you smell?" Dumbledore asked as he flicked his wand, closing the door. Arthur, Minerva, Moody, Remus, Sirius and himself were all that was needed here. The Auror's would just cause further complications.

"Sex..." Remus said quietly. "Recent... very recent."

The Headmaster of Hogwarts showed no surprise or any reaction as he nodded. "Anything else?"

"Blood." The Werewolf gulped and forced himself to remain detached. He had to do this or else they might never find Harry. "There is a really faint scent of recent blood but the main concentration is about a day old." He pointed towards the patches on the floor. "Those I'd say. There's nothing else out of the ordinary except a dry snake odour but that's to be expected." Beside him Sirius nodded in dog form, looking anxiously at the door.

"Thank you, Remus," Dumbledore nodded gravely before turning to Alastor. "What can you see?"
The man's magical eye was going haywire, trying to look everywhere at once. "There's a lot of static here. I guess the boy's magic or his Lordships was very diffuse and the house spells aren't helping," the scarred man reported quietly before concentrating. "There's the echoes of 'Confu', 'Easasum', some major Healing charms and a... 'Obliviate fractus'"

Dumbledore just stood there. "Obliviate fractus?"

"Quite a powerful one."

"The walls have memories..." The Headmaster murmured, repeating Voldemort's parting words. "I taught him that spell myself."

"Albus?" There was a worried note in Minerva's voice.

The moment passed and Dumbledore returned to his usual self, his eyes twinkling weakly. "Everyone, please stand back," he gestured with his wand, locking the door in the same movement. "I think it's time we knew what happened here. Revisum hours forty eight!"

Sirius transformed, giving Dumbledore a very dark look before he was consumed with the vision the Headmaster's charm had invoked.

A misty vision of Harry sleeping peacefully appeared and Albus nodded before flicking his wand. Harry was struggling, obviously in the grip of a nightmare before he woke up and looked outside. A black eagle hawk delivered his letter they watched transfixed as Harry read it once with a sceptical expression. After the boy had finished though he'd frowned obviously considering the letter and it's contents before he froze, a look of horror on his features.

A moment later, Harry had stuffed the letter under the bed before he ran to the door. His Aunt appeared and Sirius hissed at the woman who said something to Harry and he left. Dumbledore again flicked his wand. Harry entered the room again, carrying a glass of water and a slice of bread. The boy split the bread, giving half to Hedwig before he sat on the bed, nibbling his bread and sipping the water, a look of apprehension plastered on his features.

Harry sat there for quite some time before his Uncle had burst into the room. Even though the image was only spectral the rage that was evident in the older man seemed excessive. Sirius snarled and Remus grabbed his arm as Harry got one word out before the older man had hit him.

"I'll kill him!" Sirius snarled as the man continued to beat his God-child. "I'll kill him!"

Eventually it was over and Vernon left Harry crumpled on the floor. Blood pooled below Harry and he passed out.

"That's enough," Sirius said quietly.

"Sirius," Dumbledore turned towards him, his eyes grim once more. "I'm afraid that's not everything. And we have to continue this so that we may help Harry and while this is horrific, I'm afraid we are going to have to delve further into the past to understand what Tom was referring to. 'The walls have memories' and only they know why the Obliviate was cast."

"This had better be worth it."

Dumbledore flicked his wand again and they watched as Harry struggled to his bed dragging himself on it again before falling unconscious again. Dumbledore pursed his lips as he willed the image forward and as expected the next thing was Tom Riddle entering the room. The Dark Lord had looked murderous; eyes split and skin almost looking like it was scaled. After murmuring orders to
the Death Eaters who appeared in the door he had gone to Harry.

Sirius watched, flabbergasted, as the man who had wanted nothing more that to kill Harry had raised his wand muttering spells that had eased Harry's pain. It was obvious that what ever spells the Dark Lord had said had calmed Harry since his pained expression became normal and he slipped into peaceful sleep. Sirius almost felt thankful to the Dark Lord, almost... But then Voldemort had pulled the covers off Harry and shed his own outer layers caressing the boy and kissing him...

"No..." Sirius moaned. "He didn't... He can't have..." He couldn't say anymore because it was obvious that the Dark Lord had. Even as a human he could smell the odour of sex. And it became obvious that in some way Harry reciprocated.

Dumbledore didn't let the image continue as he destroyed the spell with a sharp swish of his wand. The old man had sighed tiredly. "Harry wasn't in his right mind, Sirius. Remember that. That was the 'Confu' spell was for. I'd wager Harry would have fought tooth and nail if he'd of had any idea what was happening. But now I'm afraid we will have to continue."

"Albus, are you sure?" Minerva asked the question gravely.

"I'm sure, Minerva. I know Tom well enough to know that he wouldn't have said what he did without some knowledge. We have to know what he knows."

"You don't have to go all the way back."

"What is this?" Remus asked.

"It's a spell like the one we just saw," Moody began, "except Albus will take the image back years rather than hours."

"You can't!"

"We don't have a choice. I'll be alright."

"What?!

McGoganall fixed Dumbledore with a stare that quite clearly said that she though he was pushing to far as she explained it to Remus, Sirius and Arthur. "The charm to bring back the recent past is draining but the charm to bring back years past is not taught because it requires ridiculous amounts of energy. It's usually only done by a group working together..."

"But we don't have time for that," Albus broke in quietly, "and I have the feeling that we have to know."

Sirius narrowed his eyes. "All right," he said eventually. "If we don't know, Voldemort's only going to twist everything."

Dumbledore nodded sagely. "Thank you. This will not be easy - to cast or to witness but you must remember that everything we see will allow us to help Harry. He endured this, so can we."

The aged wizard raised his wand, his eyes suddenly showing his age. *I'm sorry, Harry*, he thought before murmuring the words. *Revisum years octatifium."

There was a surge of power and the whole room was covered with wavy ghostly images but no people. The room was filled with clutter and despite the seriousness of the situation, Arthur looked around wide-eyed at the many and varied Muggle toys that filled the room. The only things that
hadn't moved were the bed and the largest cupboard.

"I'm going to go quickly, unless something happens. I'm not sure how long I can hold this."

The others in the room nodded, slightly awed. Even with their knowledge of Dumbledore's strength, it was impressive seeing it.

The image seemed to blur somewhat but everything remained identifiable and then people began coming and going from the room. Sirius easily recognised Petunia cleaning and Dudley playing but those were all normal. It wasn't until Vernon entered the room dragging Harry that he felt a chill pass through him. This wasn't right.

The image slowed slightly and it wasn't long before another man entered the room. Dumbledore slowed the image completely to normal time as the man approached Harry. "Endure it, for him," he warned the others again, looking sternly at both Sirius and Remus.

Harry looked at the man, seven year old emerald eyes wide. When the man got too close the boy lashed out, kicking and clawing but to no avail. The man just caught his hands, gripping both thin wrists in his large hand and he had then pushed Harry back on to the bed, the man's other hand ripping away the boys cloths. Harry had screamed then but the man had just pushed a wad of fabric into his mouth and had appeared to laugh.

Once Harry was naked the man began to lick him, starting with his face and moving downwards. The man had paid special attention to Harry's genitals but he had continued to struggle. After what seemed an eternity the man had flipped Harry over and forced himself into the small boy. Little Harry's eyes opened wide and under his gag they could see him scream. Tears formed in his eyes but the man had laughed again and had licked at them, driving into the young body harder.

Finally it was over and Harry lay slumped on the bed as the man dressed and left. A few moments after the man had left, Harry had pulled the cloth from his mouth and had looked around for anything that was still wearable from his clothes. Vernon's head had appeared at the door a moment later and the man had thrown some fresh cloths to the boy.

Dumbledore looked grim and a sheen of sweat had appeared on his brow. With a determined flick the scene blurred. "I'm going to skip a couple of years..."

The image solidified again as another man left a crying Harry although this time the boy was a lot older, closer to eleven although they knew that couldn't be the case. The abuse couldn't have continued after his Hogwarts Letter had arrived. They would have known.

Sirius bit his lip as he continued to watch feeling sicker with every passing moment. His expression was shared, in it's own way by all of them but they had to witness this, for Harry.

Vernon came in after a moment and for an instant it looked like he was just going to throw new cloths at Harry but the fat man had checked his watch and then had advanced on Harry. From the door there was a flicker of motion and Sirius glanced over to see the obese Dudley standing there watching as Vernon violated Harry.

When it was over again the fat man left, sharing a few words with his son that they both laughed at.

Dumbledore's eyes were narrowed in concentration and he was looking fierce, nothing like the kindly old man he seemed to be. With another flick of his wand the scene again changed, this time to show two men with Harry both dressed in what were obviously wizards robes.

"There," the Headmaster said, waving his free hand, freezing the image. "Anyone recognise them."
"That one's not human," Both Moody and Remus pointed to the taller man while Arthur frowned. There was something familiar about one of the men...

Dumbledore let the image move forward a little and the man took off his hood. "Ah... A vampire... Xeoaph, I believe," Dumbledore murmured.

The image once again moved and the Vampire raised his hands, weaving visible lines of magic. The energy centred around Harry before it seemed to seep into him. His sleeping image frowned but then became peaceful again and the two men turned to leave.

"No, freeze it!" It was Arthur who shouted the request. "I know him!" Mr Weasley pointed to the man accompanying the Vampire.

"Who is he?"

"He's a trader... Has some dealing with the Ministry dealing with magical artefacts... His name... Hep... Hepras...? Ah, that's it, Heprah Yusia."

Dumbledore nodded and let the charm fade.

"I'll kill them," Sirius said quietly.

Dumbledore tapped the side of his nose, looking at Sirius. "I am sorry, Sirius, more sorry than you can imagine but I think it would be better if we brought them to justice. The 'Revisum' charm isn't widely used but it is admissible and there are clauses in the system that allow for Muggles to be tried in our world."

Sirius trembled. "Punishment?"

"They'd get the Kiss," Moody spoke up. "There'd be no question about that, Harry Potter or not, Muggle or not, they'd get it."

"And they'd deserve it," Arthur spoke, still looking sick. He had seven children and the thought that any of them... that any child... should have to go through that...

Remus looked at Dumbledore closely. "Why didn't we know?"

"The Elder Vampire Xeoaph, who has been on the Ministry's Most Wanted list for centuries, cast the Obliviate. And as you well know, Vampiric magic is almost impossible to sense."

"So how did Voldemort find out about it?"

"I'd imagine through Harry's blood but that's not the issue here. We have to start the search for Harry."

"All right," Sirius growled before turning back into Snuffles but Snuffles hackles were raised and his lips were pulled back, revealing long white teeth.

"Let's go."

The tone was sombre as they filed out.

Remus paused at the door, letting Hedwig take one last look at the room. "We'll find you Harry," he whispered. "We won't fail again."
Voldemort looked down at his sleeping prize as he considered his next move. He had Harry here but he knew, having wasn't keeping and his prize would still fight him before bowing to the inevitable. The Dark Lord was actually looking forward to the fight...

Harry had his true memories back now and he had a new memory to combat the truth with but it was unlikely that he would be ready to accept either. In time, there would be no choice but for the immediate future... Acceptance would not come easily either. The Dark Lord narrowed his eyes, idly running one hand through Harry's sleep tousled hair, feeling the beginning of an idea form but his train of thought was broken as sleepy green eyes blinked and Harry looked around confused.

Emerald eyes flicked around wildly and Voldemort made soothing noises to his pet but he failed to prevent the inevitable as Harry remembered. Crystal tears collected in his eyes and then rolled over his creamy skin. The Dark Lord moved long white fingers to Harry's face, cupping it and gently wiping away the tears before raising his hand and licking at the salty liquid. "My poor little one," he murmured before embracing Harry, pulling the boy into a sitting position.

Harry held back only for an instant. All unknowing he clung to the man who was offering him comfort, sobbing into the fine black fabric. Warm arms were wrapped around him and hands were running up and down his back, stroking him gently. A soft litany of comforting murmurs sounded in his ear and he felt safe... protected...

But nothing could protect him from his memories.

He had... They had... They had all... It had hurt, it had hurt so much... He'd asked them to stop, why hadn't they stopped? What had he done wrong? Shouldn't they at least tell him that? It hurt... It hurt so much... He couldn't tell anyone. He'd tried but he just couldn't get the words out and they had watched all the time. They'd hurt him when they thought he might have been thinking about telling. There had been no way out.

He'd been used... He felt so cheap. He was dirty. He was so dirty...

"Shh... Harry... Shh... I will not hurt you... It's alright, I won't let them hurt you again..."

"I'm dirty..." Harry gasped through his tears, not looking up. He trusted the man... They wouldn't hurt him again but he still felt like used goods...

"No Harry," Voldemort soothed him. "No, you're not. Not to me. I will always be here for you."

Harry looked up dazedly, blinking tear filled emerald eyes, focusing on the crimson eyes that looked down at him. He sniffed and shook his head before bowing it back again, gripping tighter to the man. He remembered those eyes... They had been comforting... They had been soft as they were now. And he knew the voice, it had soothed him before and it had been rough with the sound of his name at the moment of release and it had been the only one to whisper endearments to him.

"Let me show you what it means to be loved," Voldemort whispered into Harry's thick hair reminding him of the better time as he inhaled his scent.
Harry gulped feeling himself become weak again. He was warm and the words brought back an incredible feeling of pleasure as if he was wrapped in a cocoon. He was protected and cherished... He was safe. His eyes became heavy again and he sighed... He felt a little better but he was still dirty. He'd still been used.

"I won't ever leave you."

Harry nodded slightly and sighed as he felt himself lose consciousness again. The words were comforting... The man would stay with him... Perhaps he could face the darkness.

Voldemort looked down at his treasure as he laid Harry back down, keeping one hand on the boy's chest, rubbing gently. His reaction was expected. Grief... It would be followed by guilt, then anger, before acceptance and then Harry would be ready to move on. He narrowed his eyes; grief he could handle but he had never dealt well with guilt and anger... He could help with those reactions but he would kill for Harry and that would spoil what he had planned for Harry's ascension gift.

No... Dumbledore created this mess. He could help Harry through the last four reactions until Harry was ready to come back to him.

"It looks like I will only get to keep you for a little while, my pet," he hissed the words softly as the path became clear. "But I have claimed you, never forget that Harry, I have claimed you."

The Dark Lord walked silently towards the door, after willing a small meal into existence for his pet. He looked back once before smiling. The boy wouldn't be here long this time but the image of Harry sleeping in his bed was enough for Voldemort to know that it was the sight he wanted to see every time he entered his chambers.

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The Dark Lord surveyed his assembled Death Eaters. They were talking quietly amongst themselves as they waited for the final few to arrive. No one knew why they had been called tonight and they were all curious. There was a mix of Elite and normal here but they all wore plain masks so only he could tell who was who.

Cold red eyes glittered as the doors clanged shut, effectively calling order and the Death Eaters all bowed to him.

"You have gathered for a reason," he announced coldly. "I wish a number Muggles found," the Dark Lord continued, waving his wand creating images of the one's he had seen in Harry's memory. "Muggles?" The question came from several Death Eaters.

Voldemort's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Muggles," he hissed, silencing all questions. "They may be connected to each other so if you find one he may lead you to the others. I want them found. I want them marked and I do not want the Ministry to have any idea. Once they have all been found they will be collected." He looked around again. "These may be Muggles but the one's who deliver them to me shall be rewarded."

His Death Eaters bowed, wisely keeping their questions to themselves. "Severus," Voldemort called. "Stay," he ordered as the others filled out.

Once they were alone in the large throne room Severus bowed, removing his mask, "My Lord."

"At Hogwarts I doubt you will be able to find Muggles so I have a different task for you."
The tall man nodded, waiting for his Master to continue.

"Dumbledore has not announced it yet but I have claimed what is rightfully mine."

Severus blinked, keeping his expression schooled into strict neutrality. He had no idea what Voldemort was saying.

"Ah... You don't know, either, do you?"

It wasn't a question that could be left unanswered. "I do not know, My Lord," Severus admitted and was surprised as Voldemort laughed.

"Of course not." The Dark Lord raised his wand, creating a new illusion.

The image was of a sleeping Harry Potter. He appeared calm, curled up on black silk sheets with his head resting on green silk pillows. A small snake was coiled beside him, sampling the air and looking about with dull eyes. Snape recognised the snake. It was the type Voldemort set to guarding select individuals.

"My Lord?" Severus fought to keep the tremor out of his voice. If the Dark Lord had Harry then... He didn't even want to know what it meant.

"My prize has come to me," Voldemort said proudly, "but he is not ready to accept fully and Dumbledore has much to answer for."

"I do not understand, My Liege."

"You will help the Order of the Phoenix recover Harry Potter," Voldemort announced. "Such an act I'm sure will be beneficial for you in securing your position and the trust of Dumbledore."

Severus gulped. "My Lord," he forced the words out. "You honour me."

Voldemort waved one white hand dismissively. "I merely wish to preserve several items within my fortress. You will lead them to Harry and I will have him suitably confined."

"The dungeons?"

"No... Nothing so crude... He will be in my chambers. The password will be 'Salamir Ascendant'. I'll tell my pets to leave you alone but I cannot guarantee all the Order Members."

Snape bowed again but the Dark Lord waved him off with the final instruction, "Don't be late."

Dumbledore sat alone in his office considering events as Fawkes sung quietly. He had made a mistake. He had made a mistake that might damn the Wizarding World... Those Muggles... How could they do that to their own? 'The Worst Kind of Muggles'... Minerva had called them that, right at the beginning... But then there had been no thought of that in their minds... He had checked... He had checked very carefully... What had changed?...

He shook his head, forcing himself to look at the letter. Harry's letter lay on the desk in front of him... Mocking him... It was true... All of it... And it was mocking him. He had put such power with those Muggles... He reached out to read it again. Tom had been brutally honest but had left out key pieces of information... He had explained enough that Harry would understand but only see one half of the truth...
With a sudden hiss the letter burned and the Headmaster looked on with mild curiosity. It appeared Tom had reactivated the charms embedded in the paper. With a grim smile Dumbledore looked on, knowing his student would see him and would act upon that information.

The letter burst into flames but from the ashes of the old letter a new parchment emerged, one labelled 'AD'. It hovered before him and then unfolded itself.

_Dumbledore,_

_Why am I not surprised that it is you who hold this parchment?_

_The Walls have memories..._

_You know the truth now... Very unexpected, I assure you but nothing I can't handle. They hurt my prize and for that they will suffer. Do not worry about Harry's Muggle Relatives. I have not hurt them._

_Yet._

_I can see you still... You are shaking your head, perhaps wishing you had taken your chance to kill me so long ago... I assure you though, I will not kill Harry's Relatives... I have something else in mind for them. And for the other Muggles who have dared to touch him. There were twenty-six in all, not counting those who claim to be his relatives... I have plans for all of them._

_Heprah is another matter though... I trust you will make the appropriate arrangements..? If you do not, I will and I will not be so merciful as to grant him the Kiss. Xeoaph is useful to me so the Vampire will be given a chance of absolution. He, after all, the one who granted my prize mercy by making him forget..._

_I would have left Harry thus... But you know, as do I, that he must remember. He must be whole..._

_I will not keep Harry for long. Your Order can come for him soon for the time has not yet come for me to claim him fully although it is growing closer. He knows what I want now... And he knows how good it can be._

_I am disappointed though. You should have told him the truth... As I have done... But you've had your chance and now I shall take mine. You read the letter I wrote to him so you know what I have seen and you know the truth I believe. Harry will come to believe it and then I shall claim my prize._

_You have failed in keeping him safe. Do not fail again or you will discover exactly how safe Hogwarts really is._

_Keep him safe or you will not survive my wrath._

_Lord Voldemort_

Dumbledore looked at the parchment. So Tom would be giving Harry back soon..? That would be a comfort for Sirius and perhaps he could work to undo the damage that had been done.

"_Harry..."_ Dumbledore whispered, laying the parchment aside. "Forgive me..."
"Quiet," Severus breathed the warning, black eyes brilliant as he scanned hallway. They were deep inside the Dark Lord's stronghold, approaching Voldemort's personal chambers to rescue young Harry Potter.

Dumbledore had almost had to restrain himself when Severus had reported that he knew where Harry was and he didn't really want to think about Sirius' reaction. The dog had been beside itself and had been very quiet on the mission so far. Focused.

The Order had sent three people to accompany him. Any more would have been suspicious. The castle was Voldemort's stronghold but it was not crawling with Death Eaters. The Dark Lord preferred for his servants to be out in the world, not fawning over him so the calls for a larger task force had been argued down. Four could bluff their way through the halls, any larger number would only be acceptable if Voldemort had summoned his forces, and then they could hardly be here.

"Here," Snape gestured towards a non descript door before whispering the password. "Salamir Ascendant."

The door swung back silently and with quick motions everyone pilled in, wands at the ready and eyes searching everywhere for dangers.

"Stupefy!" The curse was still effective even if it was whispered. Several snakes hissed defiantly before they fell to the ground.

"Cover me," Sirius ordered as he strode into the room. His eyes were everywhere as his old Auror training took over.

Snape had warned them that Voldemort wasn't keeping Harry in the dungeon but had chosen a more personal setting but seeing it was nothing like expected. Sirius would almost have preferred the dungeons than the blatant opulence of the room. It would have made him feel better, especially with what he knew the Dark Lord had inflicted upon Harry. With a growl that was more like Padfoot he shot several curses at the snakes that were still conscious and were entwined around the large bed.

Harry was asleep, his face calm. His hair was spread around him like a halo and he was curled around a pillow. The blankets were covering him haphazardly but the room was warm enough so that he would not be cold. Sirius reached out, bundling the covers around Harry before lifting him.

"What?!" He snarled. As he'd moved Harry there had been the soft chiming of chain links and he'd caught sight of the chain. Sirius saw red as he levelled his wand at the silver links, obliterating them. "I'll kill him," he growled, shaking his head as he picked Harry up again, turning back to the door. Two large snakes crawled into his path and he glared at them, watching with a cold sense of satisfaction as they quailed before him and slithered away.

Severus looked on with an amused expression. The Dark Lord had told him that the snakes wouldn't hurt him but it was still amusing and he privately suspected that Voldemort had intentionally packed the room with serpents just to see the reaction but it was interesting to see them retreat before an angry dog.
"Let's go," Remus said, sniffing the air delicately. "We're still in the clear."

"Hmm..." Harry blinked.

"Shh... Harry," Sirius soothed.

"Who...?" Harry murmured.

"It's me, Harry, Sirius."

"No..." Harry frowned, struggling weakly. "I can't go... They'll hurt me."

"No, they won't," Sirius said calmly. "I won't let them."

"But he promised..."

"No, Harry, no. He didn't mean it, he only wants to hurt you." Sirius forced himself to keep his voice quiet. Yelling at Harry would not serve now. In his current state he wouldn't understand.

Harry blinked sleepily, not really comprehending but he nodded as the man holding him stroked back his hair. Sirius smiled at him and gently placed a kiss on Harry's forehead as green eyes closed again.

"Can we go now?" The voice was Snape's and despite the edge to it, Sirius didn't snap back since he understood the Death Eaters urgency.

"We can go," he whispered back.

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Voldemort watched as the four cloaked figured carried Harry away. Dumbledore's chosen task force had been interesting. Snape of necessity, for no one else could lead them through the veritable maze that was his stronghold. The werewolf Lupin, whose superior senses had helped them avoid detection several times was also necessary. The Auror Moody, whose years of experience had allowed them to disarm several of his more elaborate traps and who provided a slight stain of legality to the operations had been unexpected since he had been expecting someone younger. And Sirius Black, the wanted criminal who completely destroyed any legality the Order of the Phoenix might claim but who also seemed to be someone Harry trusted. And that was very interesting.

Of course, he knew who Sirius Black was. Having Wormtail for a servant, he could hardly not know who the other Marauders were but seeing Black on active duty was surprising and it only highlighted exactly how incompetent Wormtail was. Black was intense and eminently capable. His expression made it was easy to see how the Wizarding World would have thought him capable of killing Wormtail and the Muggles. Voldemort sighed... Wormtail had his uses... But Black... He could be so much more.

The Dark Lord waved his hand dismissing the image after taking one last look at Harry before he turned to his Elites. Two of them were holding the Auror Arabella Figg while the third had their wand trained on the woman.

"You needn't worry," he spoke to her softly, ignoring the look of loathing she gave him. "The Order of the Phoenix has just rescued your charge. He should be back at Hogwarts within the hour."

Arabella nodded briefly, her eyes betraying her relief before they clouded with resignation.
Voldemort smiled, red eyes meeting hers squarely. "Which means I don't need you anymore," he purred.

She merely nodded again.

"I'm not going to kill you. That would be a waste. I have a different task for you," he continued before he was interrupted.

"I'll never serve you!" She hissed, eyes sparking.

"I don't want you to," he said easily as he raised his wand, stunning her. The Dark Lord looked at his Elites who placed binding spells on her turning to look at their Lord. He looked at the Auror, she would be a suitable bait. "I need you three to capture the Vampire Xeoaph Casitial. Use the Auror as bait and go to the dark city of Karpesh. Talk to the lesser Vampire Ikhan and tell Xeoaph I am prepared to pay for his blood, with the currency he desires. Then bring him to me. Bring her back if you can but I will understand if you can't. And I want Xeoaph unharmed."

"My Lord." The three Elites bowed before Apparating out, taking the Auror with them, leaving their Lord to his thoughts.

Voldemort sat back on his throne, alone. He half closed his eyes as he looked into the dark. He supposed he should be presiding over some Mudblood torture session but it had lost its appeal. It was useful to spread terror but ultimately unsatisfying and wasteful. He needed followers, not corpses if he wanted to rule and while Mudbloods weren't pure, they were better than Muggles and they tended to breed true and that was enough, barely, to spare them.

Muggles on the other hand...

With a vicious wave of his wand he brought Harry's relatives into the room. They looked at him, eyes wide with fear. The silencing spells were still on them so he could only smell their fear, thick in the air without having them bother him with their noise.

"I had wanted to wait until I had the others," he addressed them, turning to regard them. "But I think I can begin without them."

With a casual flick of his wand he released the binding and silencing spells on the fat boy and his father. "You, woman, have earned some mercy... You get to watch as your husband shows you what he did to my prize when you were absent."

"No..." The man bleated. "No..." He shook his head.

"Imperio..." Voldemort barely raised his wand and his voice was lazy as he cast the curse. "Now do it," he ordered, blood red eyes burning.

The boy squealed. "No..." He tried to hit his father, but the older man was stronger and blocked the blow easily, backhanding his son to the ground before he fell on the boy. His hands travelled all over his son, ripping the boy's clothes off with brutal strength. Dudley boy fought as best he could but his flab kept him from driving his father off.

When Dudley was naked, Vernon grabbed his head and drove it into the cold stone floor stunning him briefly so that he could remove his own clothing without hindrance.

"Careful..." Voldemort cautioned Vernon. "I don't want him unconscious for this."

Dudley came around though, just as Vernon finished removing his pants, stroking his penis to
erection with ham fingers. His tool wasn't large but it would do the job. Vernon slapped at Dudley's white arse making the skin red and hot before he placed both hands on the dimpled skin pulling apart the cheeks and driving himself into his son's anus.

Vernon groaned and Dudley screamed. At Voldemort's mental suggestion though, Vernon drove Dudley's head into the floor again.

"Silence," the Dark Lord growled at the boy, eyes burning.

Vernon began pumping in and out, his passage lubricated by Dudley's blood and his own precum. He grunted with effort but rammed hard into the body beneath him. Dudley had stilled, tears streaming down his face but he was silent, the look in Voldemort's eyes enough to cause him to hold his tongue as his father worked himself into a good rhythm.

Petunia watched on with wide eyes as her husband raped her son. She couldn't cry out in denial or do anything because of the magic still around her but she felt sick. A part of her was screaming.

The Dark Lord looked over at her. "I do not lie. This is what he did to Harry. Many, many times... And he allowed other's to violate my treasure. This is the beginning... I will extract full vengeance."

Vernon continued to drive himself into Dudley, his hands on his son's hips, pulling the whale like boy to him. Despite the fact that it was his son he could feel his body responding to the tight heat that it could feel. Dudley was still bleeding, the crimson liquid running down his legs and pooling beneath him. The blood made a squelching noise as Vernon thrust into Dudley. Vernon cried out as he felt himself begin the rise to his climax, unconsciously pumping harder, pushing deeper in a primevil attempt to ensure fertilisation.

Dudley was hot and tight around him, the hard ring of muscles at the entrance a firm pressure on him driving him to completion. With several long hard thrusts that drove his engorged and twitching cock deeper into Dudley he stilled as he came, flooding into his son's rectum with a savage growl of satisfaction.


Vernon groaned as he felt himself respond to the man's command. His balls twitched and he flooded into his son's depths again. Around the base of his penis, the blood still leaking from Dudley's anus mixed with creamy white cum.

"Again."

Vernon just grimaced, mouth opened in a silent scream as he was forced to respond again.

When it was over again Voldemort removed the Imperio from Vernon, watching with interest as the man found his strength and pulled out from his son, lying on his back on the cold stone floor gasping, his limp cock covered in blood and cum. The mixed liquids were smeared liberally over the sobbing boys arse and still leaked from his torn anus.

The Dark Lord laughed at the pained expressions on their faces before a cold detachment settled over his features. The torture he inflicted couldn't even begin to avenge the torture Harry had to endure for years. With a negligent flick of his wand he transported them back to their holding pens.

For now, he just needed to be alone.
"The court will come to order!"

"Objection!"

There was a murmur of surprise from the select Wizards and Witches who had been called to serve. The Court had only just been called and already the Defendant was objecting.

"What is it?" Chief Judge Gilamy Horton asked.

"I object to this being a secret session," Heprah said strenuously. "And I demand to know what I am accused of!"

Dumbledore rose. He was representing the Prosecution. He was wearing plain purple robes, the ornamentation that usually accompanied his attire absent and his eyes were unusually sombre. "I would request that this court remain a secret session because this will be a very sensitive case, Judge Horton. If at the end of this session you feel that I have been incorrect in my assessment, I will not object if you feel the need to revoke the secrecy clause retrospectively."

Judge Horton nodded at Dumbledore. The man had done so much for the Wizarding World but he couldn't make his decision based solely on that. He was meant to be impartial. However Dumbledore's suggestion was reasonable. It was impossible to reinstate secrecy once it was gone. "I don't see a problem with that."

Dumbledore smiled wanly before continuing, turning to Heprah. "I am levelling various charges against you on behalf of Mr Harry Potter."

Throughout the room the minor stirrings ceased as the Hogwarts Headmaster invoked the still legendary name. Even Judge Horton sat up straighter.

"Harry Potter?" Heprah scoffed. "I'm never met him! Why would he be accusing me of anything?"

Several of the judging committee nodded, wondering the same thing. This was a Wizarding Court. There was only the Accused, who in this case had chosen to defend himself, the Prosecution, this time represented by Dumbledore and five Judges who formed a Committee, headed by Horton and it was these five who would make the final decision. Witnesses could be called by both sides and all legal questioning techniques were permissible although Dumbledore didn't intend for there to be many questions. Once he was through, he fully expected that the Committee would condemn Heprah.

The Committee was comprised of several prominent members of the wider Wizarding Community so that whatever decision was made, it represented what the Wizarding World desired. Today, it had Horton, who was a Judge from the days of the First Voldemort Death Eater Trials, Lefrant Junra, a fellow trader in Magical Artefacts, Reika Nibbleby a free lance journalist - a secret court session would later entail secrecy charms on all concerned so there was no chance of Miss Nibbleby cashing in on her discoveries today, Bethany Salmato who was representing any Ministry concerns and Lucius Malfoy...
If it had been any other case, Dumbledore would have been worried but he knew Lucius would come to the right decision, despite his hatred for Mr Potter. Tom wouldn't have had time to instruct his followers on this and he wouldn't either, because he didn't want this issue to be general knowledge any more than Dumbledore did but Lucius was intelligent, he would work it out.

Dumbledore took a deep breath. "On Mr Potter's behalf I am levelling charges of spell casting on a minor without their consent with intent to pervert the course of justice, violation of the protective wards surrounding him and most seriously with child abuse."

"Child abuse?" Heprah laughed. "I told you, I know who he is, everyone does but I have never met him!"

"He has met you."

"Then let him make these accusations! I have full respect for the boy and what he's done for the Wizarding World but this is ridiculous!"

Dumbledore nodded. "Due to circumstances Harry is currently under several protection spells and is being accompanied by Guard Animals at all times. If the Court will permit the animals then I will summon Harry."

"The Court so agrees," Horton said formally.

With a flick of his wand Dumbledore summoned Harry. The boy was pale and had one hand on the large black dog that was at his side to calm the animal that was snarling at Heprah, hackles raised and teeth barred. Harry looked around with dull eyes, showing some slight curiosity. Since he had been rescued he had been consumed by his memories. Having had them blocked for several years was hitting him hard although occasionally his face would bear a secret soft smile. Hedwig, fully recovered from the malnutrition also accompanied him although the owl had changed. Her feathers no longer appeared to be the simple soft feathers of a snowy but instead seemed to be hard and she appeared sleek and dangerous. Her beak seemed to be long and sharp and her talons glistened as she gently gripped Harry's shoulder. She turned unblinking yellow eyes towards Heprah and hooted warningly.

"Harry," Dumbledore began calmly, for Harry's sake, ignoring the shocked looks he was getting from the Committee as they took in how pale their saviour was. "I know it's difficult but Heprah would like to know what you are accusing him of."

Harry nodded, stroking Snuffles as Hedwig nuzzled into him comfortingly. "He... He hurt me... Like the others... He hurt me," Harry began quietly.

"Harry, I'm sorry but you have to be more specific."

"He raped me," Harry wailed, burying his face in Snuffles' fur as he clung to the dog, looking more like a young child than a teenager of fifteen years.

"He what..?" The exclamation came from almost everywhere.

"I did not!" Heprah objected. "This is some sort of twisted joke."

Dumbledore sighed. "I wish it was. I truly wish it was," he said solemnly. "But there is evidence to prove it."

"I think we need to hear this."
"Several days ago the reborn Lord Voldemort decided to come after Harry Potter and the Dark Lord tripped the Wards around Harry's house. Several Aurors, myself and a few members of the Order, scrambled and arrived in time to see Voldemort carry Harry and his relatives off. In an effort to determine where the Dark Lord had taken Harry I cast a 'Revisum' and discovered that Harry had been continually abused as a child."

"There were Muggles also involved but Heprah was also present in the spell."

"So why didn't we hear of this sooner?" Miss Nibbleby asked.

"Harry has been under an Obliviate since just before his eleventh birthday. Lord Voldemort broke it."

"And you expect us to believe the memories weren't planted?" Heprah asked.

Horton fixed him with an unimpressed stare. "Revisum does not rely on the memories of people, it relies on the memories of objects," he explained. "If you are strong enough, you can recall the memories of years past."

Heprah's eyes opened wide and Snuffles yipped in an almost happy tone.

"He's making it up!"

"I have several witnesses who will testify to what they saw in the Revisum charm," Dumbledore said before he sighed. "And, while this would be a last resort, Harry may testify if the court feels it is necessary."

"I would think it necessary!" Heprah snarled but cringed back as Snuffles and Hedwig glared at him, as if daring him to take one step towards their charge.

"Please call your first witness, Dumbledore," Horton invited.

"Thank you. I call the Auror Alastor Moody."

With a flash Alastor appeared standing in the witness box. He was dressed in plain black Auror robes with his wand strapped to his side. He nodded briefly before looking around the court.

"Thank you for coming, Alastor," Dumbledore greeted him.

Moody said nothing as he fixed his magical eye on Heprah and his natural eye on Horton.

"We understand that you were present when Albus Dumbledore cast the Revisum charm."

"I was."

"Could you tell the court what you saw?"

Alastor nodded as the 'Witness Field' extended itself around him. It was a simple concept causing no pain but giving a visual assessment of the truth. It glowed a pale yellow. If he lied it would change to red but if it detected no untruth it would remain the same.

"It was late that night when I received Dumbledore's call. I responded immediately and Apparated to Mr Potter's place of residence to find the Anti Apparition Wards down. Several other Order Members and Auror's were there and saw Lord Voldemort emerge from the house followed by two Death Eaters who had Harry's family confined before the Dark Lord and his followers Apparated away."
"Ha! So where was Mr Potter?" Heprah seemed triumphant.

"The Lord Voldemort had him but the Order of the Phoenix, as you can see, has since rescued him but Mr Potter's where-abouts is not in question. Since it was impossible at that particular time to pursue Voldemort we continued into the house to see what had happened. We discovered recent evidence of abuse on Harry carried out by his Muggle relatives, as well as evidence of several broken spells."

"What were these spells?"

"Apart from the broken Wards, an Obliviate Fractus had been cast which freed Mr Potter's memories. The Revisum charm was cast twice. The first was to ascertain that Lord Voldemort had not harmed Mr Potter and the second time was to see what Harry has had to endure for several years. It during this second time that the Accused was seen in the Rooms memories in the company of the Vampire Xeoaph Casitial."

"I'm sorry to have to ask this but did you see the Accused with Mr Potter?"

"We saw many men with Harry and yes, the accused was one of them."

"Ridiculous!" Heprah scoffed but to the trained ear there was a note of panic in his tone.

Snuffles snarled again but was restrained by Harry.

"What was the accused doing with Mr Potter?" Horton asked, keeping his voice calm.

"He was engaged in sexual intercourse with Mr Potter," Moody kept his tone neutral.

"Preposterous!"

"Mr Yusia, you may take the stand if you'd like," Horton invited.

"Why should I have to defend myself from these absurd allegations?"

"Because they are not so absurd," Horton's voice was deathly quiet.

"Indeed..." Lucius spoke. "If you take the stand, that would be the quickest way of clearing this whole thing up." The man's grey eyes were bright.

"No!"

"Perhaps the court would allow a visual aide?"

"What do you propose, Dumbledore?"

"If Harry permits, I can, or in fact, you could cast a Visible Memory Charm which would allow the court to see Harry's memory. As I'm sure you are all aware, such a charm calls forth the truth, not what Harry may have believed happened but the true actions of the people in Harry's memory. Or perhaps, Mr Yusia will permit the charm to be cast upon him?"

"No!"

Dumbledore turned to the boy beside him. "Harry?"

Harry had been warned that this was a possibility but he wasn't scared. It would reveal the truth to the Judging Committee and while that would mean more people who knew, they couldn't speak
about this trial. It was one of the acts of the secrecy clause. They would be able to verify that they made the decision but they would not be able to reveal anything else from the trial. He nodded.

"In the interests of impartiality Mr Potter, I will cast the spell," Horton stepped forward with his wand at the ready.

Harry nodded again and the spell was cast. It materialized as a cloud behind him and he painfully forced himself to recall at time with Heprah. Usually all the men had blurred together for him but Heprah had 'insisted' that he respond to his advances and if he didn't he'd hurt him worse than anything. Harry knew now it was the Crucio curse but at the time it had been enough to get his compliance and he had learnt how to pleasure Heprah.

He didn't look at the image but he knew Heprah had just punished him for some indiscretion. His bone ached with the memory. And now the wizard was kissing his younger self to make up for causing him pain, running his hands over Harry's body, massaging him gently as if to remove the residual pain of the curse. Then of course Heprah had entered him. He covered his ears, trying to block his scream but in his memory it was still there and there was nothing he could do.

After a few moments more Horton broke the spell, turning to look at the Wizard with disgust and contempt warring on his features. He spared a thought for Harry who had to live with this and hoped that Dumbledore was up to protecting him. "How could you?" He spat. "How could you to any child?" He turned towards his fellow judges. "Do you need to see any more?"

All four of them shook their heads. "Azkaban!" Bethany snarled.

Lefrant shook his head, "The Kiss!"

Reika nodded her agreement and Horton turned to Lucius. "The Kiss," the older Malfoy agreed quietly.

"It's official then," Horton said, his eyes burning. "You shall be taken to Azkaban where the Dementor's shall administer their Kiss. This is the ruling of the court."

A blaze of light appeared around Heprah, restraining him before lesser lights surrounded everyone else, seeping into them as the secrecy clause took effect. Dumbledore placed one hand on Harry, sending him back to the Shrieking Shack from whence Sirius would take him back to Hogwarts.

The Headmaster hid a grim smile. Court was over. Now perhaps Harry could heal.

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Lucius sat back in his chair as he watched the fire. He narrowed his eyes as he thought...

It had been an interesting day and the revelations had explained so much that was puzzling about his Lord's behaviour.

Lucius had been surprised when he had been asked to serve on the Judging Committee for a case involving Harry Potter. He had been with his Lord when they had captured the boy so how had Dumbledore gotten the boy back so quickly? Voldemort is growing weaker...

The fixation on Harry Potter was not normal... The boy had been troublesome certainly but a quick Avada Kedrava would have solved the problem but it appeared Voldemort's fixation had progressed... Lucius frowned... Harry Potter had been attacked by Heprah but also by Muggles... Ah... It became clear... That was why Lord Voldemort wanted those Muggles. He was going to extract vengeance.
Weakness... The boy was nothing but trouble.

*He is no longer fit to lead us... The thought was not new... Change was coming...*

"Father!"

"Draco," Lucius greeted his son, eyes still narrowed.

"How did the trial go?"

Lucius raised one eyebrow. "It was a Secret Session. You know I can't tell you."

"What I know is that you have ways around that," Draco said in a strictly business like manner.

Lucius smiled. "Very good, my son. You correct... But I may not reveal all... Not so late in the game." Lucius half closed his eyes as he considered. "You will not get the Mark, my son."

"What!? But I want to serve our Lord," Draco objected.

"And so you shall but the Dark Lord you serve will not be him. He had become weak with his rebirth. You will be my Heir." Lucius sat back as he watched his son consider the information.

Draco gulped. "Is he... Is he really that weak?" He asked uncertainly.

"He is," Lucius confirmed. "He seeks Harry Potter but not to kill... Instead he now wastes his and our time by seeking revenge for Harry," Lucius shook his head. "It's better this way," he said slowly. "History will remember him as a great Dark Lord who was cut down in his prime but from the ashes of his rule rose another Lord, Lucius Malfoy."

Draco nodded, a sly smile forming on his pale features. "What do I do?"

"For the moment, nothing... Nothing has changed... However I have some information for you which I trust you will put to good use when the time comes?"

Draco nodded.

"At this very moment, Dumbledore has Mr Potter at Hogwarts where the Headmaster is attempting to heal Harry of his wounds."

"Potter's wounded?" Draco's eyes were alight.

"Emotionally, my son, emotionally. It appears his Muggle relatives abused him extensively. He was raped many times and has only now come into possession of that information when the Dark Lord broke the Obliviate on him."

Draco's eyes narrowed. "So..." he said slowly. "He's useless... If he's suffering that much then he wouldn't be able to fight anyone!"

"Exactly," Lucius smiled again. "I trust you will make the appropriate arrangements to keep him that way."

Draco smiled back at his father. "Of course, My Lord."
"We have to tell him!"

"Tell him what?" Sirius questioned roughly.

"Everything!"

"And what do you think that will accomplish?"

"He deserves to know the truth."

"That Voldemort raped him?" Sirius snapped. "I agree he deserves to know the truth but he's barely accepted everything else. He's only beginning to recover now."

"So what if it's used against us? How will he react if he finds out some other way?"

Sirius sighed... That was the question. They could take the risk of destroying Harry and tell him that he had slept with the Dark Lord, hoping that he would understand or they could wait until he was more fully recovered and risk someone of the Dark twisting what had happened. "He's not ready yet. I've spoken to him about it and do you know what he believes?"

"It doesn't matter what he believes and it's all the more reason to tell him the truth!"

"He knows he slept with someone, someone with red eyes and he feels thankful to that person because they were so gentle. He liked it, even though he doesn't know who it was. And he is thankful that whoever it was got away before Voldemort came. He has no idea that it was the Dark Lord."

"We have to tell him then!"

"Do you want to do it?" Sirius snarled. "Can you guarentee that it will not destroy him? While he is a Hogwarts we can protect him. We have the time to wait for him to recover fully before we tell him the truth. And it can be done gently, slowly so that he understands exactly what happened."

At Sirius' final outburst Albus rose and nodded. "We cannot risk Harry and Sirius is correct, we have time to wait. Tom is willing to wait and for the moment he will not force the issue with Mr Potter so we do not need to worry about someone else telling him. Plus, I do believe that Tom hasn't advertised the fact that he captured Harry over the summer so there is only a select group of Death Eaters who have any inkling as to what may have transpired and even then I do not believe that they will act without their Lords permission and knowing Tom we will have plenty of warning before he strikes."

Sirius' eyes bured. "So if anyone tells him, they'd better be prepared to face me."

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Harry smiled at Ron and Hermione as the two of them dragged him into a corner of the common room. Ever since he'd been rescued from Voldemort he'd spent the rest of the summer at Hogwarts
coming to terms with his memories. Sirius hadn't left his side, nor had the strangely changed Hedwig and the two of them had always been patient when he'd been able to do nothing but cry. He had written to his two friends over the summer and had told them that he was at Hogwarts but he hadn't been able to tell them anything else. Nor was he going to. They didn't need to know about what he could remember now but he would tell them about Voldemort and the rest.

They'd been ecstatic to see him at the Gryffindor table with both Hedwig and Snuffles in attendance and Dumbledore had explained to the school that the two animals would be remaining with him but hadn't elaborated on the reasons. However the Gryffindor table hadn't allowed his two friends enough privacy to question him on events but it was good to know they cared.

They sat him down in a large overstuffed chair in the corner, each of them taking an arm as Hedwig settled on to the back and Snuffles sat down in front.

"Harry I was so worried... Even though by the time I found out, you were already back here."

"Now Harry, spill it!"

"Okay, okay!" He smiled back at them before sighing turning serious. "I don't really remember that much though. Voldemort came to the house one night. I was asleep," he wasn't going to tell them what had happened with Vernon, "so, from what I've been told, Voldemort stunned me anyway and while it's really boring the next thing I remember is when Snuffles, Snape and Moody were there, rescuing me."

"That's it?" Ron was incredulous.

"I told you there wasn't much to tell. If I'd been awake maybe there would be more to say but really, I hardly even know he kidnapped me, except that the Dursleys are still missing," Harry said sadly.

"What?!"

"Dumbledore's still looking but it's been a couple of weeks..." Harry trailed off.

"Have you dreamed about them?" Hermione asked in a small voice.

Harry shook his head, glad that he didn't have to speak. A part of him was thankful that he didn't know what was happening to them but another part of him was revelling in the fact that Voldemort still had them and was assuring him that the Dark Lord would be very thorough with his torture. He always felt guilty at that... He didn't want them to be tortured... He just didn't want to have to live with them anymore...

:And you won't...:

Harry frowned as he looked around. He knew the others hadn't heard it. It was almost like hearing the Basilisk again but it wasn't parceltongue, it was something else.

"Harry..?" Hermione asked.

He shook his head again, turning to look at his friend. "It's nothing," he said. "Just... I don't know."

"What is it?"

He sighed heavily, knowing that they would just keep pestering until he told them something and it wasn't really that big a deal. "Every now and then, I hear something," he said softly. "It's not a snake, it's a whisper, almost below my hearing and... I don't know... It's never more than a comment or an
observation... I just can't help thinking that it's something Voldemort did."

"Have you asked Dumbledore?"

Harry couldn't help but grin. He'd been betting with himself that that would be Hermione's first suggestion and he intended to surprise her. "Yes, I have."

Ron giggled at the expression on Hermione's face. "So, what'd he say?"

"He said it was probably something Voldemort had done." He rubbed his scar. "I haven't had many dreams lately so the Headmaster thinks Voldemort may have figured out a way to block the bond with him but he can't block it completely so that's why I hear something occasionally."

"Phew! I'd hate to think that you were really hearing voices, Harry!" Ron joked easily, slapping him on the back.

"Harry..." Hermione wasn't as relaxed.

"It's okay," he said slowly. "Really... Dumbledore's cast some spells on me so nothing's going to happen. And I've got weekly meetings with him about everything."

The worry clouding her eyes eased slightly and she nodded. "You remember though, we're still here."

Ron nodded, his eyes wide as he gave his silent agreement with Harry's other best friend.

"I know..." Harry smiled at them. "Thank you."

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Draco narrowed grey eyes as he cast another surreptitious glance towards Harry Potter. The boy was eating quietly surrounded by his friends, including the Mudblood but he still looked far too collected for someone who was supposedly recovering from the Dark Lord and from his memories.

He flicked his eyes over the 'Guardian Animals' Dumbledore was now allowing Potter and snorted. It was just his owl and a stray and they would both be ridiculously easy to side step. But side step to do what..?

"Draco!" Blaise rolled his eyes at the junior Malfoy. "Pay attention!"

Around him the Great Hall was beginning to clear. He glared back at Zabini but rose and followed the rest of his house out of the Hall. Just as he was almost out of earshot he heard Potter... "Yeah... But it's all over now..."

Over..? Draco smiled as everything became clear and he knew exactly what to do. Oh, it's never 'over'... "Blaise, wait!"

"What is it?"

"You heard about Potter, didn't you?"

Blaise frowned. "What?"

"You mean you don't know?" Draco feigned surprise. Neither Voldemort or Dumbledore had let Potter's summer adventures become common knowledge but that didn't mean anything to him.
"What happened?"

"Not here," Draco said, theatrically looking around with narrowed eyes.

Eventually they got back to the relative sanctuary of the Slytherin Dungeons where he motioned over Millicent.

"Draco, what happened with Potter?"

"He escaped."

"I know that! That's the first thing I heard as soon as I got home," Millicent objected.

"Not then," Draco shook his head. "Just a couple of weeks ago, our Master had Potter cornered, when the brat escaped again."

"How?"

Blaise's eyes seemed to burn and Draco hid a smile. This was going to be easier than he thought. Draco shook his head. "I don't know... not really but that's not important. What's important is that we're in a position to stop it happening again."

Millicent blinked before a decidedly evil smile flitted over her features. "So what does our Master want us to do?"

Internally Draco laughed. *Our master... How little they know..? But in a way, they are serving their Master...*

"Wait for a while... Potter's almost settled in again but just when he thinks he's safe, I think it's time he discovered exactly how serious going against the Dark Lord is."

Millicent and Blaise both licked their lips, grinning. "Oh... I think we can ensure Potter will *run* back to our Lord once we're through with him."

*Your Lord perhaps... But not mine.* Draco nodded, grey eyes glittering. "Good," he purred. With Potter effectively dead, only Voldemort stood in the way of the new Dark Lord, Lucius Malfoy but that wouldn't be for long.

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Harry frowned in his sleep. Something was wrong and as soon as he came to that realisation his vision opened.

Once again he was in Voldemort's throne room, watching events unfold. The Dark Lord spared him a glance and a soft smile before his Elites and the being they had with them took his attention.

Harry's eyes widened as he recognised the being. It was the Vampire Xeoaph. His skin was ivory white and his eyes a pale blue but they glowed with intensity. He snarled at Voldemort, canines long and sharp. His robes were ornate but disheveled and rumpled. Slowly he drew himself up, looking powerful and every inch the elder vampire despite the wands trained on him.

"Petty Dark Lord," he spat.

Voldemort smiled as he narrowed his eyes and he gathered his powers before murmuring a single word as his skin flashed its mottled pattern, returning to normal after an instant.
Xeoaph stumbled at the force of the word, staggering and falling to his knees, as darkness seemed to wrap around him. He growled, breathing heavily, grunting as the darkness seeped into him. "No!" The scream was agonised and Xeoaph coughed up thick black ooze that burned the floor sending up acrid smoke as it ate into the stone.

"Master!" Xeoaph cried. "Please!" He begged.

The Dark Lord raised his wand, muttering another word and the Vampire suddenly collapsed, the pain vanishing as he struggled to breath still. "Master..." He gasped.

"I am not the Master," Voldemort shrugged before he looked back at the Vampire. "What I want is quite simple."

"Blood."

"Yes... Your blood, willingly given."

"All right," Xeoaph agreed easily, anything to avoid that inhuman pain again, as he rose to his feet again. Voldemort was a Dark Lord like many before him but mastery over that dark magic he had just unleashed meant he wasn't just a Dark Lord, he was The Dark Lord, no matter what he was claiming.

"Good..." Voldemort's eyes narrowed again. "One more thing... Stay away from my pet."

"What?" Xeoaph looked confused although all traces of pain had vanished. He wasn't an elder for nothing.

The Dark Lord snarled back. "Turn around," he ordered, as he fixed red eyes back to where Harry was watching.

Reluctantly the Vampire turned and his pale blue eyes widened as he saw what the Dark Lord saw and a new realisation came to him. "How..?" He swung back around towards the Dark Lord.

"Stay away from my pet," Voldemort repeated coldly. "Or you will discover exactly how far my Mastery extends."

Harry blinked as the darkness descended on his vision and the room; Voldemort, his Elites and Xeoaph disappeared as true sleep reclaimed him. He snuggled deeper into his pillow, pulling his blankets around him as warmth surrounded him and he subconsciously recalled the way red eyes had looked at him, hungrily, passionately but gentle and comforting.

Harry woke early the next morning but he felt calm and refreshed. He felt good.

And then the memories returned. All the men, all at once. They hurt him. They used him. Again and again and there was no escape.

Harry blinked but the tears he expected didn't come. For a moment he thought that perhaps it was because he was cried out but he could feel something between the memories and himself. He sighed as he recognised it. It was time and it was the Obliviate spell. That what he remembered had happened to him, he was sure of but it had happened years ago, before he was eleven and he was fifteen now.

It seemed ridiculous but it made a kind of sense. It was almost as if what had happened, happened to
someone else. If he had remembered for all this time then that would have been different but he didn't and everything, while being painful to recall, was buffered by time. He hadn't forgiven the men, he hadn't forgotten, not anymore at least but it was time he moved on. He had felt guilty but Sirius, Remus and even Moody had all acted to convince him that none of it had been his fault and after that he'd been angry... But Dumbledore and even Hedwig had calmed him.

Now it was time to move on...

It had happened to him. It wasn't his fault. The one's who had done it would be brought to justice and that was enough...

Besides, he knew what it was like to be loved.

Harry frowned at the feeling. He wasn't sure what he should be feeling about that...

Technically he supposed it was rape, like all the others... After all he hadn't given his consent, at least, he didn't think he had but he could remember that he hadn't fought... So could that be consent? He shook his head. Confused.

It had felt so good...

*Let me show you what it means to be loved...*

Harry sighed... He remembered those words... They had been crooned softly to him, comforting and questioningly... *I did agree...* He realised suddenly, remembering the loving look those crimson eyes had given him and the way that the man had taken his hand, squeezing reassuringly. After that there had been a moment of pain but then nothing but pleasure...

Harry blinked as he remembered more. The man had been so gentle, every movement designed to reassure him, to make him feel better and right at the end he remembered in the afterglow of his own pleasure he had felt his partners release and he had heard his name.

And it made him feel even better. It had been so nice.

He hadn't been raped... He smiled at the sense of relief that washed through him as he came to the conclusion. Even though his agreement hadn't really been conscious, he had agreed and he had liked it and he hadn't wanted it to stop. *In fact...* he thought with a small shiver, *I think I'd like to do it again...*

:Hehehe! You will, Master... You will.:  

Harry looked around. In the dawn light everything in the dorm was covered in deep shadows but some of them seemed to be shimmering. He blinked, shaking his head, telling himself firmly that it was only an illusion caused by the fluttering of the curtains.

But at least the voice was correct...

He didn't know who his partner had been but they had obviously slipped out before the Dark Lord had come and for that Harry was thankful. Whoever they were, they had done him a service and he didn't want them to be hurt by Voldemort. He doubted the Dark Lord would have any mercy for anyone Harry thought of with any degree of like. He just wished he knew who it was so he could thank them.
Voldemort sighed, leaning back in his throne. His mind was consumed by thoughts of Harry - his taste, smell, smooth creamy skin, cherry lips, messy black hair and glorious emerald eyes. Unbidden came the image of the boy just after he’d entered him and the Dark Lord couldn’t help but remember how tight Harry had been and the exact feeling of being inside him. Idly he wondered what it would feel like to have Harry inside him. "You will be my only," Voldemort murmured the words. He had slept with many people, men and women but he had always been the one they served and he had never willingly served anothers pleasure. Even his Dark Arts teachers had known better. But Harry would have that singular right and would be the only being who could claim to have taken the Dark Lord.

He narrowed his eyes, shaking off his memories as a presence came to him but after a moment he relaxed, nodding towards a shadow that was a slight pitch darker that its fellows. "In time," he informed it. "In time I will give your Master everything."

The shadow considered his words before it returned his nod and vanished, once again, leaving the room empty but for the Dark Lord who sat in quiet contemplation.

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-Ssss... Do they have to smell so bad?- There was a definite frown in Nagini's voice.

-They're Muggles,- Voldemort replied, delicately wrinkling his own nose. -This is about the best you can expect.-

Nagini looked up at her Master, the end of her tail flicking back and forth absently. -I wouldn't even eat them,- She hissed, dismissing the Muggles derisively before coiling her bulk tighter around Voldemort's throne, closing her eyes as she returned to sleep.

Voldemort smiled thinly at her but the expression faded as he looked back up. Before him were huddled Muggles guarded by five or so of his red masked Elite. Some of the Muggles were staring steadfastly, some were muttering to themselves, others had shed tears and one or two were trembling as they looked at him but Nagini was correct. They smelt. Sweat, piss, shit and fear. It was the last that brought a cold gleam to his eye.

"Muggles..." He hissed the word coldly bringing their attention to him. "You have been brought here for a reason."

"Why?" One of the bolder one's questioned.

Blood red eyes fell on the speaker who gulped and after a moment looked away shivering. "Because of these," Voldemort answered the question, flicking his wand to bring the bruised and bloody Dursleys into the room. The three of them fell to the floor where they remained kneeling, trembling and not daring to look up. The previous weeks had not been kind to them.

"What?"
"I trust you recognise them? You are here because of them... Or should I put it a different way..." He paused sensing the wave of uncertainty. "You are here because you all dared to touch my mate."

"What?"

"Perhaps an image would help them understand, My Lord," One of his Death Eaters suggested with a half bow.

"Hmm..." With an intricate flick of his wand, Voldemort brought an image of Harry to life and most of the Muggles recoiled at it. The Dark Lord smiled grimly. He'd chosen to represent Harry as the boy would be when he was ready. His emerald eyes were still brilliant but coldly focused, his hair was tied back but wisps still escaped in a manner Voldemort thought adorable. The black robes hung around his frame somehow making him seem taller and giving him an aura of power. "My mate," Voldemort introduced the illusion softly.

"That bitch!"

"Crucio!" The Dark Lord snarled, his wand flicking up, his eyes glowing as he targeted the speaker and let the image fade. He recognised the man... Having been in Harry's memories, he couldn't help but recognise the man. It was the first one.

"Earrhhh..." The Muggle screamed, writhing on the floor and the others drew away from him.

The Dark Lord snarled before he withdrew the curse. "Never refer to my mate as such. You are all here because you dared to touch him and I do not take kindly to that. He is mine and mine alone."

He was met with silence from the Muggles so he continued.

"The pain my mate suffered you will experience in full and before I am through you will be begging me to die but first I believe simple pain is in order." With a wide encompassing flick of his wand he murmured the word, "Crucio."

Voldemort looked on with hooded eyes as the Muggles screamed. He hadn't included the Dursleys in the curse so they were the only one's who showed some response to the torture the others were experiencing. They flinched at the screams but retained enough sense, or fear, not to move. His Elites watched on with bland expressions, ready to help their Master should he desire it. After a few moments, after the initial screams had faded and the Muggles were gasping for breath, Voldemort released the curse and there was tangible change in the air.

The inky shadows of the ceiling seemed to writhe and a generous portion of darkness dripped from the whole, forming an almost humanoid shape that stood before the Dark Lord. It said nothing but as soon as it was sure that it had the attention of the all the Muggles tendrils whipped out from it touching each of them before dissipating into nothing. Two orbs of absolute black looked deeply into Voldemort's crimson eyes. "Crucio is a bit crude." The whisper echoed from everywhere, as if every inky shadow in the throne room had spoken.

Voldemort tilted his head as he examined the dark before him. This was a far more powerful manifestation than he had ever been expecting. "It is a beginning."

"You are the Dark Lord. It is crude," the shadows repeated.

Voldemort smirked, seeing where the creature was leading. "So what have you done?"

"Given you a gift."
"What?"

The shadow before spread its arms, encompassing the Muggles. "They cannot die until we desire it. Their minds may not retreat from the pain of Cruciatuus and further they shall know terror as children."

The Dark Lord’s smile became truly pleased as he flicked is eyes over the Muggles once more, lingering the few he had 'special' plans for. "Thank you," he said warmly. It never hurt to thank those he didn't have full control over.

The shadow looked at him. "It is for our Master."

"Hmm?" Red eyes blinked with well-hidden confusion. "I thought your kind did not take kindly to authority yet you have voluntarily implied you are controlled."

"There are factions amongst us."

"Ah... Watch over him."

"We are."

"You were right though, Crucio is effective but crude."

"As physical torture goes it is effective but it merely deals with the body. The mind can also inflict pain," the shadow nodded its agreement. "My touch does one further thing."

"Another gift?"

"It ensures that they may not experience pleasure from this."

"Ho! True sadists?" Voldemort questioned.

"Masochists," the shadow corrected.

"How rare..." In an odd way the Dark Lord seemed excited but he quickly sobered looking back to the Muggles as the shadow floated back, dissipating into the gloom. Crimson eyes narrowed as he looked at the huddled mass of flesh, growling softly. With a half smile he flicked his wand looking over the eight men he had selected for the first round. "Imperio," he murmured, focusing on the other eighteen before he glanced over at the Dursleys. It was Vernon's turn, he decided quickly. "Go..."

Voldemort kept his eye's on the first man, the one who had approached Vernon. He looked around confused at the Dark Lord's words but as two other Muggles with glazed eyes grabbed him and pushed him down, he cried out. Around the room the other men who had been spared the Imperio’s touch echoed his cry. One of the other men hit him when he struggled and pathetically tried begging.

With brutal effectiveness the two men stripped him before they stretched him out, each man taking position at his head and arse. "No..." Voldemort heard him cry in a voice that sounded like a child and it only brought the cold knot of rage back to the Dark Lord.

"Slower," he ordered as he heard Harry's voice through the years of pain as his beloved had struggled to fight. How dare that man beg...

The man looked at him, eyes screaming but Voldemort looked back with a dull expression that bore only a slight question. 'What mercy do you think I would give?' Blood red eyes glowed his pleasure at the situation and Voldemort licked his lips gently.
"Earr...mmmpt..." the man screamed as the man at his arse pushed his cock in. The cry was cut off as the second man took advantage of the opened mouth and pulled the head down on to his own erection.

The smell of blood rose throughout the room, sweet and clinging and the Dark Lord swallowed, taking a moment to enjoy the taste before he turned his attention back to the tableau playing out before him. The two men were grunting as they thrust into the other. The man penetrating the anus had captured both his victims arms and was pulling them back pushing the shoulder blades together which in turn was pulling the man's head up allowing the second man to ram his cock in deeper. Voldemort watched as the man's throat was distended again and again by the thrusting shaft and he struggled to breath around the meat. He moaned around the organ, saliva trickling down his chin and tears streaming from his eyes as the blood poured from his anus.

The scene was repeated throughout the room although the two men using Vernon were struggling with his bulk but were making progress simply by repeatedly battering the older man into submission. The blubber that was Harry's cousin was cowering, sobbing softly as it dawned on him that the Dark Lord probably wasn't going to be satisfied with just Vernon and so he was next and the woman was staring with wide eyes, her mind screaming incoherently at the evil that was here.

Voldemort altered his eyes, allowing himself to see the magical streams in his throne room even though it was only Muggles. The streams were churning, brilliant red tendrils that were the Imperio were wrapped tightly around eighteen of them and were whipping at the wild magic. The eight victims weak streams were being consumed and below everything was darkness. Beautiful... he thought as he leaned back, panting slightly to fully appreciate the taste and smells.

Blood, mixed with shit and overlaid by sex...

Red eyes closed as he concentrated, sealing way everything so that when Harry asked the Dark Lord could show his beloved true vengeance. On top of the delicious smells and tastes there was noise - flesh on flesh, the slick slurp of bloody lubrication, choked moans mixed with hearty grunts of satisfaction and finally cries of ecstasy.

"See my vengeance, Beloved," Voldemort murmured as the men finished the first round, most of them pulling limp dicks out of the others and some showing admiral disregard by wiping their cocks clean on their victims, some pissing on the bodies that had pleased them.

The eighteen men under the Imperio turned to regard the Dark Lord with blank expressions, dropping to their knees before their Master. Now that their first order had been carried out, they needed further instructions to function. The others lay in pools of blood, semen and urine, gasping for breath, sobbing and in some cases trying to pull on tattered clothing.

With a small frown of concentration Voldemort grabbed his Imperio, shifting it from Muggle to Muggle. Ten Muggles remained free of the curse. The victims, who had now been cursed, quit snivelling and pulled themselves to their knees despite their states. The Muggles who had been released from the curse, dropped, looking around with wild eyes as they remembered.

"The pain my mate suffered you will experience in full," Voldemort repeated and was pleased to see some of the 'free' Muggles eyes widen in realisation. "Now begin," he ordered.

The set up was slightly different this time. He wanted to hear some of them begging. Two men fell on Petunia. The fact that she initially hadn't known what was happening to Harry had granted some mercy but she wasn't stupid, she had worked it out and had stood on, letting it happen. She screamed and fought but they were too strong for her, sandwiching her between them as they violated her cunt and arse. She cried out at the assault, the calls becoming weaker as it continued. The men varied their
motions as they sought their release, sometimes pounding into her together, at others one pushing in while the other pulled out.

Another two men fell on Dudley. The fat boy continued to blubber in fear before a cock entered his mouth muffling** his cries but even that couldn't stop the low whine that escaped him as the second man pushed into his arse with calculated slow cruelty.

Voldemort licked his lips as he turned to Vernon. The man was still kneeling but had turned to face his wife and son and was watching their rapes, tears streaming from his eyes to mix with the semen still coating his chins. The Imperio didn't show on his body as it was with the others but it remained the same. He could see and feel everything as normal but he could not act, save for the actions Voldemort allowed him. He sat back slowly, not even feeling the pool of his own blood that he rested in as he spread his legs, sitting spread-eagled on the stone floor. Ham fingers moved their way to between his legs and began to stroke his limp organ. After a few moments it surged with blood and he began panting. He kept his fingers light and his movement's gentle but in time with the pumping motions of those using his wife and son. Soon he was grunting and puffing as if he were the one in Petunia or Dudley and the Dark Lord noted gleefully that both 'victims' had seen his reaction. The family was going back to the same cell later and it should be interesting. How stringent would the woman be now that she believed her husband had gotten off on her and that blob she called a son rapes?

"No... Please... No!" The scream echoed through the room and Voldemort turned to see the speaker.

It was the first man. This time, only one man was using him and had the first man face down beneath him. The cock that was penetrating was only half way in and the Dark Lord could see the blood welling around the entrance, pouring out but not lubricating the dicks passage well enough. With a savage grunt the man on top pulled back slightly before ruthlessly pushing down, driving himself in another inch before stopping.

The first man screamed, writhing and trying to claw his attacker but the man had managed to pin his arms and was holding firm. The pounding motion was repeated and slowly the man penetrated the other, sliding fully in with a growl of completion as his balls slapped against blood smeared skin.

"No, no, no, no, no..." It was almost a litany coming from the first man and did nothing but rouse Voldemort's pleasure and satisfaction at events.

With a flick of his wand, Voldemort allowed the man using the first one to speak, relaying the Dark Lord's words.

"Do you think I'm going to stop?" He questioned, thrusting once to emphasis his point. "Harry asked you to stop. He begged, he screamed, he fought. For years he asked you to stop and you didn't so now that I've just begun, do you really think I'm going to stop?"

The man twisted to stare at Voldemort as the words were whispered in his ear, their meaning accentuated by well timed thrusts into him. He knew, instinctively that while the black robed man was still on his throne they were his words. Voldemort laughed as he nodded to the Muggle. The man might have been the first to use Harry but he was intelligent enough to understand the deeper meaning behind the words. 'I'm not going to touch you, but I am going to take you.'

Voldemort flickered his eyes around the room where other threesomes continued to torture each other for his vengeance. The only other twosome was relatively quiet, each man driving their cock into the others mouth as they sought their release. With a nod of satisfaction he looked back at the first man who had continued to struggle and cry out.
All is it should be, he thought, feeling a wave of pleasure pass through him and settle in his groin.

He would dream of Harry tonight.
Death of a Defender

Possession
Chapter XV - Death of a Defender
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Harry frowned as he walked down the corridor after dinner. He wasn't ready to go back to the Common Room, he didn't feel like studying and with the outside curfew restrictions in place this year, he couldn't go outside so that meant he was reduced to roaming the corridors as he tried to work out what was wrong.

Hedwig and Sirius accompanied him of course, Sirius at least had given him an understanding nod as he'd told his friends he wanted a little time to himself.

He'd dreamed again last night and he'd seen the Dursleys. That's what had been bothering him. Like the dream before with the Muggles his scar hadn't hurt but this time it had gone further. This time, there was something, someone comforting him. He'd felt the arms around him, the soothing stroking motions on his back and the comforting power that had wrapped around him, mixing with his own aura, assuring him that he was safe.

And then there had been a voice, below his consciousness but there never the less. It wasn't the shadowy voice he had been hearing, its tone and inflections were all different but he knew he'd heard this voice before. He'd seen everything Voldemort had done and he'd heard the voice telling him that it was keeping its word and the Muggles who had hurt him would never hurt him again.

And he'd believed it.

And that was where he was confused.

He remembered the promise. The person with gentle red eyes who had made him feel so wonderful had made it to him but how had they then got Voldemort to carry it out for them? They'd shown him love but then had gone before the Dark Lord had come, hadn't they?

The thought that his unknown lover had been taken by the Dark Lord and that now Voldemort was in some twisted way ensuring that Harry's lover kept his promise was almost too much for him. He couldn't bear the thought of that unknown person being taunted by the Dark Lord. Not when he meant so much to Harry. He shook his head, pushing dark locks out of his eyes as he dismissed the matter momentarily. And he would know why his scar didn't hurt.

In his dream, the Dark Lord had been brutal. Harry had seen that immediately and despite the fact that it wasn't Voldemort's promise, his actions were ensuring that the Muggles wouldn't ever hurt Harry again. Once the Dark Lord was through with them they wouldn't be capable of hurting anyone.

Harry blinked as a sudden vision came to him. The Dark Lord was still on his throne but the Muggles were being dragged out. They were covered in blood and none of them were conscious but Voldemort had a small satisfied smile on his lips and he seemed momentarily sated. With chill eyes he looked around the room and as he had before, his gaze settled on Harry.

"You see, my little one." A white hand had gestured towards the puddles of blood on the floor. "Thus I have kept my word, so that they can never hurt you again."
The Dark Lord had smiled and Harry felt the comforting warmth surround him again before he blanked his vision returning to the Hogwarts corridor.

No... Voldemort hadn't... He hadn't made such a promise... He'd never make that promise... He'd never...

"Well, well, well... If it isn't potty Potter."

Harry looked up startled at the voice. Hedwig hooted and Snuffles growled low in his throat, hair rising on the back of his neck.

"Draco!" Harry hissed.

The blond Malfoy appeared, stepping out from behind a tarnished suit of armour with a smirk on his lips. "Imagine finding you here."

"What do you want?" Harry asked with sudden belligerence. He didn't want to deal with Malfoy now.

"Not much, Potter," Malfoy snarled back, pulling his wand out.

"What?" Harry went for his own wand but before he moved he felt a stunning spell hit his back. He staggered forward, fighting its effects but all he could see was Draco's grey eyes, lite with an unholy light and then he fell to the floor. Help me... The thought escaped just before the end.

"Well... That was easier than I expected," Millicent drawled.

"Humph! That's why he's such a dumb-ass. He never suspects."

"Grrr..."

Draco looked back over towards Potter. The boy was sprawled on the floor and the two animals assigned to guard him were hovering over him, eyes burning with hatred as they stared at the younger Malfoy. The growl had come from the dog as it stood with its four paws planted firmly on the ground in front of its fallen master, every hair on it's body bristling and it's teeth barred. Hedwig hovered above Harry, her claws flashing before her as she extended them forward.

"Finally, some fight!" Blaise grinned, twirling his wand through his fingers before snapping his arm out, shouting the curse, "Stupify!"

Snuffles jumped but with the stiff guarding position he had assumed he was too slow to avoid the curse completely and so fell heavily back to the ground with a thud. Hedwig hooted bending her head down to size up her opponents before she feinted, flicking her tail to give her direction and drove forward, clawing at Millicent as she raised her wand.

"Argh..." She screamed as Hedwig drew blood, leaving claw marks on her shoulders.

The owl withdrew again to hover over Harry again, her yellow eyes daring them to come closer.

"Stop being a baby," Draco snapped as he raised his wand, firing off a curse.

Hedwig hooted contemptuously as she dodged the curse before folding her wings and swooping at the blond boy, striking with her beak before she once again returned to Harry.

"Stupid bird!" Draco snapped as he shot off several more curses. Eventually he managed to hit Hedwig but only because Blaise had joined in and the two of them had managed to corner her in mid
air.

Hedwig didn't falter though and to the horror of the two boys she glowed with the energy of their combined curse, changing even further from the mere snowy owl they had known. In an instant she morphed, growing larger as her feathers merged together forming definite armour plates over her body. Her talons lengthened again and a crest appeared on her head, several spines rising defiantly. Her wings also changed, the end of each flight feather growing a barb. She hooted again and there was a clear warning in her voice.

She didn't pause but instead swooped in again, clawing at Draco's eyes before sweeping back and diving at Blaise. Millicent screamed again and threw herself to the side but Hedwig was faster, whipping out one talon and striking the girl again, high on her arm before she swung around, lightning fast, driving once again at Draco.

Malfy growled seeing the white streak that was Potter's owl hurtling towards him again and suddenly everything became clear. He didn't feel fear seeing those long claws extended towards his grey eyes, he felt nothing as he raised his wand and spoke the words with clear enunciation, "Avada Kedrava."

The green light flew true, hitting Hedwig's chest. She screamed, the sound reminiscent of a humans voice as she clawed the air before dropping heavily to the ground, wings sprawled around her form as the light faded from her yellow eyes.

"Finally!" Draco snarled as he bent down to pick up Harry's wand. "Let's go," he ordered Blaise and Millicent as he turned away, trusting them to pick up Potter for the next phase.

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Voldemort paced his chambers, ignoring the concerned hisses from his pets. Something was wrong. He could feel it. He just didn't know what.

He'd seen Harry again tonight just for a moment because the boy had been awake but it had been long enough to show him what was happening to his attackers and it had cheered the Dark Lord but soon after a chill had passed through him and his instincts had begun to warn him that something was no longer as it should be.

He'd ordered his Elites to check the strong hold and had paced around the walls himself but nothing was amiss with the wards and charms that surrounded the building. They were all as he had set them. He's spoken to Nangini but she hadn't sensed anything wrong and he'd even questioned Wormtail on the state of affairs at the Ministry but there was nothing in the works.

The Dark Lord hissed, gripping his wand tightly as he continued to pace. He'd tried questioning the darkness but it had been unresponsive and no shadow had come, no matter how much power he had put into the call. He doubted his feeling had anything to do with them but he had run out of options and couldn't escape the knowledge that what was wrong was important.

He hissed again, flexing long fingers into claws. Whatever it was, he was going to find it and then...

Then it or they would regret awakening his ire.
"Have fun," Draco smirked as he stautered out the door, taking one last look at Potter.

The black haired boy was tied spread-eagled on a raised stone slab. Both Blaise and Millicent were hovering over him, waiting for him to awaken but Draco knew they would hasten that process just as soon as he and his illusion companions were somewhere public.

"Oh, don't worry, we will," Millicent chimed as the door clang shut.

"Sheesh!" Blaise rolled his eyes. "I thought he'd never leave."

"Tell me about it... But we can begin now. You got his wand?"

"You betcha!" Zabini held the piece of holly, one hand at each end. "This will ensure that he can't get away." With narrowed eyes and a sly smile he snapped the wand.

"Eargh!" Harry screamed as something within him snapped. His body arched up, pulling at his bonds unconsciously as he struggled.

"Yeow! That was loud! What the hell happened?" Millicent yelped.

"Well... This was meant to be his only wand," Blaise said. "I guess it was tied to him. That's the only thing I can think of."

"Yeah well, it doesn't matter now, does it," Millicent smiled at Blaise, licking her lips.

"No, it doesn't." He flung the broken pieces of wood aside, turning hooded eyes towards their captive. "Draco should have had enough time so now we can begin." He held his hand out to Millicent, like some twisted parody of a gentlemen. "For our Lord?"

"For our Lord," she confirmed, taking his hand as they raised their wands towards the unconscious Harry Potter.

"Enervate," they said the spell together.

Harry blinked but quickly realised he was bound and he'd had enough experience to know that the bonds weren't going to break from the force he could exert. He carefully opened his eyes and immediately wished he hadn't.

He knew that look. He'd seen it almost all his life.

Lust, desire, craving, carnal... And he was only a thing to them. Something that could ease their desires.

Without thinking he screamed, struggling desperately but it was to no avail but he continued to try. Out of nowhere a fist hit him and Harry turned to glare at his captor... Captors he corrected himself.

Blaise Zabini and Millicent Bulstrode.
Two of his year mates...

Two of Voldemort's followers...

He looked at them with wide eyes.

"Well, look at what we've got here," Millicent purred, licking her lips.

"What..?" Harry coughed. "What do you want?"

"Oh... I think you know. And we're going to get it," Blaise narrowed his eyes as he looked lewdly at Harry. "You escaped our Master last year and you escaped him again a few weeks ago."

"We're here to make sure that you don't do it again."

"There are consequences for angering our Lord."

"Just think about it Potter. Next time you escape from our Master we'll do this again and next time we won't be so merciful. We'll let you watch though as we do this to Weasley and that Mudblood Granger. And just think how the youngest weasel will squeal when I rip her open," Blaise laughed and nodded towards Millicent.

The girl reached towards Harry, ripping at his clothes.

"No!" Harry screamed and tried to flinch away but the bonds were too tight and he couldn't move. He felt the panic rising within him. This couldn't be happening. It couldn't be. He'd escaped this pain. At Hogwarts he was safe.

"Bad boy!" Millicent exclaimed as she slapped him, swinging her legs over the stone so that she straddled him. "Bad, bad boy." She pulled a knife from within her robes and continued to cut at his clothes.

It didn't take long for her to expose his chest so as Blaise watched she slid down slightly, rest her butt on Harry's knees as she cut away at his pants. "I'm going to enjoy this," she murmured, eyes clouded with desire as she beheld his full nakedness.

Harry continued to struggle as best as he could but he couldn't do anything. Mindless terror gripped him and his breath became short as his mind threatened to shut down. This wasn't happening.

"Hmm..." Blaise sighed as he sat down. "So am I," he grinned watching as he waited for his turn.

Millicent removed her own robes, throwing the fabric aside before placing one hand on Harry and moving one to between her own legs, probing there. After a few moments, despite Harry's best efforts, he was ready, his dick standing tall and proud. Millicent withdrew her hands, her fingers slick with her fluids as she raised herself and moved forward.

"No. Please, no." Harry looked into her eyes, making sure she could see the sincerity in his own.

Millicent grinned, licking her lips again and raising one eyebrow at him. "I don't think so," she said as she sank herself on to him.

It didn't hurt but at the same time it was pain worse than anything he knew. Harry screamed, desperately hoping his voice would be heard but he knew they would have cast a silencing charm on the room but he still tried. Millicent began moving up and down on him and Harry looked away, unable to bear the sight of her pleasure, feeling shame flood through his chest. This was happening
and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

"No..." She growled, gasping as she drove herself down and held there, muscles massaging Harry's length. "Watch." She reached out and gripped Harry's head, forcibly turning it so that he had to look at his groin and the connection they shared there. "You are so good," she added as she began moving again.

She moved faster this time, placing her hands either side of Harry's chest to brace herself as she just moved her hips, making small circular motions and crying out softly each time she impaled herself fully. "So good." Her breasts bounced with her movements.

"Hmm..." Blaise moaned as he massaged himself. He'd lost Horn, Parchment, Wand (Wizarding Rock, Paper, Scissors) and so had to wait for Bulstrode to finish before he got his turn with Potter. But that didn't mean he couldn't enjoy himself. With gentle hands he stroked himself in time with Millicent's motions, amused and driven further by the way Potter was trying to escape. "You should try to enjoy Millicent, Potter," he said, wrapping his hands around his cock as he felt it twitch. "I'm not going to be so gentle."

Harry gulped but not at Zabini's words. With the movements Millicent was making and the tight heat she was exerting on his cock he could feel himself beginning to respond. He gritted his teeth as he tried to control his body's reaction. He was not taking pleasure from this, no matter how fast her muscles massaged him. He felt nothing but shame and pain and terror. A tear escaped his eye as he cried out, casting his mind for anything that could help him.

Darkness opened itself, soft and warm. :Master... Retreat.: Harry looked at the ceiling seeing the shadows there. Amongst the beams they were alive and Harry felt a flash of relief as they seemed to descend and wrapped themselves around him. He felt warm and secure and Millicent and Blaise sank into insignificance.

:We will protect you, Master.: Millicent rocked back as she felt it. Harry's cock was withering within her and he hadn't cum. No man went from full erection to nothing, not with a woman around him, not with her around him. "What?" She snarled slapping at him but she got no reaction. Her hands hit him but his head just rolled with the force of her blows. With a frantic movement she pulled herself off Harry's limp cock, pulling back to sit on his knees again, ignoring as several thick strands of fluid stretched out between them.

Blaise sat up as he saw what had happened. He felt his own arousal subside as he stepped forward, grabbing Potter's face and looking deep into the glazed emerald eyes. With a hiss he pulled back. Harry's eyes were dead. He was breathing and as Blaise put his head to Harry's chest he could hear the heart beat but his eyes were dead. Zabini could see the rafters reflected in them and he suppressed a shiver at the soft smile on Harry's lips. Something wasn't right.

"What did you do?" He asked Millicent.

"Nothing!" She screamed raising her hand to strike him but Blaise was faster, catching it and glaring at her with pale eyes.

"All right! I was watching too..." He breathed deeply considering what they should do.

They hadn't done exactly what Draco had wanted but he supposed technically this could be defined as being adequate for what had been their purpose. Potter wasn't going to escape their Lord in this
state any time soon. Still he was disappointed that he hadn't got a go. He had been looking forward
to ramming into the smaller boy.

"Get dressed," he said to Millicent as he began 'cleaning' the room, casting charms to ensure they
couldn't be detected.

Millicent slipped off the raised stone, using a fragment of cloth to wipe herself clean before she
dressed.

"You ready?" Blaise asked from the door.

"What about him?" She jerked her head towards the comatose Harry.

"What about him? You got all the fun. Just leave him."
"Aarrhhh!" Voldemort screamed as he raised his hands to the sky, using his power to whip the storm that was brewing over his stronghold into a seething, lightning filled mess. He was so angry he didn't even think to use his wand which now lay abandoned in his chambers.

His eyes burnt with rage and his skin was mottled, the snake like patterns rippling over his body with frenetic speed. His fangs were long and almost looked like a vampire except no vampire possessed the sheer raw power that emanated from him. He was literally glowing with power and as he stood on the highest tower his blood red robes whipped around him, making him seem like a living flame.

With a sharp gesture he forced the lightning down making the night brighter than day.

Someone had hurt his treasure.

Someone had dared to touch Harry.

He had felt his mate's pain, heard his anguished mental scream and knew the terror.

And he had known that he could not help.

That knowledge had done nothing to calm him.

Harry was at Hogwarts. He was meant to be safe. Dumbledore was supposed to be protecting him. Nothing was meant to happen to him there. Nothing. But if Dumbledore couldn't protect him then he would have to provide Harry with protection that would also warn others away from his treasure.

"Arrr!" He screamed again, his voice drowned by the clash of thunder.

He didn't know who had hurt Harry. Their bond wasn't that developed. Harry could see him at times and he knew when his mate was watching but he couldn't watch over his mate. And Harry's mind hadn't been focused enough to allow him to pull the information from the boy.

But as it was with Heprah, he would find out. He suspected he knew who... Some over zealous Death Eater wanna be directed by the one's he knew were scheming against him.

Well... They would learn...

They would know the consequences of angering a Dark Lord.

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Madam Promfrey shook her head sadly. "No... I can't get him to wake up," she said softly, gently stroking one of Harry's hands.

The boy lay still in the bed. He'd been found yesterday and had been brought to the Hospital wing but hadn't moved since. He lay there staring up at the roof, closing his eyes when the room was darkened and opening them when the room was light. Tears leaked from his eyes and ran down the sides of his face, drying to leave white salty flakes on his skin. The fresh crystal tears were the only
evidence the boy was alive.

"Do you know what is wrong?" Dumbledore asked gravely, for his own sake and for that of Sirius, who was lying as Snuffles, curled at the foot of Harry's bed.

The man had been wracked with guilt and had resumed his post at his Godson's side with a vengeance, swearing murder on those what had hurt Harry, no matter the cost to himself.

"No... It's almost as if he's not there," she said softly. "Nothing is physically wrong but he's just not waking up."

"Like being stunned by the Basilisk?"

"No," Poppy shook her head at the question from Mundungus Fletcher. The man was a member of the Order and had been called here to act as a guard. "While it looks similar, it's completely different."

"Oh..."

"Thank you, Poppy," Dumbledore said as he rose. He wasn't sure what he was going to tell the school. He really didn't know but he knew he was going to have to say something. How could he have failed Harry again? His eyes were grave and there was an air of exhaustion around him. He truly looked as old as he felt. Fawkes trilled softly from his shoulder, nibbling at his ear. The Phoenix had tried to help Harry but the bird had risen from the bed shaking it's head in a very human like manner singing sadly. Dumbledore reached into his pocket as he left, feeling the broken pieces of holly. He didn't know what it meant but it couldn't bode well for the world.

Mundungus stayed with Poppy for a moment, getting his first good look at the Boy Who Lived. At the moment, it looked as if it would have been kinder to let him die. There were bruises all over him and his catatonic state was depressing. No child should be like this. With a soft sigh he realised he should being his job and nodded to Madam Promfrey as he moved to the door. He never even felt the knife stroke that killed him.

Crimson eyes surveyed the room as Voldemort caught the body, laying it silently on the floor. The nurse was still at Harry's side, holding his hand and murmuring quiet soothing words. There was a large black dog resting at the foot of the bed, a dog that to his mage sight did not look right. It's energy wasn't right... It was sentient?..?

Ah... He understood now. This was one of Harry's protectors. Or perhaps it was a new one. The scent of death hung over the boy and with a flash the Dark Lord knew what had happened. He spared a small thought for the owl he remembered from Harry's room. It had died but it had died defending it's master. It's ghost, spirit really was perched on the bed head, staring at him with questioning eyes.

With a determined motion Voldemort raised his wand stunning both the dog and nurse.

"Harry," he murmured, eyes softening as he looked at his beloved but his ire raised. Whoever had done this was going to pay dearly... Even more so than those Muggles.

Harry lay unmoving, his beautiful emerald eyes staring unseeing at the ceiling and his arms resting beside him. The Dark Lord reached out his hand, long white fingers gently stroking Harry's hair as his other hand put his wand away before drawing forth a small egg. He placed it in Harry's hand before tapping one finger on it and whispering in parcelmouth, "Hatch."

From the head of the bed there came a spiritual scream and Voldemort looked up in time to see a
flash of white streaking towards the egg. It shimmered briefly before the Dark Lord had a hazy view of wings merging with a snake. He smiled before the small feeling faded. So Harry's Protector wanted to stay with him? The owl could remain now but it was now one of his servants.

Hairline cracks appeared all over the egg in response to his command. Slowly the cracks widened and from the egg there came a soft hiss before the top of the shell seemed to explode outwards and the rest of the shell shattered. A tiny black serpent was coiled in the remains of the shell. With another hiss, it raised itself up, its tongue flickering as it tasted the air. There was a little plume of red on the crest of its head and its eyes were closed.

-Master!- Its voice was surprised but it instinctively recognised it's Master.

-I am here,- Voldemort responded.

It turned towards his voice, dipping its head slightly in a bow. Its small coils rubbed together dryly and the remains of the shell clacked against each other almost so quietly it couldn't be heard but the Dark Lord could hear it. He could hear everything.

-Master?- Voldemort smiled slightly. The serpent's question was simple but it conveyed everything. The snakes vow of loyalty to him, its King and its absolute willingness to obey him. -I wish you to stay here. Guard my mate.-

-Sss!- There was no hiding the little black snake's surprise. This was an enormous request from its Master.

-You will do well,- he reassured it, reaching out one finger to stroke it. The little snake purred at his touch before it tilted its head to regard him, eyes still closed.

-Bond with him?-

-Yes.-

The snake nodded before it turned back to Harry. With a determined flick of its tiny tail it lowered its head and slithered up Harry's arm, heading towards his face. It paused slightly on the black haired boy's throat, tasting the smooth flesh with its tongue before it slid on to his face and coiled itself over his mouth, rearing up so that it could look into unblinking emerald eyes. With a soft hiss and deliberate slowness it opened its own eyes, its lipless mouth parting slightly in concentration.

The serpent's eyes were a brilliant yellow and seemed to glow but as it looked into Harry's eyes the yellow seemed to liquefy and change. Blue swirled around and clouded the yellow and after a moment, emerald eyes stared into emerald eyes. The snake blinked carefully before closing its eyes again as it turned back towards the Dark Lord. -It is done.-

-You may look upon me,- Voldemort said gently. -You cannot hurt me.-

The little snake bobbed its head before it opened its eyes again. A small wave of power rippled out from it but was lost in Voldemort's red orbs. -Master,- it hissed again.

-I wish you to stay with him. I wish you to protect him,- the Dark Lord relayed his orders. -But I would advise you to remain hidden. This is not my Lair.-

The snake nodded. -May I use all my power?-
Voldemort smiled knowing why it was questioning him. -You may. If anyone tries to hurt him, show them the true eyes of a Basilisk.-

-Yes, Master.- For an instant the snakes eyes burned red before they returned to emerald. As it had spoken it had moved to Harry's chest and now lay coiled there.

-Can you sense him?- In bonding the little Basilisk had done more than just ensure that it could never kill Harry with it's eyes.

There was a small shake of the red plume. -There was a barrier. It allowed me to bond but it would allow nothing further. It did indicate that your mate would wake when he was ready.-

The Dark Lord nodded leaning over and gently kissing Harry's forehead. He felt strangely relieved. Harry would wake up and unspoken in his new guardians voice was the fact that the barrier was made from Dark. It appeared the Shadows were doing what they could, even if they could not act without their Master's permission. -Rest now,- Voldemort instructed as he stood, brushing his fingers through Harry's hair once again before he turned and left without looking back. If he'd of seen Harry again he knew he would take the boy to his stronghold but that couldn't happen yet.

Just as he left the Infirmary he sent a pulse of magic towards his mate, supportive and warm.

*I will wait for you, Harry.*

*Forever.*
The Great Hall was noisy as the students talked while eating their evening meal. It wasn't a feast but since the Minister of Magic was visiting the school the majority of the students were there. Some still had papers laid out beside them and were trying to study amidst the noise. The teachers sat at the head table talking amongst themselves and to the Minister's People about affairs of the world but two of them, like three of the students were silent and had auras of concern around them.

Hermione, Ron and Ginny sat together at the Gryffindor table. They ate their food mechanically and didn't speak to each other or to their fellow House Members. There was nothing to say. Harry was hurt again and this time it wasn't by Voldemort. This was worse. This had been done by a fellow student and they didn't know who. Everyone had been accounted for at the time, even the people Sirius swore were there. The knowledge was driving them crazy and all three were splitting between spending every spare moment in the Library, trying to determine how they could have done it and watching their classmates for signs of guilt. Hermione and Ron were also sparing some time to comfort Ginny. Originally Dumbledore and Sirius were only going to tell them, but she had listened in because of her concern for Harry and now knew everything, in all it's detail:

Someone had raped Harry. Not even Hogwarts was safe.

Dumbledore was also quiet at the Great Table. Unlike his students he knew any number of ways of telling who had been with Harry but he needed Harry to be awake and to tell them who had attacked before those methods could be employed. He would catch the people who had hurt Harry and he would expel them. Their actions demanded nothing less but their actions reflected worryingly on the cohesiveness of Voldemort's forces. If the Dark Lord had ordered this, then had the letter been just a sham or was it some splinter group, who knew nothing of their Master's true plan, acting on their own. Or was it another faction launching the opening moves in their battle against their Master? There were too many questions that only Harry could begin to provide the answers for but one thing was for sure, he was expecting a visit from the Dark Lord soon.

Severus Snape was unusually quiet as he ate. Most people hadn't noticed because his expression was as neutral as always but the trained eye might notice the small furrow of a frown on his forehead. Things were happening, rumours were spreading and there were whispers in the air that he didn't understand. Since he had 'rescued' Harry, the Dark Lord had only called him back once or twice and always in private, claiming that he had not wanted to risk compromising his greatest spy. That was one change. Voldemort had never cared for his follower's dangers. But Severus had just returned from a larger gathering of Death Eaters and he had detected further changes and he had detected unrest. Voldemort was moulding his plans for conquest and not everyone liked the changes. The absolute fanaticism on purity of blood had softened. He wasn't advocating acceptance of Mudbloods but he was no longer condoning the killing of them outright. It had been subtle but it had been there, just as the unrest had been present. Not all his followers liked the new changes and while Severus was sure they hadn't progressed past angry muttering but he was equally sure that they would soon. And he was torn.

Dissention within the ranks of Death Eaters would make fighting the Dark Lord that much easier and if by some miracle the Dissenters managed to topple Voldemort, none of them would ever wield the same level of power he did, making their defeat that much easier. But neither side could not control
dissent and it added an element of uncertainty that was not needed. With a sigh he realised what his next action would be. Dumbledore would need to be told and the next time he saw the Lord Voldemort he would mention the unrest. That in turn would assure Voldemort of his loyalty.

There was a sudden chill in the air but no one thought anything of it until silence swept over the Great Hall and all eyes fixed on the entry doors. Standing in the antechamber was a tall wizard that Snape recognised instantly - Lord Voldemort.

He was alone and his hood was drawn so that his eyes appeared to be glowing in the darkness. Ivory hands extended from his robes and everyone could see his wand. A red aura hung around him, wisps of power curling off it like a flame. With heavy steps he moved forward, into the Great Hall but didn't descend the steps. That would have brought him to below Dumbledore.

No one screamed. No one had time to scream because the Dark Lord snapped his wand up, casting a silencing charm on the students, his eyes never leaving Dumbledore but the entire Hall seemed to shiver at the power.

"You try my patience," Lord Voldemort said heavily.

Dumbledore shook his head. "I do not understand, Tom."

"You did not understand then either but perhaps because it is him you will understand." The Dark Lord raised his free hand and an image of Harry's sleeping face appeared. "I will find them," he said, even as the image faded.

"W...who..? W..w..what?" Cornelius finally managed to force the words out.

Crimson eyes flashed and Voldemort looked at him with a sinister smile. "Minister..." he hissed. With slow movements he pushed back his hood, allowing the Minister of Magic to get a good look at him.

Snape suppressed a gasp of surprise. The previously baldhead was now covered in luxurious black hair, much like the Dark Lord had possessed before his rebirth. He still looked like a snake with almost no nose and a lipless mouth but the hair did enhance his appearance, making him look almost like the few pictures there were of him at the height of his power.

Cornelius' eyes opened wide. "..y...y..you!" He gasped. "That's not possible."

"Ss..." Voldemort almost seemed to laugh. "I am immortal. I will be reborn again and again and I will rule this world until the end of time."

"No! This is a trick. Some trick of Dumbledore's," Fudge snapped, sounding like a petulant child.

Voldemort's eyes flashed dangerously but he turned his gaze back to the Headmaster. "This is the man you allow to be the Minister of Magic?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "Power cannot be used to force such things, Tom," he said quietly.

The Dark Lord stared incredulously for a moment, assessing the Headmaster before he raised his wand again. "Then I will give you a gift." He didn't even bother tracing out the pattern with his wand, he just levelled it at the Minister, saying the words with a force of will that was enough to ensure the power of the spell. "Avada Kedrava!"

The green light flew true and several students cringed back, crying out silently as the spell flashed above their heads. But this time it wasn't aimed for any of them. Instead, Cornelius was flung
backwards, his dead limbs pulling Professor Vector down with him. His chair clattered to the ground and for an instant there was silence before his two guarding Aurors seemed to wake up and with frantic cries they raised their wands, "Avada Kedavra!"

The two guard Aurors shouted the curse simultaneously and the green lights that was their spells wrapped around each other as they speed towards the Dark Lord. Voldemort stood his ground, watching the spells approach and then feeling them hit without so much as flinching. The green wrapped around him and for a moment, he didn't appear to be there, instead there appeared to be a giant snake coiled where he was. There was a flare of ruby light and ribbons of it spun around the Dark Lord interacting and being consumed by the green before the light faded and everything resolved itself back into the black robed form of the Dark Lord.

"Would you like to try again?" He invited with a scornful hiss as both Auror's drew back with gasps that were more pain than surprise. Having your curse fail was not a pleasant experience. "I am immortal," Voldemort repeated.

Dumbledore narrowed his eyes focusing on a flash of emerald and ruby beneath Voldemort's robes before an almost imperceptible smile flickered across his features.

But it wasn't fast enough. The Dark Lord turned back to him. "Ss... So you see the truth? I wield the ancient power and he does not have a chance unless he too is awoken to his power. There is only one way to return his wand."

The Headmaster nodded tiredly. The Dark Lord was unfortunately right. If he could not protect Harry then he should give the boy the means to protect himself.

Voldemort returned his nod. "I will find them, something you never did for me," he said, meeting Dumbledore's blue eyes squarely before he vanished.

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Silence reigned for a moment before it seemed everyone let go of an explosive breath. Many of the students shivered, gasping and clinging to each other as the warmth was robed from them, questioning each other disbelievingly about the Dark Lord's presence. Above, the enchanted ceiling of the Great Hall seethed with a storm. Thunder and lightning cracked and the dark clouds were moving so fast they resembled the boiling top of a potion rather than sky.

Ablus stood and waited for the students to notice him. "That was indeed Lord Voldemort and as many of you have worked out, he did come in response to the attack on Harry Potter. Now... Due to events, classes are cancelled for the rest of the week and could all Prefects lead their houses back to their Dormitories. Curfew is in effect tonight as of now." With that Dumbledore sat back down watching as the students rose and left the Hall.

Dissention...

Tom had dissent within the ranks of his Death Eaters and he had chosen now to focus on other things. The Headmaster could see the grim irony of the situation.

A Dark Lord had no weaknesses, save those that were inherent in embracing the dark. Their greatest weakness was an inability to see how much those of the light would sacrifice willingly for those they loved. It had brought about Tom's downfall last time. Lily, bless her, with the pure love of a mother had no thought past saving Harry, no matter the cost and she had and in saving her son had brought down the most powerful Dark Lord in centuries.
That had been Tom's weakness. He could not comprehend love.

But now... Was it love he felt for Harry, or lust, or something else entirely? The line between love and hate could be thin and before certain events Dumbledore would have been sure that Tom could have maintained his hate.

But if the Dark Lord now understood love, and knew how important it was then what weakness did he have?

Dissention within his ranks..? Dumbledore shook his head. Tom may not care about that but he had not been a Dark Lord for as long as he had without knowing how to deal with it.

Power..? No, he was one of the most powerful wizards in centuries. His raw power was in no way deficient and if he knew love, then he was even more powerful now than he had been.

Love..? The strength of the Light..? It seemed that Tom loved or lusted after Harry but was not willing to give up his position as the Dark Lord. So if Harry returned the feelings in anyway would that make them star crossed or would the boy accept the Darkness?

Harry... What magic have you wrought?
Ginny held her breath as Dumbledore entered the room, hoping that the Headmaster wouldn't sense her presence. Ever since the Dark Lord's visit she'd been here, watching Harry. They'd moved him from the main Hospital wing into a smaller, private room and the whole time he hadn't moved. He'd just lain there looking up at the ceiling as a few people had come and gone.

She'd watched over him. For the past five days, she had skipped all her classes and had watched him from the small closet space she had found. She knew the others were worried about her, and that no doubt Dumbledore had heard and would insist that she return to class but she had vowed to herself that she wasn't going to leave Harry until he was well. Convincing Dobby of that had been easy too so each day, she slipped out of bed before dawn, and crept into her hiding position, returning to her dorm only in the depths of night. The House Elves knew she was there and they brought her food regularly so that she wouldn't have to go to the Great Hall and explain herself.

Ron or Hermione would wait up for her each night and listen to her report but that was all they could do. The teachers were watching them too closely for them to do much more than that but their support was helping. They also gave her new books to read since the three of them were researching ways to help Harry but none of them had found anything. She closed her eyes, before turning her attention back to Dumbledore.

The Headmaster looked tired but he had looked that way since Cornelius' death. Inwardly, Ginny didn't think it was much of a loss and it had galvanized the Wizarding World. No one doubted the Dark Lord's return now and already Aurors were training for the combat they knew would come. The Dark Lord had given them a blessing, a gift as he had put it but Ginny knew there was something else troubling Dumbledore. What else had the Dark Lord done?

Tired blue eyes looked at Harry as the Headmaster sat down, taking one of Harry's hands in his own. "I'm sorry, Harry," Ginny heard him say and perked up slightly. Perhaps he was about to reveal what had gone wrong.

"I am so sorry..." the old man repeated, stroking Harry's hand. "I cannot right was has gone wrong but I can give you the power to ensure that it never happens again." With those words, Dumbledore reached into his robes and drew forth a shiny silver sword that Ginny had seen before. It was the weapon of Godric Gryffindor. "Harry... You are the last direct descendant of the Founder Gryffindor. You have the right and the responsibility to bear his sword and for good or ill, you have inherited his full powers. I pray you will walk the right path."

With those words Dumbledore rose, placing Harry's hand on the hilt of the blade and looking once more at Harry's face before he left the room.

Ginny continued to watch and that was why she saw it. She almost cried out in happiness as Harry's hand closed voluntarily around the sword hilt but he showed no further sign of life. After a moment she looked away, blinking back tears. This wasn't fair. It just wasn't fair. Hadn't Harry suffered enough?

And then, everything changed.
Ginny blinked... There had been a wave of darkness and now everything in the room was reversed. She looked around with wide eyes. What was dark was now light and what had been light was dark. Even the sunshine streaming in the window was dark, the inky lines highlighting further points of darkness which were dust motes hanging in the air. Without thinking she turned to Harry but he was unharmed.

His hair was now white and his skin was black - not brown as if the colour pigmentation had changed, but black as if he was made from shadows. His lips were grey and his eyes were... They remained unchanged... Emerald green orbs that were staring sightlessly up at the ceiling.

But Harry was no longer alone. Above him was an inky shadow, looking down at him with eyes that were absolute pitch. And the sword of Gryffindor was gone. Ginny cried out and tried to jump forward but she could not move and her voice died in her throat. She was forced to watch silently. And that's when she saw it, rising out from beneath Harry and coming to rest on his forehead like a live version of an Egyptian crown, was a small serpent, about as long as her arm. It looked up at the shadow, eyes burning red and it's tongue flickering as it tasted the air.

The shadow moved, raising what passed for a head as it looked at the serpent and it seemed eons passed as the two stared into each other's eyes.

-He does not belong to you,- the hiss came from the shadow.

-He belongs to the King.- The snake replied.

-He is ours.-

-Only if he desires.-

With that, the shadows eyes opened wide and it cocked it's head, leaning in close to truly examine the little serpent.

-Basilisk?- The serpent nodded, raising the still tiny red crest on it's head to the fullest.

The shadow paused at the response but then it spread itself out, covering Harry's entire body before it seemed to disappear but Ginny could see that it was seeping into Harry. -We will wait for the right time,- the shadow whispered just before it disappeared entirely.

Ginny pitched forward as the room returned to normal and the sudden noise and motion brought the attention of the serpent on to her. It hissed a warning, whipping it's tail around as it moved to Harry's chest, rearing above him, daring her to come closer.

-Human?- Ginny nodded to it as she rose and was surprised as it bared it's teeth, hissing again but showing off it's formidable fangs. "I don't want to hurt him!" She snapped. She was here for Harry's protection. She would do anything for him.

-But it was human's who hurt him.-

"I know! And I want to hurt them back... But I don't know who they are."

-The Master does... And he is already dealing with them.-
"You-Know-Who?"

The snake looked confused. -My Master.- It repeated.

"He knows who did this to Harry?"

At this the little serpent looked sad. -No... He only knows who hurt his mate in the past... His mate isn't speaking of his current hurts.-

"Then let me help him!" Ginny implored the snake. Even as they had been talking, something she didn't even question her ability to do, she just did, Harry had been changing. At the moment black flame seemed to be rising from him burning nothing but flickering with a steady not light that was retreating back into his body.

-You would bond with him?- 

The youngest Weasley didn't even feel herself hit the floor. That was it! That was the answer they had been looking for...

Bond with him...

If she were bonded with Harry then she could stay with him forever... And she would share everything that he was... She could help him wake up and she would know who had hurt him and could tell that to Dumbledore and if she was remembering correctly... A true bond mate's testimony was taken to be just as legitimate as the testimony of the victim... Harry wouldn't even need to face his attackers again... She could do it for him... She could help him so much if she was tied to him.

But what if he doesn't want it..? What if he rejects you? What would you do then?

It was the voice of reason, cutting into her dreams as it had so often in the past.

"I love him," she whispered, feeling the dull pain in her chest that hadn't vanished since she had known something had been wrong with Harry. "I love him so much," she repeated the words again, closing her eyes against the tears.

-Enough to die?- 

"Willingly," she nodded not looking up.

-Enough to live?- 

"Ecstatically," she nodded again.

-Enough to walk away?- 

"NEVER!" Her head snapped up and she found herself eye to eye with the serpent.

-Then you do not love him,- it hissed, a note of contempt in it's voice.

Ginny shook her head as the pain in her chest redoubled at the little creatures actions. "No..." she murmured, "You don't understand. I love him," she began again, wiping away her tears and speaking in a voice that was firm but laced with emotion. "I love him enough to walk away," she said solemnly, ignoring the burning pain in her chest at the thought. "But I would not do so without a fight... I would walk away... I wouldn't stop loving him but I would walk away if I knew it was his true desire. It would hurt... I don't think anything could hurt me that much but if it was his true desire I would. I would fight first but would walk away."
The little serpent looked at her through narrowed eyes. -You speak the truth...- It hissed, a strange note of contemplation within it's tone.

"I would do anything for him."

-Bond with him?- It questioned again.

"Yes," Ginny nodded, her voice firm.

-Then you may return and I will let you approach.-

Ginny nodded again, not minding being ordered by a snake as with a considerably lighter heart she moved towards the door. She needed a bonding spell. She looked back at Harry once more and smiled gently at him. He was as still as ever, looking up at the roof but he was protected now, she knew that. The little serpent would not allow anyone close and the dark shadow that was Gryffindor's sword was now inside him, awaiting its time.

"I will return."

Lucius surveyed the room through narrowed eyes. He was dressed in his full Death Eater Regalia but had exchanged his plain mask for a black onyx mask which he would discard before the night was over. The room was full but was relatively quiet. His fellow Death Eater's had come because he had invited them. They were the one's who had muttered the loudest against the Dark Lord's changes.

It was time now. Draco had acted well and the Dark Lord had responded with far more force that Lucius had been expecting. The Dark Lord had killed several of his Muggle prisoners, executing them through the sheer force of his combined Cruciatus and Imperio curses. They'd screamed in agony but because of the absolute force of the Dark Lord's Imperio they couldn't breathe. The magic had taken total control of them, not letting go until their limbs were twisted and broken and they were covered in blood. They hadn't even resembled humans but the time it was over. The other Muggles had watched in horror before the Dark Lord had returned them to their cells, and then disappeared himself.

Only to appear at Hogwarts to kill the Minister of Magic... That was slightly troubling since it was behaviour befitting a Dark Lord at the height of his power but Lucius was confident he could discredit the action.

"My fellow Death Eaters," he cried in a magically amplified voice as he stepped forward. "The time has come for us to claim what is rightfully ours."

"So our Lord wants us to march?"

Beneath his mask Lucius smiled grimly. It was a good opening. "Alas, no," he said in a tragic voice. "The Dark Lord does not yet order us to march... And he may never give that order."

"What?"

The elder Malfoy waited for a few moments, allowing the indignation at his suggestion to pass. "I know, my brethren, I to mourn this fact but it is truth. Many of you have noted the changes in our Lord since his rebirth and have attributed his reluctance to attack to the time it takes to gather his forces. Our Lord has been regretfully absent for 13 years and even for a wizard of his power, regaining his strength is a slow process but this is not the case. The Dark Lord has recovered his
powers but holds his attack for another reason..."

"Potter!" The name was spat with vehemence.

"Yes!" Lucius agreed. "Harry Potter is the cause of our Lord's hesitation."

"Then let us kill the boy and be done with it."

"But our Lord has claimed that right for himself."

"Sometimes to be loyal, it is necessary to disobey."

"Then you will suffer the fate of those Muggles," Lucius said coldly, bringing the gathered Death Eater's attentions back to him. They had all known what had happened to the Muggles and they all knew how much longer it would take for a wizard to die that way.

Lucius continued in the chill silence that descended upon the gathering. "He would kill you. He would not hesitate, he would not stop and you would be but the first. Our Lord no longer desires Potter's death. Those Muggles were gathered for Potter's sake because they hurt him when he was a child. Their torture, their pain, their heads are the Dark Lord's courting gifts."

More silence...

"Our Lord has changed since his rebirth. He no longer hunts Mudbloods, he no longer sees the ascendency of blood. As regrettable as it is the weakness given to our Lord through Wormtail's blood had only been accentuated by Potter's blood. Our once great Lord is fallen, weakened from within and I fear there is scant hope that his lax morals or obsession with Potter may be broken. There is only one way to strengthen the Dark Lord."

"How?"

"Remember him. The Dark Lord has fallen but his ideals remain. We can remember him and unite under a new Lord, one who is not weak, one who knows the purity of blood and one who will destroy Potter and Dumbledore like the animals they are." Lucius reached for his mask, pulling it off as he activated several charms he'd placed on himself earlier.

His magical aura burst into brilliant existence, making him seem far more than he was and rustling his robes with power. "I am the pure blood Lucius Salazar Malfoy and I will take mercy on the fallen. I will destroy the Light and all the Muggle loving fools who stand in our way so that the pure bloods can take their rightful place as the rulers of the world."

There was one moment of stunned silence before the entire room burst into cheers which slowly resolved themselves into a ringing cry. "Malfoy! Mal-foy! Mal-foy!"

Lucius smiled beatifically, his arms raised in acceptance of their acknowledgement. They were his now... The moment they'd said his name their loyalty was his. There was a little known Dark charm that ensured that so long as he ordered them along the path they wanted they would follow him. The charm would suffice for now and later, his would extract their vows, binding the Dark Mark to him.

He looked over the cheering Death Eaters. These were the first but he knew, before he could truly challenge the Dark Lord he would need those who held power - those who had authority within the Ministry and those who's personal power levels could challenge him. It was a risk but he would bet his life to obtain the power of the Dark.
Heprah was somewhat confused. When you were condemned to Azkaban to receive the Dementor's Kiss, you were taken to the forsaken island and left there and then the Dementors came and wasted no time in stripping your soul from you. If were to be imprisoned, you were taken to the island and chained in a cell and the black guards knew that they could only feed from your emotion.

He'd thought that by now, twenty days into his imprisonment on Azkaban that it would be over but while the Dementors were approaching him, none had even attempted to take his soul. They'd greeted his arrival jubilantly and he shivered as he remembered their cold hands pressed against him as they had escorted him into the ruins. Then they'd secured him to the stone slab he was currently lying on and after that they had done nothing more. Occasionally one would come by with some bread and water but that was the limit of their care and their punishment so he was confused.

As he stared at the ceiling he could hear them talking, whispering to each other in voices that sounded like the wind. They had been doing that a lot lately. It almost seemed as if they were arguing. "Heh! Probably fighting over the taste of greatness..." His voice cracked and he ran a dry tongue over his lips as he pulled his finest memories close.

The boy... The Wizarding Worlds saviour. He was so sweet. And he was so skilled. Heprah laughed as he considered what his peers would think if they knew the truth... Their precious saviour was nothing more than a skilled little whore who would spread his legs for whoever had the strength to take what they wanted. Oh yes... He'd fight but his fight just made the claiming sweeter. With that pale skin, cheery red lips and emerald eyes he was easily the most beautiful boy Heprah had experienced and with the depth of magical power, he had easily been the strongest. "And he is mine..."

Heprah paused as a Dementor approached him. It was larger than the rest and as with all Dementors he could see nothing of its face. Ah... So they had decided to take his soul. He smiled... It would be over now and as he licked chapped lips again he recalled his first time with Harry. He would go out thinking good thoughts.

"Wizzzarrd..." A skeletal hand reached out and came to rest on his chest creating a patch of icy coldness that competed with the growing warmth from his groin.

"Get it over with," He snarled as he remembered licking creamy white thighs slicked with his cum.

"Noo..." the wind voice sighed as other Dementors released his bonds and grasped his hands and feet.

Harry was so tight and it was so good to pump into him but best of all was watching those cheery lips swallow him and to feel that little tongue flickering against him. He could remember that forever.

Another skeletal hand emerged from the robes and came to rest on his groin, rubbing his growing erection and killing all thoughts of passion. "Pleasure is not yours to have," the larger Dementor whispered before Heprah screamed as something reached out, grabbing his magical power and ripping it away from him. There was a swirl of nothingness much like apparation and he was brought back to himself as he fell to the ground.
It was stone... But it wasn't a single slab like he had been lying on before. He could feel the fine joins between pieces and he knew they had shifted locations. He wasn't being restrained anymore but he felt weak and he was surrounded by the five Dementors still. The Dementors had used his energy to shift their locations. He sat up slowly, ignoring the way the black guards seemed to be bowing at something.

He was in a large room. The ceiling was vaulted and heavy timber beams supported everything. Torches hung from iron hooks and illuminated everything in a smoky light but they did nothing to heat the air. It was cold. As cold as Azkaban and Heprah knew the chill he was feeling wasn't only due to the Dementors touch.

The wind was whispering still and he could hear a murmur of response to it. Slowly he turned around but the Dementors blocked his view. The larger one had stepped forward and around it Heprah could see that it was talking with someone who was dressed in crimson robes. At length the larger Dementor bowed deeply again and then stepped aside.

It wasn't possible... Heprah's weak blue eyes opened wide as he saw the figure the Dementor had been talking with. It wasn't possible. Rich crimson robes, burning red eyes, ivory skin, thick black hair and an aura of power that bore down on everything. The Dark Lord Voldemort.

But perhaps this was the chance he had been looking for. The Dark Lord had been killed by Potter, driven into a spirit form while at the height of his power so surely he would understand the exquisite torture the boy had experienced. Surely the Dark Lord would appreciate it and want to know more. Heprah almost smiled. So that was why the Dementors hadn't touched him. They wanted to please their Master by delivering unto him the one man who had dared to strike at the Wizarding World's saviour.

"My Lord Voldemort," he smiled with a florid bow bravado in the presence making him say the name he would not otherwise dare speak. "How may I serve you?"

"Heprah."

He shivered. The Dementors had said his name but never with such cold anticipation and even when they touched him compared to the Dark Lord's voice they seemed warm.

"My Lord?" He reminded himself that he had done nothing against Voldemort and managed to force the words out against the rising sense of unease.

"It is amusing, is it not, the complete ineptitude of the Ministry? I have been keeping them busy but I didn't not think I had been keeping them so busy that they have let their checks on Azkaban lapse, did you?"

"It is an unexpected boon, My Lord," Heprah responded, relaxing slightly as he realised the Dark Lord was feeling out his loyalties. Well, with everything that had happened to him, they had not changed. As always they were not to the Ministry and were only to himself but he was willing to compromise them for the Dark Lord, especially since it looked like it would lead to survival.

"Very unexpected but much appreciated," Voldemort agreed. "I understand you were imprisoned because of a rather special case?"

"Special in the way they don't wish to acknowledge that I exist."

"Ah... I understand. I'm sure that various Ministries across the world would like to disavow my existence," Voldemort murmured easily. "Tell me about the case."
Heprah suppressed a tight smile. This was his chance. By the time he was finished the Dark Lord himself would be thanking him for so effectively punishing his enemy and he would be rewarded beyond his wildest dreams. "I was condemned for and I quote 'spell casting on a minor without their consent with intent to pervert the course of justice, violation of the protective wards and child abuse.' Heh! This is one case where our system is inferior to the Muggles," Heprah spoke calmly, his voice betraying the confidence that was winning over his unease.

"Child abuse is what we call it, but I enjoyed it vastly more than simply beating the lad. I'm sure you would appreciate that there is only so far one can go with physical torture before it becomes unsatisfying."

Voldemort nodded but said nothing. The man was... interesting in his own way and he had no idea just how doomed he was. The Dark Lord had been prepared to let him suffer the Dementor's Kiss and leave it at that out of misplaced mercy since Harry would know that a Dementor's Kiss for a Wizard was the worst punishment possible but then the Dementors hadn't Kissed him. In fact they had brought Heprah before him, using the wizard to reassure the Dark Lord of their loyalty. A gift as it were. A single soul they would refrain from consuming to allow him the greater pleasure of destruction.

"He was begging for it," Heprah continued. "With those eyes and that hot little body he was just begging anyone for it so what was I to do? His Muggle Uncle was just raking it in although I know he enjoyed a good workout with the colt too. But with that wife and son... Anything would be more appealing."

"Oh..?" Voldemort forced himself to sound interested and unknowing. "Who was the frisky filly?"

"Ah... An excellent term, My Lord. He was frisky and he was so horny! He was so sweet, I could just fuck him forever. Those lips, those eyes, that body... it's to die for. If Gryffindor looked anything like his Heir he wasn't the strongest of the Hogwarts Four, he just seduced the others into submission. And that Harry..."

"Harry? Harry Potter?" It was almost impossible to control the urge to curse the man where he stood but the Dark Lord harnessed his impulses as he spoke the name in an almost reverent tone.

"Yeah," Heprah confirmed. "Harry Potter. The little whore was so sweet, so tight and so hot. It was like fucking a virgin every time. Three, four times a go and he still felt like a virgin. He was so good."

"Heprah," Voldemort interrupted the wizards reminiscing. The man was actually getting excited just thinking about Harry and his aura was flaring as he imagined fucking Harry again. "There are many people who come into my service. Some bring wealth, some bring experience and some come to me because they know I speak the truth. But no matter what they bring and why they come they all seek my favour and my attention so you should be proud of yourself, Heprah. You have my undivided attention."

"My Lord!"

The Dark Lord smiled, a chill smile that spoke volumes. "And you have the full extent of my power directed towards you." With an idle flick of his wand he summoned several beings to the room.

Heprah watched with wide eyes as several tortured Muggles appeared in the room. He didn't understand. What did the Dark Lord want with Muggles and why should he bring them here now? Unless Voldemort wanted him to kill them or something..? A final test perhaps... "My Lord, I don't understand."
Crimson eyes bore into him. "Look closer," he instructed his voice like ice.

It took a moment but Voldemort saw the exact instant recognition flooded into the wizard but recognition was not followed by understanding. Heprah gave a cry of revulsion and jumped back slightly, flinching away from the Muggles that had shared his pleasure in Harry Potter. "I don't..." Heprah coughed. "I don't understand."

Arrayed before him in various states of undress were three Muggles. They all showed signs of torture in their thin hallowed looks and the blood and cuts that covered their bodies. The first one he recognised was Vernon. The man appeared almost emancipated and his skin sagged from his bones. The next was thin man who was almost totally naked. Blood wept from his anus but he made no moved to staunch the flow and Heprah gagged as he realised it was the Muggle who had invited him to try young Harry. And finally there was a youngish Muggle there, one he occasionally had shared Harry with when he'd felt that the boy had required some extra discipline. All three had metal rings around their balls and Heprah could see that the skin around each ring was blackened and burnt. If the pain of constriction was not enough, fire had been added. He winced despite himself as he noticed that both Vernon and young one were twitching and beneath their largely intact trousers he could see the outline of butt plugs.

"My Lord, what is this?"

"This," the Dark Lord began softly, "is a sample of what I do to those who have dared to touch my mate."

"Your mate?" The Dark Lord shared his bed? This was news to Heprah.

"My mate," Voldemort said again. "The Heir of Gryffindor, one Harry Potter."

Understanding was not instantaneous and the Dark Lord savoured the confusion that lead slowly into panic. "My Lord?" Heprah managed to gasp as his eyes flickered between the Muggles and the enthroned Lord.

With another lazy flick, Voldemort returned the Muggles to their cells and focused his full attention on Heprah. "In some ways I have to thank you. Harry has recovered from the traumas of his childhood very quickly because of you. He has been able to disassociate himself with the memories and so has come to terms with them. Your abuse has also allowed me to show him the truth, a chance perhaps I would not have otherwise had if he'd have lead a normal life. But the fact remains that you have touched what is mine. You were in a position to save him Heprah but you chose personal gratification. Imagine the wealth you could have acquired from the Wizarding World by being known as the one who saved the Boy-Who-Lived. And such a gesture would have earnt my mercy. But you have thrown away all those possibilities and now you will suffer the consequences."

With glowing eyes Voldemort raised his wand and traced a simple pattern as he murmured the words. Behind Heprah an object appeared. It was made of glass and was almost six feet tall. It was bulbous and shaped roughly like a tear drop except that its point was turned back down on itself. It shimmered in the torch light and with another twist of his wand the Dark Lord transported Heprah. The wizard appeared in the centre of the glass sculpture and as he looked around confused, the Dark Lord rose and walked up to the structure.

"What is this?" Heprah snarled, the Dark Lord's seeming mercy making him bold.

"It is something I've wished to try for a while," Voldemort said matter of factly. "But Muggles are too fragile to endure for long so I've had to wait. You are trapped in there Heprah. The glass is unbreakable and unless you are an animagus who transforms into something extremely small you
cannot escape through the funnel. Even if you were, I have placed containment charms over this vessel. Air can get in and air can get out but that is all. You will remain in there until the day you die. I wonder how long it will take..?

"What?" Heprah gasped as some implications dawned on him.

Voldemort smiled and licked his lips as he tapped at the glass. "My only regret is that it's not summer. I would have enjoyed watching you broil but to compensate, I will have you moved close to the fire during the daylight hours. I wouldn't want my guests to be cold."

"No!" Heprah screamed, pounding on the glass. "No! Have mercy!"

"Mercy?" The Dark Lord questioned as he turned away. "I am being merciful, infinitely merciful. In time, you will die."
Lucius sat in his study as he read the reports sipping what appeared to be a glass of red wine. The reports were promising. When he had spoken to the gathered Death Eaters about leaving their Lord he had gotten a good response but he had chosen his audience well. Those ones came from strong wizarding lines, well versed in the dark arts and they wanted nothing more than to assert the authority that came with being pure bloods.

They had been an easy audience. It was the ones his minions had spoken to over the last few days that were important. He had sent various creatures out, with tokens of sincerity to canvas the more important and powerful Death Eaters and even to speak to a few people he knew had Dark leanings but weren't in the Dark Lord's service. It was a delicate operation. They were all extremely powerful individuals and one wrong word could bring disaster. He was confident that they wouldn't run to the Lord Voldemort but he did not need another challenger.

He wasn't bothering with the lesser Death Eaters. Let them follow were they would and they would follow him once they saw their Lord defeated. The Lord Voldemort quite rightly thought little of them since the he, Lucius or any of the elite would be more than a match for at least twenty lessors. It was the more powerful one's the older Malfoy was concerned about but it appeared many of them were prepared to follow his lead. The Lord Voldemort had upset too many of them since his rebirth.

Lucius smiled but then grimaced at the taste. It wasn't red wine. It was a far more useful concoction - blood. Basilisk with enough Adder and Cobra blood to dilute the deadly Serpent Kings blood to the point where it was safe for human consumption. He'd been drinking it, one glass a day for close to a year now and already he could feel the changes. It wouldn't make him a parselmouth, that gift was inherited or nothing but it could make him immune to the poisons of serpents and provide him protection from the stare of the Basilisk. And when he struck against the serpent Lord, Lucius knew he was going to need all the help he could get. Every time he was called to attend Lord Voldemort he knew the potion was working through the sibilant hissing of the snakes. They had seemed dead before but now they were vibrant with life and respectful of him. The serpents knew... They knew they could not hurt him.

He grimaced again as he set the now empty glass down, reaching for a different potion. This one was more mundane but equally important. He'd taken it many times before but the batch he was drinking currently was far more potent than his efforts in the past. This was a fortifying potion. One that strengthened his body and magic. It couldn't increase his ability. There were only a handful of methods to do that and none of them were open to him at the moment but it could and did bring his body and magic to their peak condition. When he struck at the Lord Voldemort he would be at his full formidable power, armed with his strongest talismans and shields and backed by his chosen Death Eaters.

The Dark Lord would fall before him and then he would take the power of the Dark for his own. He sat back, a half smile gracing his features as he considered it. He could taste the power already. All he need do now was bribe, seduce and cajole a few more ranking Death Eaters and then he would strike.

"Delusional..."
The whisper brought him back to reality and with a fluid motion he stood, drawing his wand.

"Put that away, Malfoy..." The murmur came from the shadows, coming from everywhere.

"Show yourself!" He commanded.

The deepest shadow on one of the bookshelves rippled and the split open and Lucius found himself face to face with a beings who's skin was ivory white. Blue eyes were rimmed in crimson and sharp canines caught the skin of his bloodless mouth. Vampire... Lucius thought as he brought several spells to mind.

"I am not here to attack you, Malfoy," the Vampire whispered again, his eyes never leaving Lucius's grey orbs. "I am here to offer the next Dark Lord a deal."

Lucius started a bit at the choice of words but then he relaxed. Voldemort did not have control over Vampires. Those Dark creatures refused to follow anyone but themselves but they weren't above temporary dealings with mortals when it suited their purposes and from everything Lucius had heard lately in was entirely possible that the Vampires would make a stand against the Dark Lord.

"That's right..." the Vampire breathed, reading Lucius' mind. "Voldemort has made a mistake."

"So it's true?" Lucius questioned, lowering his wand slightly and gesturing for the Vampire to come closer.

"You do not cripple an elder and get away with it."

Lucius nodded. "So what do you want?" He asked. It didn't really matter why the Vampire was here, what mattered was this deal.

The vampire bowed slightly. "My name is Ikhan. I am a childe of the Elder Xeoaph Casitial and it is he who will support your claim."

"How?"

"You are correct. Lord Voldemort is obsessed with Harry Potter but you do not understand the reason. The boy is dangerous and it is that danger the Dark Lord is seeking to absolve. However your son's actions represent the other way of destroying the danger the boy is and for that my Master will support you." With a flourish, Ikhan reached into a pocket and drew forth a small vial. "Xeoaph's blood, freely given. Where his submission was forced by the Lord Voldemort, and his blood was taken, you need not fear retribution for this."

Lucius reached out and took the vial. It was heavy. There was more than blood contained within it.

"The day before you strike, take it," Ikhan instructed. "It will not turn you, it will not make you immortal but it will boost your power. You are powerful Lucius Malfoy but as you are you could never defeat Lord Voldemort. His power is far more than you understand but this will allow you to stand equal for a time so you must make the best of it and crush him while you can. When you strike, call us and we will come. For this one battle Vampires will walk with your forces and fight as one. After that though... Our vengeance will be complete and we will disappear."

The older Malfoy nodded. This deal was a once only contract, one where he took the risk and carried out their dirty work...

But... The vial in his hand... The vampire's blood was singing to him and already he could imagine the power it would give him. He could almost hear his own blood surging through his body.
"I will call," he murmured and Ikhan nodded, wrapping the shadows back around his form as he disappeared.

"We will come."

Voldemort turned away from the tortured Muggles as a small serpent approached him. It was a dusty brown snake, one that blended well with the shadows and could travel unnoticed. It was one of his spy snakes. Small, lithe, intelligent, with a mildly venomous bite and one that wasn't due back for some time. He hissed at it questioningly.

-Master...- It replied, looking up at him.

With a gentle gesture the Dark Lord bent down and scooped up his servant, feeling it wrap itself around his arm and beginning to hiss its report. It was only then that Voldemort realized the condition of his servant and his eyes glowed with anger.

The little snake looked okay, but he could feel it trembling against his skin and he could tell from the cool temperature of its scales that it was not well.

-Rest,- he hissed at it. -Regain your strength, then report to me,- he gave the instruction, showing compassion none of his Death Eaters would ever receive.

The snake shook its head sadly. -Master... I cannot. My next sleep is eternal. There were too many shields.- Its tongue flickered weakly as it lowered its head to his arm. -Master, rebellion.- It whispered, its voice becoming weaker and Voldemort could feel the coils around his arm loosening. -Those who serve you are not loyal... Will strike soon...-

The snake hissed suddenly, surging upwards as it spasmed. -Vam... vampire...- It choked but somehow seemed to gather itself, grunting and clenching its jaws together. -will... help...- It gasped, breathing heavily and Voldemort watched on, supporting the little serpent as he could, as its brown eyes glowed with an unnatural light. It was forcing itself to live but it could not continue for long. -...them...- The word was less than a whisper but he heard, just as he had heard every word. With a final spasm the little body stilled, going limp around his arm.

Long white fingers reached out and gently stroked the dead serpent and he saw with his mage sight a mist rise from the body. He hissed at it, gesturing with his own power and driving it from the body of his servant. Someone had wanted him to hear this. Someone had wanted him to know of the rebellion but nothing more and so they had tortured his servant and sent it home.

Someone was going to pay.

-Nagini!- He called for his pet as he arranged the body in his lap, coiling it as if the little snake was just asleep. Rebellion... Dissention... The attack on his destined mate was then not just a random act by someone misguidedly seeking his favour. It was their first move. Voldemort's eyes narrowed, burning dangerously. He could play this game. He had not attained his position without knowing how to tell who was truly loyal and who was merely waiting to strike.

-Sss,- her response was immediate.

He held out the body of the small serpent to her. -Taste them.-

Nagini nodded, opening her mouth gently and taking the body from his hands. Nagini knew every Death Eater. She tasted them all at their initiations and so none could hide from her. If they had
touched the little serpent, she would know. It hung limply from her lipless mouth as she flicked her
tongue all over it. At length she looked back up at her master, shaking her head. -Vampires, only,-
she hissed, reporting back on the scents she had detected.

The Dark Lord nodded, taking the body back. It was as he suspected. Xeoaph wished to test his
mastery. He reached inside his robes and brought forth a small vial containing a thick red liquid -
Xeoaph's blood, willingly given after a little dark coercion. "Come..." He whispered the word,
smiling into the darkness that had settled around his throne room.

"Come..." Voldemort invited again. "And I will show you what mastery means."
Desperate Measures

Possession
Chapter XXI - Desperate Measures
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The book was impossibly heavy. It had been light in the library when she had thought it nothing more than a book holding a possibility but when she had read it, it had grown heavier as she had determined that it held what she was looking for. And then, with every step she had taken towards Harry, it had become heavier so that it was now, she was sitting next to Harry with it open on her lap, panting at the weight.

Ginny looked down at the charm... Spell really... She knew it off by heart... She'd known it by heart for the last eleven days... And now she was here to use it.

Even since the little serpent had given her the answer what seemed millennium ago, she had been in the library researching. She had rejected so many binding spells... But this one had been different. There was something with this one that told her it would work but she didn't know what. The same force that had told her to reject the other spells had told her to select this one.

There had been literally hundreds of binding spells in the library and Ginny half suspected there were so many there so that any student contemplating this on a whim would be overwhelmed. She hoped that only those like her would persist and would find this spell. The book had been in the restricted section and so she hadn't found it until she had rejected everything else in the normal library. It really hadn't taken that long to find, not once she'd borrowed Harry's invisibility cloak and started searching. Nine days to find a binding spell and five days to collect the required ingredients and six to gather the courage to use it.

She'd thought she was ready... But finding the spell and reading the warnings on it had only brought back the enormity of what she was attempting. She could help Harry, bound to him. But he could hurt her too and she could be hurting him now in a way that he could never recover from. Once bound, the couple could not be unbound, no matter what happened. Love, jealousy, rage, hate... No matter what they felt, they were bound to feel it together.

"I love him," she repeated to herself, looking down at the words.

She hadn't told Ron or Hermione what she was going to do. In fact, the two of them had just held her when she'd cried and then supported her move to go to classes again. None of the teachers had mentioned anything about her five day absence but they'd all seemed relieved that she'd chosen to return on her own. Ginny snorted at that. She'd been running close to the limit, she'd known and if she wanted to attempt this binding spell uninterrupted then returning to class, and acting like a saddened but courageous Gryffindor had been the only option. Suspicion was away from her now, and no one thought she was going to attempt such desperate measures to help Harry.

Ginny reached out her hand, placing it on Harry's forehead, as she looked back up, taking a deep breath. "I love you Harry," she murmured. "I will live for you, I will kill for you, I die for you. I will do anything to protect you Harry." The words were quiet but they were nothing less that the truth and that was what had scared her into six days inaction.

It was one thing believing you loved someone enough to do all that but it was another knowing it. Ginny brushed her hair out of her eyes as she looked up at the clock. Eleven thirty... Time to begin. On the first chime of midnight she and Harry would end their lives as separate beings and by the last
chime and the beginning of a new day, they would be bound together.  

She lifted the book as she rose and placed it on the chair she had been sitting in before she turned to Harry. His eyes were closed but then the room was shrouded in darkness and he looked as if he was sleeping peacefully. With a slow, gentle motion she pulled at the covers, drawing them to the foot of the bed. This was going to be very difficult to explain if she was caught but the book had been absolutely adamant on this point; the couple had to present themselves to each other as they were, with no ornamentation or spells hiding the truth. She would have locked the door if she could but Dumbledore had let it slip while she was watching that the room was charmed so that alarms would sound if anyone meaning Harry any harm entered it and if any attempt to isolate the room from the rest of the castle was made. The most security Ginny could give herself for this was to close the door.

Sirius wasn't here tonight. It was the night after the full moon and he had been torn between his Godson and helping his friend. Dumbledore had eventually persuaded him that while watching over Harry was noble, there were times when Remus needed him more and Sirius had reluctantly gone. "Don't worry, Sirius... In the morning it will be all right," Ginny whispered as she unbuttoned Harry's pyjamas.

The little serpent watched on from Harry's pillow. It was coiled there, it's head resting on its scales but it's eyes were following her movements. She'd visited Harry a few times while searching for the spell but she had never attempted to get close to him and tonight the snake had just looked at her before it had slithered to it's current position. It hadn't said anything but it didn't need to for her to know the consequences of failure.

She eased Harry's shirt off, trying not to gasp at the way his ribs poked out through the skin on his chest. He was feed properly at Hogwarts, she knew but it appeared his body was so conditioned to malnutrition that it refused to accept the food. His skin was white, so white she wouldn't have found it difficult to believe that he was a vampire, and it was unmarked. Whatever torture had been inflicted upon him, it hadn't marked the skin of his chest and back. With slow movements she moved to his pants, tugging gently at them as she pulled them down his legs.

"I'm sorry, Harry," Ginny whispered. She didn't know if it was true or not but for someone who had been raped, the forced exposure might be disconcerting and she didn't want to cause him any discomfort but this was the only way.

When he was naked, she stepped back, just looking at him. He was beautiful. That was the only word she could use. Harry was painfully thin but he was starkly beautiful. His skin was almost translucent and she could see the spider web like patterns that his veins traced over his body even in the gloom. He was almost hairless except for the hair on the crown of his head and a few dark curly pubic hairs that clung to his skin. He was more muscular than she had imagined but everything worked together to make him appear perfect.

With an odd smile she began removing her own cloths. Harry's perfection made her feel somewhat embarrassed but with a determined shake of her head she drove that thought away. There could be no thought of failure when she did this, there could be no thought of worth, no thought beyond her love for him.

She shivered slightly as she removed the last of her clothes, folding them neatly beside the pile she'd made of Harry's. Ginny glanced at the clock again as she picked up the book. Eleven fifty-five. Time to begin in earnest.

She looked down at the book again, running her fingertips over the parchment, feeling the ink on the page. The bonding was simple. She'd chosen this one because it was simple. If you were powerful enough, you could use sheer power to bind yourself to anyone or anything, or if you were skilled
enough in potions then there were those that would tie someone to you but true binding came from
the soul. True binding didn't really need incantations or ingredients to work, it merely required the
heartfelt energy of the couple to mix together, binding their magic into one. She didn't quite have that
since Harry could not respond but the incantation would take care of that and her own half, her own
energy, freely given to the ceremony should help to compensate.

"I love you," Ginny whispered once more and began to read, taking Harry's hand in her own. It was
a simple incantation, a promise, an affirmation of her feelings that would bring forth her magic and
bind her to Harry. The hardest thing was timing it so that she could bring forth the correct memories
to tie their souls together.

"I love you for I am you.
I will die so that you may live.
I will kill so that you may live.
I will live so that you may live.

I love you for I am you.
I will be everything that you are.
I will be everything that you are not.
I will bind myself to you.
I will walk away from you.

I love you for I am you.
I will wait for you forever.
I will stay with you forever.
I will know you always.

I love you for I am you.
My body is yours.
My mind is yours.
My magic is yours.
My soul is yours.

I am yours.
I love you for I am you."

Ginny gasped as she said the last word, fighting back a scream... This couldn't be right... It was pain
greater than anything she had ever felt and as she gritted her teeth against it, knowing that any noise
would bring Madam Promfrey, she heard the clock chime the first note of midnight.

"Ha... harry..." She struggled to lift her head, looking towards his sleeping face. "Please..." The word
was so much more than just a word. It was a question, request, and imploration for him to feel what
she was doing and to accept it.

Dimly she heard the chimes of the clock continue but it sounded as if each chime was consuming
eternity. The pain continued unabated and she felt like she was being ripped apart from within. This
wasn't how it was meant to be. Yellow eyes fixed on her own, watching as she struggled to remain
conscious but they didn't nothing more than watch. "Harry..." she managed to gasp once more as her
head swum and the world began to spin around her. "Help me..."

The little serpent reared up a little as it watched the girls body slump in the chair. It had been
somewhat surprised that the girl had found the right bonding spell but it was the only reason the girl
hadn't discovered how dangerous it could be.
She lay, slumped against the bed, the book on the ground, open now at some random page. The charm had worked the way it was meant to and already the little serpent could feel her presence through the bond it had created with it's masters mate. But the charm she'd used wasn't exactly what she had thought it was but it was too late to turn back now.

-You are bound to him,- the little serpent hissed. -But he is not bound to you. My Master does not share.- It slithered down and butted her hand with it's blunt nose. After a moment it let out a small hiss of frustration. The strain had been too much for her and she was unconscious so there was no one left to cover it's charge again.

-In the morning girl, I shall awaken you and then you shall leave for you are not strong enough to wake him alone. You may return when my Master has instructed you.- With that, the serpent reared above Ginny, the plume on it's head rising and it's eyes burning a brilliant crimson.
The Muggles had not fared well since his mate had been attacked at Hogwarts. Each day he had redoubled their tortures but he was becoming bored. He tortured and tortured but nothing changed with his mate and this torture, while they still screamed and begged was nothing compared with what they had put Harry through. With a savage flick of his wand, he broke all the spells on them, watching impassively as they sank to the floor.

Most had been under Imperio for at least the last five days and he hadn't been allowing them any rest.

"It's not enough," he murmured, narrowing his eyes as he looked at them again. He could still see Harry's memories and the pain and fear that had been evident in those beautiful emerald eyes. "Crucio!" He snarled the curse, not caring that it might kill some, not caring beyond the need to cause them pain.

The Muggles jerked, all of them writhing on the floor as they screamed.

It wasn't enough.

No matter what he tried it wasn't enough. He growled, flicking his wand once again and returning the Muggles to their cells, their screams still echoing around the chamber.

"Harry," Voldemort whispered, picturing the boy in his mind.

Black hair, pale skin, red lips and those eyes... It was his eyes, Voldemort decided, that he liked the best. He could remember them always. Emerald orbs that were so expressive. The Dark Lord could see them even now and he remembered.

The first time he'd seen Harry's eyes they were wide and innocent, the eyes of a babe who comprehended nothing, not his mother's begging and not the brilliant flash of light that had killed her. But while Harry hadn't comprehended his actions then, those eyes had instinctively clung to life, reaching out with wild fledgling magic and rebounding the curse. Those eyes had been innocent but they had known power.

The Dark Lord snorted. Harry's eyes had always known power. He had been born to it. But Harry's eyes had also known fear and desire.

Fear... He could still remember the pinched, stark expression that had graced the boy's features at his rebirth but that expression had been nothing when compared with the fear his childhood had known. Voldemort gripped his throne, forcibly calming himself. He had shown Harry fear but that had been one instant, one instant when he had not fully known the path to take. At his rebirth, the sheer intoxication of knowing he was whole again, that he would never again have to suffer the weakness of depending on his servants had driven thought from him and he had acted on instinct, lashing out at
the person who had caused him pain without acknowledging the power that lay within them. It was good that Harry had survived. Nothing really would have been accomplished by killing him then and it would have been such a waste.

And the fear that Harry had known then was nothing to the fear the Muggles had given him, the fear Harry had shown when he had mistaken him for Heprah... But he had soothed that fear, smothering it with desire. Voldemort smiled as he remembered emerald eyes clouded with lust, his treasure thinking about nothing more than pleasure of the next thrust. Those eyes, that begged him for more, that seared his soul with their intensity, he was a slave to those eyes.

But those eyes were now staring uselessly at a ceiling, not seeing, not feeling... He knew, not just because he had visited but because each night he reached out to his mate, touching, feeling, cajoling. Ever since he had slept with Harry, the bond between them extended both ways but not enough for him to have helped Harry during the attack, only enough for him to feel his mate's terror. Each night Harry remained nothing more than a blank unassailable wall to his senses. There was nothing there and Harry had not allowed him to see who had attacked him, not this time.

He would find out though. The little basilisk he had left with Harry had bonded to his mate and as soon as Harry awoke the serpent would know and then he would know. "You cannot hide them from me Harry. I will take vengeance for you," Voldemort murmured as he looked around the darkened room.

Oh yes... As with the Muggles, he fully intended to present his mate with their heads, nicely wrapped and bearing expressions of terror. It was all he could do now, but in future... No one would touch his mate. No one would even look at the boy unless they had his permission. And he was sure, in time, Harry would be more than capable of taking care of himself. But not yet... Harry was not ready yet.

He wanted to visit his mate again. But since he had killed the insipid Minister, the campaign had required his full attention.

His forces were attacking key points around Britain. None of the battles were large but they were disruptive and they were designed to test the Ministry's strength. So far both his Death Eaters and the Aurors hadn't lost anyone but they were both probing for weaknesses and that required his attention. Each battle, each squirmish he examined, searching through the Ministry response for their weaknesses, for the things they didn't want him to see. And each battle brought him one step closer to domination.

Soon... It would be soon... Soon the all out battle would begin and then everyone would commit their forces. And until such time, he could not go to Harry. Even the small amount of time such a trip would take, at the moment could not be spared. It was frustrating...

"Eternity is the reward," he reminded himself but the words sounded hollow.

What good was eternity without his mate?

That's when he felt it. It was a tickle beneath his senses, so light he'd dismissed it at first but it had become more insistent, calling out to him and seeking to join with him. Red eyes looked around the room, trying to determine the source of the feeling before it struck the Dark Lord.

He wasn't feeling this... Harry was.

The strange sensation that wanted to join with him was an overflow from something Harry was experiencing.
He closed his eyes, reaching out to touch Harry before he once again hit the wall that was his beloved. But unlike other times he was not alone. Without thinking he snarled, gathering himself and directing his full power against the other.

Voldemort flicked his head back as he felt them flinch against him but an instant later, the presence was back against Harry, seeking entry through the protective wall of shadow the boy was hiding behind. Voldemort hissed at the audacity... If he couldn't break that wall then no one was going to approach his destined mate. And no one was going to stand between him and his mate. No one.

He gathered himself again. This time whoever it was would know the wrath of a Dark Lord. They would know the power that he had been itching unleash. Voldemort's eyes glowed and he brought his hands together, allowing the energy to visibly gather there before he flung it out, driving it deeply into the presence that was daring to attack his mate.

The other being flinched again and the Dark Lord smiled as he felt them weaken, their presence drifting away from Harry. He felt, rather than heard, their mental cry to his beloved but he continued ripping into them.

-Master..?-

The Dark Lord blinked. Tied as he was to Harry he recognized the voice immediately as the young basilisk he had left guarding his mate.

-Enough.- The little serpent's voice was sure and with its word it conveyed an image to its Master. A young girl lay next to Harry, and they were both naked. Her red hair was unbound and spilled over her shoulders. She was holding Harry's hand and a book was discarded next to her.

"...my soul is yours..."

He heard this whispered words and understood. "Hahahah!" The Dark Lord could not contain his mirth as he drew back after making several more surgical strikes at the presence he now knew was the girl. The strikes ensured her spell would be successful but only one way. With a regal air, he bowed his head towards the mental presence that was the little basilisk. -Thank you,- he congratulated it.

-She is foolish but she meant no harm.-

-And now she is bound to him and through him to me. You have done well.-

-I only allowed it because I knew you could control that charm, Master.-

The Dark Lord nodded again, relishing the new feeling he was receiving from his beloved and planning for the future. The girl, who ever she was, had voluntarily bound herself to his mate and now had no choice but to obey Harry. She would be invaluable. He lacked spies in Hogwarts. Oh, there was Snape and there were the seemingly innumerable children of his Death Eaters but there was no one he truly trusted. Severus was good but there were one or two unanswered questions hanging over his head and Voldemort was no fool. He knew what that meant and any report from a Death Eater's child came either filtered from their parents or tempered by their fear of him. But this child... This girl... She could be moulded to his desires and her vow was more binding than his Mark.

He smiled, coming back to himself as he opened his eyes and surveyed the room. This was an interesting development and one he could use immediately.

"Harry... I cannot come to you... Not yet but she shall show me the way."
He sat back in his throne, looking into the darkness as he considered the future. Despite the brewing Rebellion, things were proceeding as he had foreseen. A sharp canine caught his lip as he remembered.

*Everything* was as he had foreseen.
Harry blinked as he opened his eyes. He felt stiff, as if he'd been asleep for a long time. His mouth was dry and his skin felt, not clammy but gritty. It almost felt as if he was waking up in the Hospital Wing of Hogwarts. But his surroundings were definitely not Hogwarts.

He was naked. He could feel that immediately but he was neither hot or cold. He looked around but there was nothing to see. It was dark but he wasn't afraid. Dark was just dark, after all. There was no sensation here though but as he moved he could feel resistance to his motions, almost as if he was trying to move in honey.

:Master...: The word was whispered around him.

"Who...?" Harry coughed. His throat was sore.

:We are here, Master. We are those who saved you.:  

"No!" Harry screwed his eyes shut as he remembered. He'd been raped... And this wasn't a distant childhood memory... This was something recent. Millicent... Millicent Bulstrode had done it and Blaise had helped her. It hadn't hurt, not physically at least but it had hurt... He'd been helpless... He'd been nothing less than a thing to them.

He gulped, feeling the mucus trace its way down the back of his throat. It was slimy but the feeling was real and in it's own way reassuring. He could still cry. He could still feel.

:Master.:  

"I am no one's Master," Harry replied.

:You are our Master.:  

"Who are you?"

Around him he felt amusement. :We are in everything you see, we are all around you. We are the power of Gryffindor.:  

"The Power of Gryffindor?" Harry questioned, his eyes going wide.

:Master, rest here. Regain your strength. We will watch over you and we will teach you. When you are ready, call and we will come.:  

"Wait!" Harry cried but the presence was gone and a lethargy descended upon him and he slept.

===

Binns droned on and on and Ginny tried without much success to keep her attention on the class. Last night... Had it really been only last night that she had bonded herself to Harry?

She could feel him. It was a blank nothingness but it was there and while she was happy she has successfully completed the spell, she was disappointed that it hadn't worked quite as she had
expected. Harry wasn't responding to her calls. Despite her love she just wasn't powerful enough. It hurt... It really hurt her to know that.

Harry hadn't bonded with her in return. She thought it would be enough for her to make the connection but it wasn't. She could help him but she couldn't help him enough, not until he completed the ritual. She woken up to find the half bond in place and after the little serpent had hissed at her, she'd dressed herself and Harry, snuggling the covers around him before she'd picked up the book and had slipped out, going down to breakfast as if nothing had happened.

And now she was bored in her classes, just waiting to see if Harry would respond anyway. She looked up to see a flash of darkness before Hogwarts disappeared and she was somewhere much darker. Somewhere that like Hogwarts was made of stone but even though she couldn't feel she somehow knew that it was much colder than the school. Somehow, the dark shadows were darker. She looked around seeing the large room she was in.

There were men in the room - lots of men and for the most part they were naked. Their bodies were covered in blood and it almost seemed as if there was oceans of it slicked on the floor, but the blood on the floor was mixed with small gobs of white fluid. After a moment she knew what they were from. All the men were engaged in intercourse, some of them screaming in pain, others wearing the glassy eye look of men under the Imperio curse.

Ginny quickly pulled her eyes from the ground, gagging as she looked around the room trying to ignore the men in the middle. The middle of the room was light but the edges were cast in shadow and she could clearly see throne in the centre of the far wall but it was empty. There was a flicker of moment from the side and she spun to see it and almost screamed.

The men, as gross as that was weren't terrifying her but the sight that single being pacing was enough to send a chill down her spine. He was tall and thin, dressed in blood red robes that made his crimson eyes glitter even more brightly than they were. His skin was startlingly white and his hair was thick and black, just like Harry's. But what scared her was that this was the Dark Lord Voldemort and the realisation that somehow she was in his stronghold.

The Dark Lord continued pacing, his brilliant robes flowing around him, almost as if they were alive. He occasionally looked at the men, his eyes showing a mixture of satisfaction and an urge that was insatiable, as if he couldn't hurt them enough but his attention was focused on something else. It was an incorrigible sight but the Dark Lord was almost constantly itching at his arms. Ginny could almost hear his nails raking his skin and every couple of paces he'd hiss with frustration.

Suddenly one of the men cried out and the Dark Lord spun, wand pulled but after a moment he calmed and after he flicked his eyes over them, he snarled, dismissing the torture before his eyes narrowed. He began to look around the room and Ginny retreated, backing herself into a corner but it wasn't enough. His piercing crimson eyes spotted her and it was with quick strides he started towards her, his wand pointed directly at her heart.

Halfway to her position he stopped, looking at her and he smiled, a small half smile that didn't reach his eyes and wasn't comforting. Ginny shivered, shaking her head as she realised he knew she was there. The Dark Lord lowered his wand as he raised his other hand, the long white fingers gesturing to her. "Come to me," he murmured before he lowered his head, forcing her to meet his eyes and the power he held there. "Come to me," he ordered and she knew no more.

The room was gone and Binns was still droning on about the Goblin Wars.

Ginny closed her eyes for a moment as a shiver passed through her. She'd seen Voldemort and it wasn't as an anonymous student in the whole, watching as he'd killed Fudge, and it wasn't some
abstract representation of him brought to life through her power. This was the real Dark Lord and he had seen her. She gulped but nodded to herself.

She had no choice but to obey. If she disobeyed she had no idea of the consequence but they wouldn't be good. Somehow the Dark Lord would make her pay even though she was tied to Harry who he had more than a passing interest in but through his actions she knew, somehow, that he was no longer interested in killing him. He wouldn't have set the little serpent there if he wanted Harry dead and Voldemort had proved quite clearly that he could go where he wanted and kill who he wanted without fear of retribution. He was immortal and not even Dumbledore could help them.

Only Harry could.

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Ginny shivered. The forest was still around her but it was a place no human should frequent. It wasn't evil as much as it was dark. Only beings that were born here should live here. Around her there was the constant drip of water. It wasn't raining but it was cold enough that the water was condensing on the leaves and dripping from the trees, coating everything with a slippery sheen of water and making even the air she was breathing damp.

She wasn't sure where she was going but she knew she'd reach her destination soon. The Dark Lord's words were still echoing through her mind and she was compelled to obey.

Ginny stumbled over a rotting log and as her vision dropped she saw it in the distance - a dull light held by a robed figure. She nodded as she rose, brushing her hair back and pulling her Hogwarts robes closer around her. That was the person she was meant to find. She began walking towards them with a new purpose.

"You!" She couldn't help the exclamation of surprise once she was close enough.

She knew who it was. Ron had told her all about him. He was the man who had betrayed Harry's parents to the Dark Lord. He was the man Sirius Black would sell his soul to catch. Peter Pettigrew - Wormtail.

"Oh... so it's you," he said to her without much enthusiasm.

She decided not to answer that.

He looked at her carefully, squinting through rheumy eyes. "You'll learn soon enough that this is not a game child." He held out his silver hand. "Come... He doesn't like to be kept waiting."

Ginny reached out and took the man's hand and found it surprisingly warm. All that silver should be cold but it was as if it was flesh. She nodded to him, still not speaking. She hadn't come to talk to him and while for one instant she had been tempted to run back to the castle she knew she couldn't do that. This was the only way she was going to see the Dark Lord and this was possibly the only way she had to save Harry.

There was a blur and the forest disappeared and for a moment she was everywhere that was nowhere and then there was cold stonewalls around her and she recognised the room. It was the same throne room she had been in earlier that day but this time there was only three people in it - herself, Wormtail and the Dark Lord - and the blood that had stained the floor earlier was now crusted on the stones with a mottled pattern. It smelt sweet and while she knew of the events that had caused it to be there, they no longer seemed to affect her. She was, after all, dealing with a Dark Lord and shouldn't be surprised by the extent of any torture he bestowed on his captives although she was slightly
curious as to why he was torturing Muggles.

Wormtail bowed deeply to his Master and backed away. He couldn't leave until Voldemort gave him permission but he was eager to be out of sight. Ginny just stood there aware that her every movement was being assessed by blood red eyes. Not many people were allowed to see the Dark Lord alone, no matter who they were, the risk was too great, no matter how powerless they may profess to be. Voldemort hadn't attained his power by taking unnecessary risks.

"Relax child."

Ginny started but strangely his rich voice surrounded him and she did feel her body relax.

"I know what you have done."

Ginny nodded. There was no use in denying it.

"You're not strong enough alone."

She hung her head.

"I can help you but you must help me."

She looked up, her eyes wide. "You can help me?" She asked in a small voice.

"You must help me," he said again, steepling his fingers. As his robes fell back from his arms she could see vivid red scratch marks running along his forearms.

For a moment the insane urge to run passed through her but she quickly quashed it. The Dark Lord could use more magic than she could dream about and use it in ways not even Dumbledore could conceive. "I will help you," she murmured quietly, looking back down at the floor.

He examined her closely and then nodded. "Who hurt him?"

Ginny felt the tears gathering in her eyes and she reached up and dashed them from her face, feeling the rough fabric of her robes scrape against her face. "I don't know..." she managed to croak. "I can't... I can't get through to him."

The Dark Lord just looked at her before he nodded. He wasn't happy with her response, she could tell, but he was satisfied that she was telling the truth. "If you knew, would you have acted?"

She cocked her head at him... That wasn't anything she had been expecting. "I'm not sure. If... If I knew what to do, I would have but for the pain they caused him, I don't know that I could inflict an appropriate punishment."

"Hehahaha!" Voldemort laughed. The girl was as deliciously pure as he had imagined and he could hardly wait to see her actions when she was truly angry. "I can help you there," he said softly, watching as she nodded.

"What do you want me to do?"

"You are not strong enough to awaken him alone. Your bond is to him alone, mine is not. Harry is bonded to me and I am tied to him so I may wake him."

"So why haven't you?" It didn't matter that she was speaking with potentially the most powerful wizard in centuries, one who wouldn't hesitate to kill her and wouldn't think anything of it, she felt her anger rising and couldn't keep it out of her voice or eyes.
The Dark Lord was not intimidated and her anger was merely evidence of the lengths she was now bound to go to defend his destined mate - a true Gryffindor. "It was not time."

He reached into his robes and brought forth a knife. The hilt glittered with emeralds and rubies and the blade was wavy like the body of a snake. With a cold glance at her he brought the tip down on his forearm, dragging it along to leave a trail of blood that welled thickly and then ran down to his hand. He laid the knife aside and brought forth another vial, letting the blood run down his long fingers and drip into the container. It splashed heavily, clinging to the sides but slowly the vial filled. The Dark Lord muttered a few words and the wound vanished and a seal appeared on the vial.

With a sudden movement he rose and strode towards her, stopping only a pace away and reaching out with his free hand to cup her face in a vice like grip. With a firm motion he pulled her head around to face him, forcing her to meet his gaze. "You will take this to him and you will mix it with his blood, then you will call me." There was no room for negotiation in his tone as he pressed the vial into her hand.

Ginny meet his gaze, not flinching at the sudden menace she could feel. "It will wake him?"

"Only if I am there to perform the final part of the spell," he replied coldly.

"I will call you," she acceded meekly.

Voldemort held her gaze for a moment longer, assessing something only he could see deep in her soul. "Wormtail," he snapped, releasing her and turning away. "Take her back."

With a swirl of his robes the Dark Lord disappeared, leaving her alone with the traitor.
"It's him."

Voldemort turned at the frightened whisper, gesturing with his wand sending a burst of flame to incinerate the pests who were approaching his flank before he descended on the one who had spoken.

The battle was going well. In any battle he was present the opposing forces just didn't have a chance. His red masked Death Eaters were systematically destroying the small pockets of resistance that remained and then they would array the bodies for the Ministry to find, leaving the casting of the Mordesmorth to him. It was evidence enough that he had done this but with a sudden chill smile he felt the urge to leave a more personal message.

And this child, this Auror, who's face was so young that the Dark Lord could almost still smell the old corridors of Hogwarts on him would deliver that message. Voldemort spread his arms, as if in invitation. "It is me, the Dark Lord Voldemort."

The boy Auror crumpled before him, tears streaming down the childish face. "No, no, no... You're not meant to be here."

Voldemort sniffed. "It's only a Muggle building," he agreed casting his eyes back. The building was centuries old and it was burning. It was some Official Government Department that meant nothing to him but covering up this attack would distract the Ministry enough for him.

"You're not meant to be here..." the Auror repeated.

"Oh... So where I am meant to be?" It was amusing the way fear made some people repeat themselves. The boy was still crying and he could smell the thick stench of urine but he was still talking.

"Dead!" There was a tiny flash of anger in the fear.

"I am immortal."

"Dead!"

"Like you are going to be?" The words broke the anger immediately and even though the young Auror had collapsed against a wall, he somehow managed to curl further into himself. "Like you are going to be?" Voldemort repeated when he received no answer past the snivelling of the boy.

There was a choked gasp and the head moved a fraction in agreement and the Dark Lord laughed as two red masked Death Eaters moved to stand by his side, murmuring the word "Master."

"No..." Voldemort hissed the denial softly. "I'm not going to kill you," he added. "You are going to deliver a message for me. What House were you in?"

"H... house?"
"At school child."

"Hufflepuff."

"Ah..." Voldemort nodded to himself. A serviceable enough house and one that explained why the boy had not run despite knowing defeat. His house was loyal, hard working and brave, not to the point of stupidity but enough not to run, to face the end with what dignity could be managed. And smart enough to realise that attacking was not going to work against him unlike a Gryffindor. "Then you will deliver my message."

There was another small nod although he could clearly see that the boy did not believe that he would live past this day.

"Tell Dumbledore the game is nearly over and that soon I will claim my prize," Voldemort looked at the Auror for a moment longer before he turned and raised his hand. Let the Auror and Dumbledore make what they would of this gesture but it was time to display his true power, power that had been on the rise since that girl had bound herself to Harry. She was bound to Harry and only to Harry and thus was bound to serve but that was secondary. He was not going to share his prize and would have killed her but for the fact that in binding herself to Harry, she had completed his bond to Harry and that was allowing both their powers to surge and grow. It was something he'd realised only after he'd chased down the reason his skin had begun itching and it was only more evidence that there was still much he did not understand about the powers of the Founders. In time though... Once his destined mate was at his side, then he would know all. Harry's blood contained power he had never dreamed possible but despite the completed bond the boy remained a blank wall to him. It would take something else to wake him.

"Mordsmorth," he murmured the word and from his fingers the brilliant green of his mark flew and hung in the air, letting all who saw it that he was indeed alive and that nothing would stand in his way.

The skull with it's dead eyes and snake tongue seemed to laugh, and throughout the burning building the Death Eaters apparated away, leaving only one trembling Auror, huddled in a corner, crying at the power that he had felt and for the world that was lost.

Ginny was at a loss... She'd done as she'd been instructed. There'd been a strange compulsion to obey the Dark Lord's orders and she'd had to fight it slightly so that she wasn't caught. His voice echoing through her head was strong but her love for Harry was stronger and she'd traded off her decision with his orders so that in the end, the voice had been silent, admitting that it was better if she wasn't caught.

Yet.

But Ginny wasn't worried about that. As long as she succeeded she would handle being caught, she would even handle being known as the Dark Lord's servant even though she bore no mark but right at the moment she was at an impasse.

Harry was still lying before her, unmoving as he stared up at the ceiling but resting on the bed beside him were two vials of blood. Even though it had hurt to do it, she had cut Harry and carefully collected every drop of blood spilt into the second vial. When she had enough she'd tipped it into a bowl, before adding the Dark Lord's blood.

She wasn't sure if she'd been expecting anything to happen at the instant the blood mixed but she had
chosen a room far from prying eyes just in case. It had been an unnecessary precaution because the blood had done nothing but swirl together, diffusing into each other until it was just one red liquid. Then she'd bottled it back up in the two vials, washing out the bowl thoroughly so that no evidence could be found. And that's when her problem had started.

How was she meant to call the Dark Lord?

If she had the Mark it would have been easy but she didn't and she wasn't likely to get it in the near future but she still needed to obey him. 'Call him.' She'd already tried reaching out with her mind but had met with only emptiness. She had to obey. She had to find a way.

For Harry's sake...

Harry.

With a grim smile she realised exactly how she could call the Dark Lord. She could hear Voldemort's rich voice. 'Harry is bonded to me and I am tied to him...'

She closed her eyes focusing on her bond with Harry. It was still a blank nothingness but it was a wall she could use to contact Voldemort. Ginny paused for an instant, frowning. What was she going to call him?

Master..?

No! He was not her master.

Tom Riddle..?

That wouldn't do either, not if she wanted to live to see Harry awaken.

My Lord..?

It wasn't really appropriate because as Voldemort was not her Master, he was also not her Lord.

But she couldn't think of anything else. Dark Lord Voldemort was too formal and a simple Voldemort was too informal. With an annoyed growl she shook her head. It didn't really matter what she called him, she just needed to get his attention so that he would know she had done what had been requested and then he could come and complete the spell and awaken Harry.

:My Lord..?: Her first call was tentative but there was a flicker of response. It wasn't his full attention but he was aware of her and his presence alone was enough to make her shiver. :My Lord,: she began again, feeling more confident. :I've collected and mixed the blood as you requested. Harry is alone at the moment so it is safe for you to come.: 

:I will be there shortly, child.: The brief communication was all the response she got before all sense of the Dark Lord's presence disappeared.

Ginny breathed a sigh of relief as she collected the vials, putting them back into her robes. It would be over soon. Harry would be awake and then everything would be fine. She sank into the chair beside Harry's bed, taking his hand and waited.

"Snuffles!" Ginny exclaimed loudly when a cold wet nose jolted her out of the half doze she had settled in to.
The large black dog examined her before he turned and looked at Harry before giving a strange sigh for a dog and jumping lightly on to the bed, curling up at Harry's feet and giving every indication that he was going to stay there.

*How could she have forgotten Sirius?*

Ginny almost screamed in frustration. Getting around Sirius had been her major problem before casting the bonding spell and she'd had to drug his food to get to Harry to take his blood. Now the Dark Lord was coming and it would be over Sirius' dead body before Voldemort got within spitting distance of Harry again. But that would just hurt Harry further.

What was she going to do? Somehow she had to get him out of here...

But for the life of her she couldn't think how. There wasn't any story she could think of that would convince him to leave, short of Dumbledore himself walking through the door and asking Sirius to accompany him, the large black dog was not moving.

*This is bad, this is bad, this is bad, this is...*

"*Stupefy.*"

The curse was so soft that she almost didn't hear it and she really only knew it had hit because of the soft yelp Snuffles emitted accompanied by a jump in position before he lay completely still.

"I should have expected Dumbledore wouldn't allow my precious to be unaccompanied now."

Ginny looked up, fully awake now and saw the Dark Lord standing in the door way. His robes were as rich as always but unlike all the other times she had seen him, they were not spotless. They were splattered in dark red and she knew it was blood. He had come straight from battle but the evidence of it did not detract from his power. With a regal air he stepped into the room, his crimson eyes softening as he looked at Harry. "You have done well, child," he said as she handed over the vials but he didn't look at her. A gentle hand stroked Harry's hair and it seemed that he was delicately sampling the air.

The little serpent crawled out from behind Harry, hissing softly and Voldemort nodded at it extending his free hand for the little snake to crawl up before it coiled itself around his arm.

Ginny backed away to the corner watching with a surge of jealousy the ease with which the Dark Lord touched Harry but after a moment he shifted, his robes rustling slightly with the movement. With a small surge of magic the two vials levitated before him and he unstoppered them breathing deeply as he assessed their aroma. Voldemort nodded to himself, his eyes intent as he drew out another vial of blood from which he carefully poured a small measure into the vials containing his and Harry's blood.

A strange half smile crossed his features as the vials glowed before returning to normal. Then the Dark Lord put his arms around Harry and gently pulled him into an upright position before sitting next to the boy and supporting his weight. He plucked one vial from the air and placed it at Harry's mouth, helping him drink it. Once the first vial was empty, the Dark Lord took the second vial and downed it with a gulp.

After a moment he licked his lips and gestured at the now empty vials obliterating them entirely. Finally the Dark Lord looked at her, after shifting Harry so that he was cradled against his bulk. "You have done well, child," he repeated.

She nodded in response. There wasn't a lot she could say.
He gave her a slightly speculative look. "I will not Mark you, child," he said after a moment.

"I know," Ginny said. She did know. She was far too valuable to Mark and her loyalty was to the boy sleeping in his arms, not to him and as such his Mark would be forced upon her.

Voldemort looked down at Harry, breathing in the scent of his hair. "He will awaken in the morning but first I would like a like some time with him. It's been too long."

Ginny knew better than to argue but she felt that she had to give some warning. "Please be careful. I don't know what other charms Dumbledore has in place." She moved towards Snuffles, intending to take him with her but the Dark Lord's reaction surprised her.

"What's so funny?" She snapped.

"You precious faith in Dumbledore," he looked back at her with an amused expression. "It was far easier than even I believed for me to get in here. I took such care the first time... But he has changed the wards since then and made it even easier. So long as I do not desire to harm the school or anyone here I may come and go as I please."

"But don't you want to kill Dumbledore?"

Voldemort half closed his eyes as he wrapped his arms tighter around Harry. "I can control my desires," he said softly in a voice more like a child's than the most feared man in the Wizarding World.

"Ah..." Ginny nodded as she struggled to pick up Snuffles.

It was the Dark Lord's turn to be surprised. "Why take the dog?"

"You want to be alone."

"You can leave the Guardian."

In that instant she knew. Pettigrew had betrayed his friends but even now he was holding out on his master. "You would like me to leave you with Sirius Black?" She asked with a sceptical tone.

He didn't even blink but he understood. "Ho..." Was all the response she got but it was enough for her to shudder at what she imagined Wormtail's fate was going to be. "Take him," Voldemort added as he turned back towards Harry ignoring her completely as she left, the powers within merging.
Voldemort looked down at Harry. He was so beautiful especially now that the Dark Lord could feel the blank wall that had signified the presence of his destined mate in his mind weakening. Harry would awaken in the morning as he had told the girl but he could be awoken earlier.

With a casual gesture the Dark Lord sent a surge of magic towards the door, disabling Dumbledore's charm and enforcing his own. It was subtle but effective. Anyone would still see the closed door but they would think nothing of it and until morning, no one who was in the castle would have a desire to see Harry. He licked his lips as he looked back down at Harry and then could hold back no longer.

He kissed him, tasting fully what had been denied so long to him. He had been dreaming about Harry for weeks and the taste of him was wonderful. After a long moment he pulled back, savouring the flavour. Harry was even better than he remembered. Sweet but with a tang that bespoke power. He kissed him again before drawing back to consider what he should do.

He knew despite the developing bond he could feel deep in his mind that Harry wasn't ready for him. Not yet. Harry was advancing but still needed to grow before he was ready to acknowledge him as his lover and while he could force Harry the time for that had passed. Harry would never accept him if he truly raped him and he had no desire to see those emerald eyes clouded with tears. Anyone who dared to hurt his prize would die in the most painful way he could devise. Harry was his and the only tears he would shed would be those of passion, of uncontrollable desire when he was in the Dark Lord's arms.

He could use _Confu_ again and while it would be pleasurable it wasn't what he wanted.

No... He didn't want to force Harry and he didn't want to trick his prize, he wanted willing co-operation. Ah...

Harry was growing because of his 'unknown lovers' attention, getting over the pain and fear of being raped by the memories of a better time. He could use that. With a few murmured words he placed a silencing spell on the room and then placed a rather interesting charm upon himself. It altered perceptions so that all his prize would perceive would be his eyes and that would be enough according to the little serpent still twined on his arm.

After that he reached out with his mind, touching the weakening wall that was Harry, coaxing him to awaken as he gently moved them both on the bed, turning Harry to face him as they lay down. As green eyes fluttered open he bent his head forward to once again taste the succulence that was Harry.

Harry was confused for a moment but then Voldemort was surprised. Lithe arms wrapped around him and strong legs rose and hooked themselves around his hips, locking on to his body with a firm grip. Then the Dark Lord felt himself flipped by a strong vice like grip and he found himself looking up into burning emerald eyes. He had one startled moment to comprehend the passion blazing in those depths before Harry dove forward, locking his mouth on to the Dark Lords as small hips plunged against him.

After a moment Harry pulled back, rocking back on the bed so that he sat on the Dark Lord's hips,
looking down into crimson eyes with hooded emerald orbs. He smiled down at his lover, licking his lips sensually. "I wanted to see you," Harry murmured as his hands roamed over Voldemort's chest. Small fingers picked at the silken ties that held his shirt closed.

"Harry..." Voldemort gasped before he was silenced by a small finger pressed to his lips. The Dark Lord kissed it gently, nodding his understanding as he allowed his own hands to reach under Harry's pyjamas. Speech was not necessary for them.

But desire was making Harry almost inhumanly fast and soon the boy's fingers were caressing white skin, small nails rubbing against the Dark Lord's nipples. The unexpected and skilful attention made Voldemort gasp, throwing back his head and exposing his throat. Harry swooped muzzling the white skin and nipping gently so that he could feel the rasping of Harry's tongue, teasing him.

Heprah had trained Harry and it was training Voldemort would have Harry reject utterly but skills could not so easily be forgotten and his body remembered. And from what the Dark Lord could feel Harry seemed to have accepted his body's knowledge and his greatest desire was to pleasure his lover in thanks for the pleasure that had been given previously.

The Dark Lord moaned as Harry continued to muzzle his throat and small hands moved downwards, pushing away his silken shirt and robes, drawing circles over every inch of skin, always moving down. As Voldemort realised he was losing control he tried to flip Harry but found his efforts stopped by the lithe bulk above him. For a moment, green eyes looked up at him, and Harry shook his head, murmuring the word "No" before he went back to teasing and licking the white skin beneath him.

Voldemort fought the cry that escaped his throat as Harry's small hands caressed his erection through his pants. The boy was so skilled and the Dark Lord could feel the devilish delight Harry was taking in driving his excitement higher. He gritted his teeth, fighting not to thrust himself into those hands but Harry seemed to have anticipated that and with a delft movement, he had drawn the silken fabric down, exposing his cock to the warm air. Both hands attacked his exposed flesh, one tracing up and down his length and the other massaging his balls. It was exquisite and he could feel himself loosening at the thought of Harry entering him. It only made his excitement sweeter.

Voldemort growled and moved his hands to Harry, running them over the small chest in an effort to take control again but Harry looked up at him once more, his eyes showing slight confusion. "No," he murmured again. "I want to thank you." Harry smiled and it was with a sly note he added the words: "Let me show you what it means to be loved."

The Dark Lord froze and that instant of indecision was enough for Harry. He reapplied himself to the Voldemort's body with a vengeance and after a moment the older man relaxed fully. This is what he wanted from Harry and next time it would be his turn to gratify his treasure. With that final coherent thought he gave himself over to the pleasure Harry was giving him, not even noticing the faint glow of power that surrounded him and the answering glow from Harry. Their two auras merged, two distinct colours that twined around each other.

Harry pulled off his shirt and shimmed his pants down before lying next to his lover again, wrapping himself around the white body and forcing their genitals to rub together as he kissed his paramour, extending his tongue, tasting everything he could. He made sure to press his nipples against his chest and loved the feeling of his partners hard nipples brushing against his own skin. He still didn't know who this person was but when he had awoken to see concerned red eyes looking at him so tenderly he knew what he had to do. He'd acted before he'd really thought and he knew the other was surprised but they had acquiesced now and were enjoying what he had to offer. It was different from last time. And it was different from every other time before it. This was how it was meant to be. He
was caressing them with every ounce of skill he possessed and he could feel the body beneath him responding and he could feel himself responding. Long white fingers were returning his caresses but Harry knew even if the being he was with wasn't touching him back, as long as they were enjoying what he was doing, he would still get excitement from this. Just being with them, seeing their burning crimson eyes was enough.

With a firm motion, Harry drove his hips down, once, twice and then paused, waiting for a response. He felt it more than saw it, the responding thrust upwards into his stomach. The firm pressure of the erection told him that his lover was ready. With a careful movement Harry pulled back and shifted slightly so that their engorged cocks rubbed their lengths against each other. He made a circle, running his dick around his partners, tracing an orbit around theirs and was rewarded with a moan of sheer pleasure. It was perfect. He placed one more light kiss on their lips, looking into the beautiful red eyes before he moved downward quickly, unable to wait any longer.

He licked roughly, moving from the base to the tip, tasting the delicious seepage and collecting it all before he swallowed the head, swirling his tongue around rapidly. A strangled groan greeted his ministrations and with that echoing in his ears he plunged downwards.

Harry felt the head hit the back of his throat and he shook his head a little. Deeper, he had to get it deeper to return the incredible sense of pleasure he had felt. There was a trick to it. He frowned as he pulled himself back up, sucking hard and running his tongue all over the underside before swirling it around the head, dipping the tip of his tongue into the small depression, lapping at the sweet fluid still leaking out. Ah... That was it.

In the hazy memories of his own intoxication he could vaguely remember his red-eyed lover shifting himself to accommodate him. With a grin around the cock in his mouth he plunged back down, arching his back. He felt himself swallowing the cock fully and found his chin resting on the soft velvet like skin of his partners balls. Harry sighed happily, breathing in the thick musk as he noted absently that his partner was absolutely hairless anywhere except for the thick black locks crowning his head.

Harry was surprised and pleased at the delighted shiver that passed through the body beneath him as he moved up and down. He was doing it right and he pulled back slightly, making sure his lips were pressed firmly around the flesh and that he was sucking and licking as hard as he could. He felt his own excitement rise in response. He plunged back down as long fingered white hands ran through his hair, guiding his pace without hindering his movements.

Voldemort gasped as Harry swallowed him fully. With each movement he struggled not to cry out resulting in him making several half articulated cries of pleasure that made him feel as if he was a virgin again. Even with his beloved he should be more controlled but Harry was driving every thought from him and the only thing he could think of was the warmth that was Harry's mouth. It was amazing. Harry seemed to know exactly what was going to drive him further and every movement the boy made drove him higher. It was as if he was being pulled tighter and tighter and when he snapped there would be nothing but ecstasy.

He looked down at Harry through hooded eyes, gritting his teeth against the inhuman sensations his mate was giving him. Every move he made to turn Harry around so that he could give back the pleasure was being gently resisted so finally he ran his hands through Harry's thick hair as he pressed his legs against Harry's erection, doing what he could for his prize. The boy was still underweight but he was far stronger than he should be and as the Dark Lord lost conscious control over his Mage sight there was an explosion of colour and his treasure became one brilliant beacon of energy. A beacon that outshone everything but was necessary to control the Dark.
"Harry..." He panted as he tried to hold himself back but it was no use and with another strangled cry he felt his cock twitch before he snapped, the tight pleasure exploding into a glorious nothingness that was everything.

Harry heard him and with one sensual movement looked up as he pulled back, letting the Dark Lord see how much he was enjoying licking his cock. As the Dark Lord came Harry pulled back fully so that his lover could see himself shooting into the waiting his mouth. The thick white fluid hit the roof of his mouth and Harry moved his tongue to taste it, feeling the next spurt hit the underside of his tongue and bounce back slightly to trail down his chin. He lapped furiously swallowing as more sperm shot from his lover, coating his mouth and splattering over his face.

As the jets of cum stilled, Harry closed his eyes and licked slowly at the cock, lapping up the cum that had fallen back to it's point of origin. He felt one globule and swirled his tongue over it, picking it up and stretching out between them before it snapped. As he opened his eyes he licked his lips, and felt himself dragged upwards and found himself looking into slitted red eyes that were only now fighting for rationality.

As the nothingness faded into Harry, Voldemort pulled his lover upwards and licked at his face, tasting his own essence before he finally managed to turn his beloved, twisting so that they lay facing each other before he lent forward and kissed him. As Harry met his exploring, he tasted himself again mixed with the smooth tang that was his beloved.

He squeezed at Harry's bullocks as small hands held him close and caressed his back as Harry thrust his own erection at him, fully pushing through to thrust in the V formed by his legs. The Dark Lord was about to move to spread his legs to give Harry full access to his body so that his beloved could enter him but he found himself pinned by Harry's knees. The unexpected grip held his legs together and his prize thrust into the opening, using the friction of his skin to drive himself to completion. After a moment Harry gasped and Voldemort felt him cum, Harry's essence spilling down his thighs.

"You are so beautiful," Voldemort whispered as Harry rolled to snuggle next to him, resting his head on his chest. The Dark Lord ran his hands over Harry's skin, tracing out archaic patterns with his fingertips.

"You rescued me," Harry responded, turning slightly to look into his crimson eyes.

Voldemort shook his head. "I did nothing more than what anyone with true power would. And I got you as my prize." He leaned down and kissed the crown of Harry's head.

"Prize?" Harry frowned.

The Dark Lord laughed at the pure innocence that was in his beloved's tone but he sobered quickly. "You are mine and I will not let them hurt you again," he said fiercely.

Harry nodded briefly before he yawned. Despite the sleep he had been in, that had not been one of rest. It had been a sleep of transition but he couldn't tell yet what had changed.

"Sleep." The word was whispered and Harry felt his eye lids grow heavy as he complied. He was safe here. He knew that. There were warm arms wrapped around him, strong hands caressing him and a magical aura surrounding him that would obliterate anyone who meant him harm. His red-eyed beloved had kept his promise and would watch over him as he slept. With a small yawn Harry snuggled closer, enjoying the after glow that was filling him as he fitted himself to the curves of his beloved descending into sleep again.

Voldemort watched as Harry fell to his suggestion. He had only needed the merest hint of power for
the boy to succumb and as he shifted the sleeping form gently he placed tender kisses on his skin. Eventually he slipped off the small bed and stretched, feeling his muscles protest against the motion.

:Did you have fun?:

The Dark Lord spun at the question, his whole aura flaring with power as he sought the speaker and all traces of fatigue and pleasure faded from his form as his eyes flashed. After a moment he relaxed but hissed softly as he realised the incredibly pleasurable lethargy Harry had left him with had vanished. "Yes, I did," he snapped the response back to the shadow that had materialised in the corner. "Do you want to make yourself useful and tell me who hurt him?" He questioned.

:No.: 

The insolence..! The Dark Lord felt his magic gathering to strike but then Harry shifted and he felt his power fade. "What do you want?" He asked. The shadows didn't serve him but in time he would command them.

:From you? Nothing. I am merely the first manifestation of the Master's power.: 

Crimson eyes narrowed. "He is advancing?"

:Protected by us he has no choice but to advance. He will be ready when the time comes.: 

"So why did you let them hurt him?"

:From pain is born power, as well you know."

Voldemort stroked Harry's hair gently. "I know," his voice was quiet. "Will you protect him from now?"

:Only he can protect himself.: 

The Dark Lord nodded as he pulled out his wand, stroking long fingers over its supple length. He could see in Harry's aura the Sword of Gryffindor and he nodded to himself. Dumbledore was doing what he could so it was time he gave his mate similar protection. With a flourish he laid the thirteen inches of yew that had served him so well over the years beside Harry, watching as Harry's aura flared and the wand vanished. Fire seemed to blaze over Harry and he felt its power pull at his soul.

"I will not let them hurt you," he reaffirmed his promise as he glanced back to the shadow. But it was gone.

:I am still here.: The whisper was almost below even Voldemort's sharp hearing. :He unconsciously wishes to protect his red-eyed lover from the Dark Lord so I will be here for a while.: 

The Dark Lord blinked before he understood Harry's thoughts and a soft smile crossed his features as he looked down at the sleeping boy. He was progressing but he had a long way to go.

He closed his crimson eyes for a moment focusing on the bond he had with Harry. It was stronger now... The power of their combined blood was breaking through the protective wall Harry had put around himself and the Dark Lord suppressed a shiver at the strength of the bond that was forming. This wasn't any normal bond... This was deeper than anything he had ever known. When it was complete they would be bound together and there would be no separation. It went beyond even the most permanent Binding Spell he knew of. He and Harry would be one being - mind, thoughts, souls and power. Some bindings tied souls, some minds and some thoughts but none could tie all three and none could unit two beings powers.
Voldemort laughed. "Harry..." He breathed the word. "What magic have you wrought?"
Ginny looked up as the Dark Lord reappeared. There was a satisfied glint in his eye and a half smile on his lips. He looked all together pleased with himself and she knew with a sudden flash of insight exactly what had transpired in the room after he had ordered her out. Brilliant red eyes surveyed the room as he moved with serpentine grace heading towards the door.

Her eyes narrowed as she felt her emotions rise. It wasn't jealousy... Or rather it was but it was tainted with so much desire and a peculiar form of longing. She wished with all her heart that it had been her with Harry and she could feel her whole body responding to the longing. That Voldemort could so easily be with Harry, could so easily take him when he desired, was so easily noticed by Harry was galling because she had to try so hard just to get him to look her way. What did the Dark Lord have that she didn't?

_Harry, what do I have to do for you?_

She started towards Voldemort not sure what she was thinking, not even sure what she was doing but the weight of Sirius drove her back. She glanced down...

What did she have to do?

No, that didn't matter. She would be there for Harry and when he choose to see her she would still be there.

She would always be there.

"Stun me."

"Child?" Voldemort was distracted.

"Stun me," Ginny repeated in a tight voice. "Sirius will never believe you left me unharmed."

He looked at her carefully before raising his hand. "As you wish. _Stupefy._"

Ginny's eyes widened at the complete ease with which he said the curse and as the compression wave flashed through the air towards her, she wondered where his wand was. Then there was only darkness.

Voldemort watched as she slumped over the stunned dog. _Sirius Black and Ginny Weasley..._ They were both far more than they seemed. "Serve him well," he murmured the order before with a slight surge of power he was gone.

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Harry looked at the ceiling. He knew that he'd been staring at it for the past couple of weeks but he couldn't recall truly seeing it during that time. He'd been somewhere else.

He frowned slightly... Where had he been? He could remember... _No!_ He couldn't remember... Not now... Not when he could feel the others. With a savage mental twist he thrust that information deep
down, focusing only on what he could. He couldn't let them know... They'd hurt him but he didn't want to see them next time he dreamed of Voldemort. And if the other's in his mind knew, then the Dark Lord would know.

The others... There hadn't been others in his mind before... He sighed as he thought about it. Power... There was power there. They weren't giving it to him but they were... sharing with him. He could feel their power centres merging with his own. He could call upon their strength and they could call upon his... No... That wasn't right... Only one of them could call upon his strength. The other... The other could request his aide but it was his choice to respond. But they were both giving him love. He blinked as he considered it, holding himself neutral to them. He had to know who or what they were before he responded.

The two presences were a blue and red counter to his green.

Blue... Ginny. He closed his eyes as he considered it. It felt right but what had she done to actually be present in his mind?

Binding... As soon as the word came to him he knew that's what she had done and while he could feel her, he knew he could ignore that presence when he desired but she could not ignore him. "Ginny... What have you done?" He whispered.

Something inside twisted and his stomach fluttered. He couldn't deal with this now. He couldn't... He couldn't sort out his emotional attachments at the moment. Not with everything that had happened, not with everything he still didn't know about. Why was she forcing this on him now? With reluctance but certainty that this was the only choice he could make at this time he put up mental barriers between them, blocking all sense she had of him. "I'm sorry." The whispered words were all the regard he could spare her at the moment, no matter how much it would hurt her. He had nothing left to give.

Red... Who was red? Brilliant serpentine eyes danced before his vision and Harry savagely shook his head. It wasn't Voldemort. His link with the Dark Lord was defined by pain, not by gentle concern and that was all he could feel from the red presence.

Soft crimson eyes, watching him in passion... Harry felt his emerald eyes snap open as he remembered. Last night...

Last night the same person who had rescued him, who had shown him what love was truly like had come to him again. He knew they knew the truth. He'd been used again but like before, even though he had initiated intimacy this time, they hadn't shrunk back from him and their crimson eyes had reflected only soft tenderness... Love...

"Who are you?"

:He is Voldemort.: 

Harry shook his head again. That wasn't possible.

:Remember the letter.: 

That was Voldemort's way of making me lower my guard.

:That was a Dark Lord's courting. As is the torture of those Muggles.: 

No... That is the Dark Lord being perverse. If he can't hurt me then he won't allow anyone else to. And he knows that that isn't what I wanted. Somehow Voldemort found out what the other promised
and he knows it will hurt us both to carry it out this way.

:Perhaps... But are you really unhappy about the Muggles? Does your scar hurt?:

With the words came a flash of vision and Harry knew it came from the Dark Lord's stronghold. It appeared Voldemort had tired of having the Muggles rape each other and was now using more conventional means of torture. It was poetic justice perhaps but there were several Muggle torture devices spaced throughout the room and each was occupied. He recognised the rack and various other smaller devises like thumbscrews, saws, pincers, pokers and there were several Muggles impaled on hooks. It appeared the Dark Lord didn't consider them good enough to waste his magic on.

The vision faded after an instant and Harry was left with the smell of blood and the echoing screams of the Muggles ringing in his ears.

But his scar didn't hurt. Despite the burning eyes that had been watching the torture his scar didn't hurt.

_That's not the point. It's not Voldemort._

:It is the Dark Lord. Who else do you know has red eyes?:

Harry was silent to that but internally he was examining his connection to the Red presence. "I don't know who you are," he murmured eventually, "But I..."

He paused... Was it possible to love someone he didn't know? Was it possible to love someone he'd met only twice and even then had barely spoken two words to? He'd slept with them twice but did that really count?

"I... I'm not sure yet..." Harry closed his eyes. Unlike the bond with Ginny he couldn't shut it off completely but he felt he couldn't return the emotions they were sending towards him. Not completely. "I have to know you first," he whispered, somehow knowing that his red-eyed lover would hear the words.

After a moment the feeling he got from them showed understanding and it held the promise that in time he would know everything about the person who was so far unknown.

:Oh... So you have time to wait?:

"What do you mean?"

:Danger is coming. It is approaching silently but it is coming. You don't have that much time.: "What do you mean?"

:Your bond mate is in danger.: "The war?"

:Rebellion.: "Rebellion?" Harry questioned but the voice was silent.

After a moment he sighed as he sat up. He'd been lying here too long. No matter what had happened to him, he had to continue.
Voldemort paused in his dictation as he felt Harry awaken before he frowned. The boy was hiding things... The knowledge of who had hurt him this time was quickly shoved aside, hidden deeply... Deeper even than the bond.

And then a moment later the Dark Lord felt the boy begin to examine the bonds. He smiled, pleased as he felt his mate shut out the girl. "Good, Harry," he murmured. "She serves you not the other way."

Then he felt Harry look towards his presence. For an instant his love was returned before the boy's more rational side took over and the feeling became one still of affection but tempered by the desire for knowledge. Harry was prepared to love him but he was not prepared to love the unknown, not completely anyway, not without reserve. But once he knew, once he understood, he would love without limit and together they would be invincible.

After a moment he sent Harry a small pulse of assurance saying without words that he would wait for Harry to accept him before he turned back to his letter, gently stroking the huge eagle hawk that would deliver it.

When he finished, he ran red eyes over the black parchment before folding it carefully and sealing it magically. The bird on his shoulder held out one leg for the letter and the Dark Lord tied it on securely before handing the bird a small package. "Take this as well," he instructed before walking to the window and after the bird jumped to his forearm he threw it into the air, watching as it flew away into the darkness.

"I will wait for you Harry," he whispered softly to himself before turning back to the red masked Death Eaters who were waiting to report on the progress of the war.

===

Harry sat in Dumbledore's Office. He knew why he was here, just as he knew the Headmaster was not going to be happy with his response. He didn't want to protect them... He really didn't want to but in effect that's what he was going to do but it would be for the best.

"Harry..." Dumbledore began softly as Fawkes trilled comfortingly. The Phoenix was sitting beside him and Harry was absently stroking his soft plumage. "You must tell me what happened. I realise it will be difficult but I can't do anything against them until you tell us exactly what happened."

Green eyes looked at the Headmaster. He didn't gulp, he didn't sigh and he didn't cry. His voice was sure as he spoke. "I can't."

"Harry!" Sirius exclaimed. "You must."

"I can't," he repeated flatly.

"Sirius, please be calm," Dumbledore said. "Harry, you must understand, this isn't like with Heprah. You are blocking your mind and they magically cleaned the room so we can't recall the past. It's down to you Harry. You have to tell us, then all the truth charms and potions can come into play."

"I know," Harry agreed easily. "But I can't."

"Why?"

"Where is Heprah right now?"
Dumbledore frowned. "He's in Azkaban, or his soulless body has been moved to St Mungos."

Harry nodded, not believing a word of it. He knew it wasn't true even if he hadn't seen the wizard in his visions. "Where are the Muggles?"

"Harry, that's not the point here," Sirius objected.

"That is the point. Where are the Muggles?"

Albus nodded understanding what Harry was asking. "I don't know."

"Well I do," Harry said. "He's got them. He's got all of them and I get to see every night what he considers appropriate punishment for those who hurt me."

"What! How long has he had them?"

"Since before it happened. Or maybe, just when it happened. I'm not sure." Harry looked up at Dumbledore, letting the Headmaster see into his eyes, knowing that the man would see the truth. "So I can't tell you. Not unless you want them to end up like the Muggles, except he'd go slower because I consciously remember this time. Do you really want that to happen? You can't stop Voldemort, Headmaster. You won't be able to prevent him and you know it."

"Harry..." Sirius began weakly.

"Do you really want Voldemort to get them?" He repeated.

Sirius just shook his head.

"I will tell you everything when it is safe to do so," Harry said as he rose. "I can't tell you any sooner." As he said that walked through the door and began descending the steps back to the school proper.

:Master..?:

:I know:, Harry responded silently. :You guys wouldn't have let Voldemort get them, I know.: :Good:, the shadows purred. :We have plans.: :Oh?:

:Master, when you are ready we will tell you. Until then they can wonder but we can assure you Master, we will do the Dark Lord proud.: 

Harry said nothing to that but continued down the hall with a slight smile on his face. Despite everything that had happened he just felt that it would be okay.
For the second time this year, Harry smiled as Ron and Hermione dragged him into the corner of the common room. Except last time where they had been quietly jubilant, this time there was a sombre air hanging over them. This time he'd been attacked and nothing could change that.

"Harry..?" Hermione reached out hesitantly for him. She knew one of her fellow students had raped him. She knew it had been a girl and while she hadn't had time to read up on the effects on his psyche, what with trying to find a way to wake him up but she was intelligent enough to work out what some of the effects might be - such as the fact that he may not want to be touched by a girl for a while.

"It's all right..." Harry said quietly as he reached out to take her hand. "It wasn't you."

Ron looked uncomfortable but after a moment he spoke. "I'm not trying to pry or anything... I mean, you'll tell what happened when you're ready and I know that you may not want to tell us but are you really okay, Harry?"

Harry looked at Ron. The expression on his freckled face was so earnest that he almost laughed. "I'd be lying if I said I was completely okay but I think I will be." There was a shy smile on his face as he considered what he was saying against what he knew to be the truth. Like last time he was still hiding some things.

:Oh, I'd say so.: 

"Harry, if you need us for anything, we'll be here." There wasn't a lot more they could say.

"Thank you," Harry nodded towards his friends a shadow fell over their group.

"Fred!" The exclamation came from Hermione.

"George!"

"Harry, it's good to see you up and about."

"Yeah! We'd have hated to forfeit the game against Slytherin."

"What?" Hermione was incensed. "Harry just woke up from being attacked. We don't know who did it and you want to subject him to the pressures and stress of a Quidditch game?"

"Aw... Hermione, it will be good for him," George began before his brother took up the thread of conversation.

"Yeah," Fred agreed. "It will take his mind off things."

"But what about the dangers?" She shrieked.

"We'll be there. Nothing'll happen to him and both sixth and seventh years have already decided that Harry needs an escort to keep him safe."
George looked at Harry sternly. "We've already got a schedule worked out Harry so don't you dare go off without someone, you got that?"

Harry just looked at the Weasley twin with wide eyes and was saved from answering by Hermione's tirade.

"That's very good of everyone but what about this Quidditch game? I can't believe you want Harry to play with everything that's happened to him."

"Hermione," Fred tried again, keeping his voice reasonable. "It's not just a Quidditch game. It's a game against Slytherin and odds are it was a Slytherin who attacked him. The best thing for him to do is show them that he hasn't been cowed by doing his usual thing and completely slaughtering them in a game."

"Oh really! I think you're just more concerned that if Gryffindor forfeit another game then we're completely out of the running for the House Cup."

"We forfeited a game?" Harry's voice as stricken.

"We didn't have a choice," George said gently. "It was just after... that and you weren't awake and no one was willing to take your place as Seeker and no one really had the heart to play. Not even against Hufflepuff. It wasn't your fault."

"It wasn't your fault," Fred echoed his brother as he saw the crest fallen expression on Harry's face. "And the best thing for you to do is to play."

Harry nodded, not listening as Hermione continued outlining the reasons he couldn't play. "I will," he said softly. Draco had been there. He'd helped... He'd probably arranged everything for Millicent and Blaise so snatching the Golden Snitch from between his fingers would be sweet.

"I'll play," he said firmly, smiling slightly at the stunned expression on Hermione's face. "I'll be fine and it will be good exercise. I haven't gotten out in ages. When's the game?" He looked up. It was amazing how much just contemplating a Quidditch game could lighten his mood. He felt so much better already.

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Sirius curled up under the Gryffindor table. He wasn't asleep. If it would keep Harry safe he wouldn't sleep again. Brown eyes moved restlessly as he scanned the feet he could see but the only people coming towards Harry were Gryffindors. In fact the older Gryffindors now had some sort of system for watching Harry. He'd heard them guarding the dorm the entire night, changing shifts regularly so that no one was too tired and even though Harry was going to chafe under the restrictions it would put him under, it was good that others were going to watch him.

He knew it wasn't enough to guarantee Harry's safety but it couldn't hurt. Recent events had shown he wasn't capable of protecting Harry. Students had knocked him out and then in the infirmary the smells told him that Voldemort had come to Harry again.

He wasn't quite sure what to think of that. By the time he'd woken up there was only the smell of Voldemort's passing and Harry was awake. The Dark Lord had obviously come for a reason but was it coincidence that Harry had woken up the next day or had Voldemort done something to his enemy? And if he had, why had he bothered? Surely he had enough to do with the War than sparing time to resurrect his enemy. And even though Dumbledore had his doubts about who had ordered the attack on Harry, Sirius couldn't shake the feeling Voldemort had something to do with it.
There was a screech from above - a bird but not an owl so it wasn't post. As Snuffles he poked his head out from under the table and looked up. A huge black eagle hawk was circling near the rafters. It was carrying a small package and with the odd sight of a dog he could see that there was a letter wrapped around it's leg.

Suddenly the bird flared its wings and descended, heading straight for the Gryffindor table - straight for Harry.

Harry wasn't fazed at the sight. Instead he seemed pleased at the presence of the bird, almost as if he had been expecting it. But the bird didn't land in front of Harry. It flared it's wings again and with a flourish of feathers and surprised calls from the students the bird pushed it's way down to one of the bench seats, landing directly next to Harry and in front of Snuffles. After it hopped off the small box it had been carrying it gave an odd squawk holding out its talon towards him.

He shook his head at the bird but was saved by Harry reaching around the bird, stroking it gently and making soothing noises towards it as he undid the letter. The bird looked at Harry then back to Snuffles before it spread its black wings and took off again, circling the Great Hall once before it left.

Harry looked at the letter in his hands and then to the box the bird had brought. The letter was addressed to Sirius but there was no way he could read it here. The whole school was watching. Harry looked into brown eyes and then slipped the letter into the sleeve of his robe before he turned to the box. It was tied in brown string and he was reminded somewhat stupidly of the Philosopher's Stone.

He reached out for it and pulled the string off, aware of the watching eyes of everyone in the Great Hall. Dumbledore was striding over, his wand drawn but Harry couldn't feel anything wrong with the package. There was no danger here. He ripped at the wrapping to reveal a cardboard box. There was magic on it but he didn't even need to think about it. He flexed his fingers and there was a small flash and he felt the magic enter his body. Slowly he lifted the lid on the box and gave a sudden cry, slamming the lid back down, understanding now why someone had bothered to place an unbreakable charm on cardboard.

"Harry!" Dumbledore sprung forward at the boy's cry. He reached for the box and after placing it on the floor, he motioned everyone to back away. With a flick of his wand the old wizard pushed the lid open and he understood Harry's reaction. His cry hadn't been one of revulsion, it was one of surprise.

Inside the box, now exposed for everyone to see was a small brown rat. It wasn't dead but it was stunned, it's little legs sticking out stiffly. But incongruously one of it's legs was silver. It was Peter Petigrew.

It was Sirius Black's freedom.

There was a low growl from the circle of students and Dumbledore looked over to see Harry place one hand on Snuffles, holding his Godfather back. Nothing would be achieved if he killed the traitor now.

Dumbledore narrowed his eyes, wondering what had transpired for Tom to give up one of his servants so easily but after a moment he shook his head, the twinkle in his eyes brightening. He could think on that later. For now, he had the perfect opportunity to set Sirius free. He flicked his wand in an old and archaic pattern, one not taught and murmured the word beneath his breath. A small wave of power shot out from his wand and hit the rat.

There was an odd blurring from the rat and for an instant it seemed as if Dumbledore had simply cast an engorgio charm on it but then it began changing into a balding man. Finally the diminutive form
of Peter Pettigrew lay on the cold stone floor of the Great Hall. The Headmaster cast a few more
spells, blocking the traitor's ability to Apparate even though he was in Hogwarts, and putting ropes
around him.

"Minerva, please call in the Aurors. I believe justice has been put on hold for long enough."

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Sirius Black sat in Dumbledore's office in somewhat of a daze. Harry was asleep next to him, his
head resting in his lap. Harry was strong but he still tired easily but Sirius was more than happy to let
the boy use him as a pillow.

He was free.

The knowledge was at once exhilarating and terrifying.

He was free.

Even as he sat there Dumbledore was seeing to the final arrangements. The Aurors had come and
had rather disbelievingly arrested Peter. They'd cast a whole gamut of charms before they had been
convinced but eventually they'd had no choice but to see that the rat was indeed the man who had
been posthumously awarded the Order of Merlin for attempting to capture him. But even if Peter had
been found alive after all this time, it didn't seal the case. No... It was the Dark Mark burned into
Peter's arm staring up at them that had been the final nail in Peter's coffin and the final proof of
everything he had maintained for the last fourteen years.

One of the younger Aurors had seen it first, whispering in a stunned voice, summing up the whole
situation. "My God... What have we done? He was innocent."

Dumbledore had seized on that and had nodded his agreement. "Sirius Black is indeed innocent of
the crimes he has been accused of and was wrongly imprisoned." He saw no reason to point out the
difference in tenses they had used. The Aurors would work it out for themselves.

The Interim Minister of Magic had looked at the Headmaster with shrewd eyes. "A full pardon is
hereby issued to Sirius Black for the crimes he was accused of. Further more there is no crime to be
answered for from his escape from Azkaban and there will be no criminal charges laid against those
who have aided him since his escape. I declare him to be a free man and he has the humblest
apologies from the Ministry. The subject of restitution will be dealt with in future but for now I
believe we should find him. You wouldn't happen to know how to contact him, would you Albus?"

Dumbledore had smiled, his eyes twinkling brightly. "As a matter of fact, I do know where to find
him and will pass along your pardon."

He was free.

And the one being he hated most, after Peter and after himself was the one responsible for it. What
was the Dark Lord playing at?

Sirius looked down at Harry. There was that letter. Gently, he reached out and expediated the
parchment from the folds of Harry's sleeve. If the Dark Lord was playing at something then he
would be gloating about it in his letter. Sirius broke the seal, not even seeing the Dark Mark.

Sirius Black,

You are a most interesting man. I do mean that. Although now is not the time for me to discuss that
At the moment, I am sure you are wondering why I have chosen to give the Rat to you. Call it fate, call it whim, call it a reward, call it what you will. The Rat may have betrayed you but he lied to me... Can you believe that? All this time, he lied to me.

I know Remus Lupin is a werewolf. There is a peculiar smell about them that cannot be hidden from me and I knew James Potter was an animagus. That Rat though, assured me that you were not, that while he completed the transformation, you were blocked from achieving the same feat. As he put it, it was the only thing at which he was better.

It is an entirely plausible explanation. Many wizards may attempt the animagus transformation but very few ever succeed. There is something fundamental in being 'human' that very few can side step. The fear of changing and of being stuck in that transformation is potent. I know you do now fear anything, but such fear is not always conscious. For some wizarding lines that fear is instinctive.

The Rat of course, did not say all that. He can barely speak in my presence but what he said was enough for me to infer it and thus he lied to me.

I am far more than an animagus so I had no reason to doubt him. Indeed, it was only by accident that I learnt about your transformation ability. But it is an accident that has served me well.

You needn't worry. I do not wish to recruit you although if you wish to serve I believe I would make the rumours that you are my right hand true however I have no desire to pull you away from Harry. Instead I wish to reassure you that I no longer desire to kill Harry. I did in the past but since my rebirth I have grown and indeed now my feelings are quite the opposite. Because of this, I wish to assure you that, like you, I will take very good care of your Godson.

You are aware of the abuse he suffered as a child, I currently have the Muggles responsible for that at my stronghold. While I know you would have extracted revenge for your Godson, you must also admit that your methods would have been somewhat crude. Mine are far more effective and I would be more than happy to give you recording of their suffering.

I trust it will meet your approval but for now enjoy your freedom. I will be coming for my prize soon enough. Do not stand in my way again for my mercy is not infinite. I have stunned you twice, I will not guarantee a third time.

Think about the future, Mr Black. Think on it long and hard and decide where your loyalties truly lie for when the time comes there will be no time to hesitate.

I trust you will make the right decision but for now, watch over him for me. He needs more protection than you know.

Lord Voldemort

Sirius looked down at the letter in his hands. There was something not right. While it was signed under the Dark Lords mark it wasn't what anyone would expect from the wizard who was on the verge of taking over the Wizarding World. One did not expect rationality from a wizard known for his insanity and one did not expect Peter to have shown any back bone.

If what He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named had written was true then he wondered what else Peter may not have told him. No... Sirius shook his head. Peter would have told his Master everything and if he hadn't told about him being a animagus then that was because the rat was trying to save something. If something went wrong he could still buy his way out by revealing his final secret. That was like
Peter except the Dark Lord had found out and had decided that it was the final act of betrayal. Even if it was twisted Sirius could help but smile savagely at that thought.

He was free.

"Ah, Sirius, it's good to see you smile."

Dumbledore broke him out of his reverie. "Did we learn anything from the Rat?"

The Head Master looked grim. "Unfortunately no. It appears Voldemort mind wiped him before he gave him up."

"Mind wiped?"

"It's an advanced Dark Art's technique almost like a Dementors Kiss except that it does leave the victim with their soul but nothing else. Peter has no mind, no magic and no hope to ever wake up."

Sirius wanted to say good and leave it at that but somehow he couldn't bring himself to utter the word. It was happening too fast and he'd always imagined doing it himself. He wouldn't have done what the Dark Lord had but he'd always imagined at least hexing Peter a little. Now that had been taken from him.

"There is also evidence of extensive torture before the final technique was used so if you are thinking he didn't suffer, he did and probably more so than we can ever know. Voldemort is not forgiving to those he thinks has betrayed him."

Sirius sighed and nodded. "I know," he said finally. "It just seems too easy. I keep looking for his trap and wondering why I can't see it."

Dumbledore nodded understandingly before he looked significantly at Harry. "I truly believe this is his punishment for Peter but also a peculiar form of courting. You know he desires Harry. Freeing you may be one way of trying to get on the boy's good side."

"Harry's not that stupid."

"I know but Tom can be very appealing when he wants to be."

"He can be as appealing as he wants. Harry will not turn to him."

"Just be there for him and Harry will have no need to turn to him."

Sirius stroked one hand through Harry's hair. "I will. I'll be there for him forever."
What Was Broken

Possession
Chapter XXIX - What Was Broken

DAILY PROPHET
Special War Report

At the End? - Is it the Dark or Light Facing Annihilation?
From Elliot Bryant

*With the Dark Forces on the rise, we are forced once again to question if there is sanity in the world. The fourteen year peace has been broken. Forces of dark are attacking throughout Europe, striking at those targets we consider quintessential to life and already the strain is beginning to show on Ministries everywhere.*

*But everything is not that clear cut. In the battles which are raging presently it is not a simple case of dark forces attacking those of the light. As before the dark forces are stooping to the dishonourable and despicable act of attacking defenceless and unknowing Muggle targets. While such acts are no doubt diversionary at the moment we are still forced to question and worry, 'diversionary to what?' since while Ministry forces are cleaning up the obvious breaches to Wizarding secrecy there have been no major counter strikes. Such attacks on Muggle targets - while worrying and while stretching the resources of the light forces by forcing the placement of Auror guards at suspected Muggle targets, not to mention the strain on the Oblivators who have to conjure new memories after each attack and the artificers who are called in to repair the buildings - are nothing compared to the blood shed happening right in our back yard.*

*Eastern Wizarding Europe is awash with blood. Reports filtering in from those still insular Wizarding countries are confusing since it would appear that the dark forces aren't attacking official targets but are instead focusing their attention on the comparatively large Vampire communities that exist there. While we may secretly support such infighting we cannot be so naive as to ignore it without knowing why traditional allies are deeming it worthwhile to cut each other down. We can only use such a schism if it truly exists and we why it exists.*

*Closer to home You-Know-Who had been confirmed leading many attacks on Ministry targets personally and while each attack has been devastating his presence has raised as many questions as it answered. He is alive, he is whole and his power is as overwhelming as before. His mastery of the Dark Arts is absolute and only the most experienced and powerful combat Auror's working in concert can stand against him but none can hope to win. At the most, all they can do is buy enough time to evacuate people and rescue key Ministry documents.*

*Confirmation of his presence has changed the face of this conflict. Unlike last time it appears he is dispensing with the extensive cloak and dagger games that signified his last rise. This time his forces are declaring themselves openly and are attacking with all the cunning he possesses. The attacks appear random but as we all know, random is anything but.*

*His presence though is raising questions. While physical descriptions of him at the height of his power are rare, those who got close enough to see, usually died, there are some disturbing rumours which are persisting. We may never know exactly what dark rituals he has used to reconstitute his body and to enhance his power but reports are filtering in that he is no longer fully human. While this should come as no surprise the changes that have been noted are unusual.*
His skin, which has the consistency of a serpent’s is showing signs of stress. While most of us will never know the strain of wielding that much magic we can only speculate as to what else might be causing such obvious distress to him. Is it possible that he has made himself too powerful for even a non-human body? Or is possible that his regeneration may not have been as complete as he hoped? Dark Art’s rituals aren’t universally noted for their consistent results.

Or do we dare to hope that the reason for the sudden and devastating attacks by the dark forces is some last ditch effort on behalf of their dying master?

It might be nice if this were the case but more likely he has simply grown tired of waiting and seeking to assert his dominance now.

But to confound the questions his strangely stressed physical state raises, his mental state is also raising questions. During his last rise, in the few battles he was definitively recorded in his power was overwhelming and his sheer presence and abilities are frightening. In the past he has known were every single being on the battle field was. He knew every charm and curse spoken and if anyone managed to break through his Death Eaters, no one, not even the most powerful wizards and witches came close to landing an attack on him. But this time, while his Death Eaters have been as efficient as always, there have been times when he has appeared distracted and several attacks have almost landed upon his person but his personal defensive artefacts have saved him.

Personal distraction combined with a stressed physical condition... Is this good news for the forces of light? Or is it simply because the Dark Lord is focusing his entire attention on domination?

One thing is for sure though, we cannot rely on his seeming weakness for even if the Dark Lord himself falls, his followers will not. As we learnt from Grindlewald, a Dark Lord who was at the height of his power considered unequalled, there is always someone waiting to rise from the ashes. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was waiting in the wings, who amongst us can know who shall rise this time?

No matter what happens it is imperative that we join together to fight. The Ministries of Europe can no longer be distracted by their petty differences. They must unite to present a front of pure power upon which the dark forces can spend their force. And they must look to the Order of the Phoenix, that ancient Order, founded by Merlin, to help co-ordinate their efforts. For centuries the Order has acted as front line soldiers, intermediaries between Ministries, trusted messengers and skilful planners in the battle between the light and dark. From their ranks have risen many of the greatest wizards throughout history - most recently the great Albus Dumbledore, Defeater of Grindlewald, Head Master of Hogwarts and the only man feared by You-Know-Who.

It is to him and to the leaders of the Ministries we must turn to for guidance. While we could also turn towards the Boy-Who-Lived, it is this reporter's belief that he is too young at the moment. He has unlimited potential and has shown great courage in the face of adversity but we must remember that Harry Potter is only fifteen years old. He is not yet of age to join the battle and while war knows no borders, no age and no mercy, we do and it is our responsibility to protect those who need it. In time his strength may be called upon, since it is unlikely that the dark forces will fall quickly.

We must be prepared to fight. And we must be prepared for the sacrifices that lie ahead. While the night may be long we must never lose hope that it is night and we must maintain the belief that morning will come.

Dumbledore looked down at the eleven and a half inches of holly that lay on the purple velvet on the bench top. It was something he'd never thought he'd see but it was whole again.
Ollivander had done it, with Fawkes' help. The once shattered wand had been healed and even his critical eye couldn't spot the join mark and the aura which wrapped all magical objects felt smooth and whole.

Fawkes trilled softly from his shoulder as Ollivander entered the room.

"Thank you," Dumbledore said but surprised when he received no response.

Silver eyes watched him critically, not judging, just examining every nuance of his being. "I have done what you asked," Ollivander said eventually, "but I will not guarantee that everything will be as it was."

Blue eyes narrowed. "What do you mean?"

The strange silver eyes didn't blink and it was the aging Headmaster who was almost forced to take a step back at the controlled power. It was easy to underestimate Ollivander but the man was far more than he seemed and knew more about wands and their masters than even Dumbledore.

"Things change," he said. "Things always change. You forget that Albus."

"Many things have changed," the Headmaster responded, not at all offended by the sudden familiarity.

"And many things have not changed," Ollivander retorted.

"Are you saying I'm too old?"

"I'm saying that reasons are sometimes more important than the action. You still don't know why he walks that path."

"It was his choice," Albus responded firmly.

"Or was it his destiny?"

"Destiny can be changed."

"Only when it is allowed."

"It was his choice."

"Or was it yours?"

The question hung heavy in the air for a moment before Ollivander shook his head. "The reason is still important," he said softly.

"After all this time, I cannot seek it."

"After all this time, you should not have to seek it."

Dumbledore gestured to the wand. "It is over now."

"Perhaps. I cannot guarantee it. What was broken has now healed but it cannot be used by one who has not broken."

"He was broken."
A strange smile came to Ollivander's face. "He was," the ancient wizard agreed easily and Dumbledore suddenly felt as it the wizard was talking about something else entirely.

With a shrug he dismissed the matter and picked up the wand. There was no reaction as he tucked it into his robes but he felt warmer with the knowledge it was there. With this, Harry would be able truly use magic again and he could truly begin to prepare him for the battles that were to come. With a nod at Ollivander, Dumbledore apparated from the store, leaving the silver eyed wizard in his own quiet contemplation.

"One was broken and has healed, but one was only bent. You underestimate such power," he finally murmured to the empty store before turning back and disappearing between the shelves of stacked boxes, the labour of centuries.

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Voldemort frowned and shook his head as he lost his concentration again. The newspaper article was closer to the truth that even the journalist realised. Not about him dying... That was some potion dream but he was distracted. But how could he not be when a certain pair of emerald eyes dominated his thoughts?

And he was stressed. His magic levels were flaring unpredictably allowing him to pull off some spells that were absolutely impossible but then his power would return to normal and that was making him feel weak. It didn't matter that normal for him was still vastly more powerful than any other wizard save two, after experiencing what felt like infinite power, it wasn't enough. The magic surges were wreaking havoc on his body as well. They weren't destroying it. He'd checked that very carefully but they were making him itch.

There had been a surge in his power when the girl had completed his bond to Harry and that power had made him itch as well but this was nothing like that. That power surge had been a gentle summer breeze, this was a raging hurricane and trying to control it was distracting him. He had to be so careful. Several times he had caught himself planning the battles as if his increased power was permanent. It wasn't though, not yet but now that he knew such power was possible it would be his. He couldn't rely on it though and he couldn't plan as if he possessed it.

It was so frustrating and simply added to his distraction.

He wanted Harry. He wanted the power. And he wanted to crush the Ministries that opposed him.

And he wanted them in something like that order.
Draco peered around the Slytherin Common Room. It was almost perpetually dark so he had to be extra careful that someone wasn't hiding in the shadows. Once he was convinced that he was alone he pulled out the letter he had gotten from his Father. He knew the plan was coming together. Those loyal to his Father were still working on the Dark Lord's behalf fighting the Ministry, paving the wave for Purebloods to take back the power that was rightfully theirs but at the same time, they were working to destroy the Dark Lord himself. And at the moment, that meant destroying Harry Potter.

The boy waking up hadn't been expected and the threat of further attack couldn't be expected to hold now. The boy was too well guarded for them even to attempt it. Sirius Black stalked the corridors behind his Godson, his wand half drawn and somehow he seemed to know who had attacked Harry when the rest of the school remained baffled. Every time he got close to the precious Gryffindork, the man's black eyes smouldered, daring him to even flinch out of line. Somehow the man knew even though Draco knew Potter hadn't talked. Add the constant scrutiny of the teachers and the ever-present eyes of the older Gryffindorks and Potter was untouchable.

It was so frustrating! The whole school was seething with an aura of fear, of uncertainty because the attackers hadn't been caught and they couldn't even take advantage of the situation. All he could do was sit and wait for his Father to make his move before he could openly state his allegiance. He opened the letter, looking down at the neat writing. His Mother had written the letter but no doubt his Father had dictated it.

My Dearest Son

That was definitely his mother.

It has come to our attention that Harry Potter has awakened. While your initial results were very pleasing the current situation cannot be allowed to continue. The circumstances surrounding his awakening remain unclear but it has become certain that his existence can no longer be tolerated.

As such you have permission to fulfil your greatest wish to ensure that boy can no longer interfere. I know you were careful last time, my son, but this time you must be doubly cautious as I have no wish to lose my Heir at the moment of my ascension. The Dark Lord is powerful but he is also vindictive and even as he falls he will still strike out.

You will do well my son. You are my Heir.

Lucius Malfoy.

A slow smile crept over Draco's face and his eyes narrowed. Oh... This was going to fun. And he knew just how to do it.

He'd finally beat that stupid Gryffindork at Quidditch and in the instant Potter knew who was truly the best he would die.

Dumbledore looked over the school grounds. It was amazing but in the starlight it was as if
everything was made clear. He could see the Quidditch pitch with its pennants trailing in the breeze and the dark smooth lawns that extended their way up to the castle's battlements. He could see the slowly undulating branches of the Whomping Willow and the lights of Hagrid's Hut shining before the dark smudge that was the Forbidden Forest at night. It all combined to give him a sense of peace but he knew just how fleeting it was.

Ever since Tom had killed Cornealis what had been simmering unrest was slowly escalating into full-scale war. Each day the attacks of the Death Eaters were becoming more and more brazen and each day they found further evidence of Ministry Duplicity. The Interim Minister was doing his best to hold things together but Fudge had done more damage than anyone had realised and open war would be on them soon.

It wouldn't be like fifteen years ago. Tom had tired of cloak and dagger games. This would be true war with wizards and witches lining up on both sides. There would be soldiers and planned tactical battles. The lines would be drawn clearly and the forces on both sides known unlike last time when no one was sure where their neighbours loyalty lay and the war was comprised of strikes in darkness and report after report of bodies found at dawn. Open conflict was at once better and worse than before but it would be open only if there were two sides.

With a tired shake of his head Dumbledore turned away from the school. Tom still hadn't dealt with the growing Rebellion within his ranks and that threw all their plans into chaos. Tom had to know of it. Already there were bodies appearing in the squirmishes that had no right to be there. Death Eaters were dying and no one in the Light was killing them. It was coming from within, from the schism growing within their ranks. So why wasn't their Lord acting to purify his forces? Why wasn't Tom cleansing his troops?

It wasn't weakness. He had more than enough power to be able to do it both in terms of personal ability and in manpower. And it couldn't be ignorance. While Tom may not know who all the Leaders were, he would know enough to find out and if he was truly that worried he could just eliminate everyone as he had in the past.

It had to be arrogance. Tom was so sure of his victory that he could afford to wait for the traitors to strike. He could take them out then while still dealing with the forces of Light.

Dumbledore suppressed a shiver. If he was that strong... If he was truly that strong... No... No Dark Lord was that strong and only Tom was that arrogant.

But if he fell in the midst of battle then they would lose their chance to eliminate the Darkness. The factions that comprised his forces would go into hiding and most would never be found. The Dark couldn't be eliminated entirely. Light would have no meaning then but it could be suppressed, driven back to wait for generations again before it rose as it should have with the defeat of Grindelwald. But with Grindelwald's defeat there was Tom Riddle waiting for his opportunity.

With Voldemort's defeat there was no one. There were those who would like to claim the mantle of a Dark Lord but there was no one with the sheer raw power necessary to unify the Dark. Once Riddle was gone the Light would rule unhindered if they could destroy his forces completely.

"Tom... Why haven't you acted? Is it because of Harry?" Dumbledore spoke the question aloud.

Tom had figured out his defences and had awoken Harry but he had done something more. Harry hadn't said anything was different and it was possible that he didn't know himself but to Dumbledore's well-trained eyes something within the boy had changed. The Sword of Gryffindor had helped to sustain Harry but it wasn't enough to heal him completely but when he had awoken he was complete. The broken thing inside him was healed but that shouldn't have been possible until
Harry had bonded with a new wand. And Harry was only suited to one wand apart from his own.

No... That wasn't possible. Tom would never... He could never...

"What have you done?"

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DAILY PROPHET
Special War Correspondents Report

Sirius Black - New Hope or the Dark Lord's Plot?

From Elliot Bryant

We all know the story. The Potter's knowing they were on He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named Hit List cast the Fidelus Charm and went into hiding in Godric's Hollow and then they were betrayed. But on that tragic night You-Know-Who was defeated and the Wizarding World knew peace. You-Know-Who was gone, his Death Eaters scattered and his right hand man, Sirius Black was imprisoned.

That is until two years ago when our peace was shattered by the news that a prisoner had done the impossible - Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban. To make matters worse he seemed to be after our saviour the Boy-Who-Lived, Harry Potter. But everything settled down until last year when at the Tri-Wizard Tournament another tragedy struck. Cedric Diggory was killed during the Dark Lord's revival that had presumably been arranged by his most trusted and dangerous servant.

But all conventional belief's have been changed. Peter Petrigrew, thought to be deceased appeared at Hogwarts very much alive and bearing the Dark Mark burned into his arm. He has of course been stripped of the Order of Merlin but his appearance raises more questions than it answers.

Sirius Black has had all charges against him revoked leaving him free to pursue what future he would. At the moment his is spending time getting to know his Godson but is this part of a larger plot of the Dark Lord? You-Know-Who is both cunning and powerful and has shown he fears nothing, killing the Minister of Magic quite openly at Hogwarts.

So is Sirius Black's recent reappearance and interest in his Godson nothing more than the actions of a newly freed man or are they the actions of one of the Dark Lord's most devoted servants, laying a trap to stop the one person who has proven his ability to stop the Dark Lord? Unfortunately while Peter Petrigrew has been captured and placed in custody he is not in any position to speak since the Dark Lord has left several Dark Art's charms on his body, reducing him to a state similar to one who has been subjected to the Dementor's Kiss.

Leaving the only word on what happened in Sirius Black's hands. If this is the Dark Lord's plot then it is a brazen and direct attack on everything that has given us hope. Of course there is always the possibility that Sirius Black has been telling the truth the whole time and is as innocent has he appears to be. If this is the case then the Light has gained a powerful defender.

But should we really take that risk? Does the Boy-Who-Lived deserve to be subjected to such risk when he is the only one who can stand against You-Know-Who?

Plot or Hope?

You decide.
"Is that understood?" Draco cast glittering grey eyes over the rest of the Slytherin team. He may be the smallest person there but they all knew who held power.

"The Gryffindorks forfeited their last game against Hufflepuff because they were scared. They are weak... But we've always known that and without Wood to whip them into some semblance of order they are distracted. Potter is weak both emotionally and physically and as he thinks he's won the Snitch today he will find out exactly what it means to challenge Slytherin.

"Today, we're not just playing against Gryffindor... Today we are playing against the world and today we prove just how superior Pure bloods are!"

"Yeah!"

Draco grinned at the cheer his words brought and as the team mounted their brooms and flew out on to the pitch he added the words, "And today we will see the end of the Defender of Light. Today, Harry Potter dies."

Madam Hooch walked on to the pitch carrying her broom and levitating the chest containing the Quidditch balls behind her. With a flourish of her wand she set the box down gently before blowing her whistle, calling for the Captains to come and shake hands.

"Harry!" Angelina hissed.

"What?"

"Go shake his hand!" Katie yelled from her position on the high field.

"I'm not the Captain!"

"Opps! I knew we forgot to tell him something!" Fred swooped by as George flew up behind Harry and pushed him gently towards the ground.

Harry blinked back tears. "I'm going to kill you guys," he said as he descended. He landed in front of Madam Hooch and nodded pleasantly to her. She had a small smile on her face. "You knew?"

"No team Captain position is official until I approve it," she said easily. "Now shake hands please."

Harry looked over at Draco and almost felt the memory overwhelm him but with a firm mental shake he pushed it back down. He had to behave as if everything was normal. There was too much going
on for him to show anything. Dumbledore. Voldemort. The Shadows... Everything.

Harry closed his eyes for an instant and inside everything shifted. It felt like he became the shadow. His emotions faded into darkness, dropping deep into his being, waiting until it was safe for them to come forth. He wasn't denying their existence, that would be unhealthy but he was suppressing them, just for the moment. He felt his rationality come forward and he felt a rush of magic surge through him. The blue and red presences came forward, supporting him and he relaxed at the feeling.

With a half smile on his face and neutral expression in his eyes he held out his hand, not surprised when the gesture was steady. He could do anything if he didn't feel, at least temporarily. And he was pleased at the shocked expression on Draco's face. It appeared Malfoy didn't know how to act.

"Mr Malfoy? Is there a problem?"

Draco blinked grey eyes and then stuck his hand out oddly, half expecting to feel a burst of power when he touched Potter but there was nothing. Their hands barely meet before they both pulled back quickly, mounting their brooms and nodding at Madam Hooch.

"I want a clean game," she said before blowing her whistle again as she released the Snitch and Bludgers before bending to pick up the Quaffle. With a heave she threw it high into the air and the scrummage began.

Alicia swooped in even before the Quaffle had reached its peak, grabbing the ball from the air and speeding towards the Slytherin Keeper. She was intercepted by Adrian Pucey but she passed it to Katie before he barrelled into her. The Bludgers soared wildly around but both Fred and George were in hot pursuit of them and seemed to be taking great delight in hitting them directly at their Slytherin counterparts.

Harry rose straight into the air before slowly circling the pitch as he watched the proceedings. Alicia, Katie and Angelina were working together as they usually did and their movements were as seamless as always. They seemed to know exactly when another needed help and exactly where they were and where the Quaffle was. As usual they were literally flying circles around the Slytherin Chasers.

He watched with admiring eyes as they triple teamed the Slytherin Keeper. They were careful not to Stooge him but it almost didn't matter. Isadon Bletchley had taken his brother's position as Keeper but to Harry appraising eye he was still raw at his job and the Gryffindor Chasers were very experienced. He looked over to Draco but dismissed the other Seeker after a moment, turning back to watch the Slytherin Chasers.

Only Adrian Pucey was truly experienced. The other two, Zabini and Quirke were working well together, passing the Quaffle between them expertly as they wove back and forth but their movements lacked speed and practice. Harry only watched for a few moments but he could see the pattern and if he could see it then the Gryffindor Chasers had already seen it and were acting against it.

Bingo! As if in response to his thoughts Angelina rushed in, at first seeming only to fly by Quirke but she extended her arm at the last instant, snatching the Quaffle from the air and zooming away with it tucked close to her body. Harry chuckled and finally turned towards the new Gryffindor Keeper.

The others had chosen Oswald Richards, a third year to replace Wood. Harry hadn't really seen him fly before but he had to admit that he looked comfortable on his broom as he circled the hoops, keeping a firm eye on the location of the Quaffle. With the ladies and the Weasley's though, Harry was sure that he wouldn't really see that much action.
Harry didn't even question the voice, he'd gotten so used to hearing them. With a fluid movement he flattened himself against the handle of his broom and dove, just as a Bludger flew through the air his head had been in. Mikhail Usaran brandished his bat triumphantly but was hit an instant later by the other Bludger. But Harry didn't see this, he was too busy spinning and diving as the Bludger followed him as it was meant to. They were be-spelled to attack the closest person, so he just had to lead it to someone else.

He executed a beautiful corkscrew as he pulled out of his dive and sped towards the Slytherin Chasers. Pucey saw him coming and spun away but Harry couldn't help but smirk when he noted that Zabini was still oblivious to his presence.

"So you think you've won?" Draco drawled as Harry matched his height.

Emerald eyes glanced towards the scoreboard. "130 to 50, our favour," Harry sniffed. "Not quite yet."

Draco remained silent at that and Harry drifted away, not noticing as a small darkness left the shadows of his robes and attached itself to the black lined green robes of the Slytherin Seeker.

"You see the power?:"

:I see the power.: Harry replied silently. He saw the power. The power that came when emotion was controlled, when he didn't think about the consequences. It was exhilarating. He could face anyone like this. Draco. Blaise. Millicent. Heprah. Voldemort. Dumbledore.

With a shake of his head Harry dismissed the thoughts. He was in the middle of a Quidditch game. He couldn't be distracted and he would have his chance to face them all soon enough. As he looked for the Snitch he watched the score rising. 140-50. 150-50. 150-60. Darn. That was almost too quick. 160-60. 170-60. Ha! That would teach them!

:Duck!: The advice came again and Harry once more moved with liquid grace. He spared a glance for Draco but the blond was scouring the pitch for the Snitch. With a small curse Harry dove as the Bludger followed him, jinxing with his movements as he attempted to throw it off his tail.

:Spin right. Rise then jinx right again.: Harry complied and he could feel the rising tension in the air. The Bludger wasn't acting properly. It wasn't like the time Dobby had tampered with it, this was something else. It was following him with single minded intensity but it was also jinxing towards the other players just enough that it didn't seem like it was only focusing on him. But like a blood hound, it always returned to his trail.

"Whoa! Look at Potter fly!"
Harry didn't hear Lee's commentary but the words brought the attention of everyone to him as he completed a complex series of loops, pulling out of them smoothly skimming over the pitch, with the Bludger still following him. To the watching students it looked like a beautifully executed manoeuvre but to him, it had been the almost last ditch effort to get rid of the flying ball. There was only one thing left to do. He growled softly as he headed break neck into the Chaser Scrummage. Perhaps he could hit another Slytherin with it. Before he got close though, George sped past him, his freckled face frowning and his bat raised. He belted the Bludger with a resounding 'Thwack!' driving it back towards the ground where it circled randomly before shooting back into the air, heading towards the chasers and Harry.

"And an impressive attempt at save by Richards but it's not enough and Slytherin score again bringing the total to 170-80."

He noticed because he was paying attention to the Bludger, but with the announcement of the score it zoomed away, once more pursuing other targets.

:That wasn't right:.

Harry nodded to himself and to the voice. It didn't feel right but at the moment there wasn't anything he could do about it. He wasn't in any danger from the Bludger. The whispered voice knew exactly where it was and knew exactly how he should move to avoid it. He could fly loops around it and never be hit. No the danger was in Malfoy. While Harry had never lost a match to him, the blond was still a Seeker and had won matches for Slytherin against the other teams. And with no Bludger bothering him he had a free run of the pitch and all the time he needed to find the Snitch.

:Do you want us to find the Snitch?:

:No!: He couldn't bring himself to do something like that even though he wouldn't get caught.

:Then why don't you see who's magic is on the Bludger?:

:Huh?:

:Master, you know it isn't coincidence.: 

:I don't know how.: 

:Red-eyes does. Just ask him.: 

Harry blinked. 'Red-eyes' was his name for his unknown lover. But despite the love Harry could feel coming from the other presence in his mind he didn't want to ask it for something. If he did he felt he would have some obligation and while the man had saved him and Harry already owed him the world, he didn't want to owe him further.

:I don't think you can owe him further.: 

:I know!: But despite that, he still felt reluctant to ask for their help. :I don't want to be weak.: 

The shadows were silent for a moment before they returned the advice, :Then try it yourself.: 

:I don't know how.: 

:Master... When has that stopped you?: 

Harry smiled slightly to himself. It appeared the shadows knew him better than he knew himself. :All
right.: he agreed as he rose into the air, putting himself into a position where he could see the whole
pitch.

He concentrated for a moment. He wanted to see the magic... How did you see magic? He focused
on his eyes and suddenly he felt a tingle in them, almost like an itch he couldn't scratch. Magic would
be in streams... All living things would have some magic, so everyone on the pitch would glow with
their magic. His broom would also glow but it wasn't alive so it would be dull and the Bludgers and
Quaffle would too. With a long sigh he opened his eyes and almost cried out at the world.

Everything was different but at the same time it wasn't. The stadiums were just awash with colour
but he could see several brighter beacons amongst the students - those individuals who possessed
great power. But what surprised him was that the very air was alive with Magic. The shadows
danced and the Earth sang to him. It was too much and just as he was about to be overwhelmed
something clamped down on his vision, restricting what he saw.

:Master.:

Harry wiped the sweat from his brow. :Thank you.: He turned his eyes towards the players and
quickly found the Bludger. Where it's fellow glowed a dull brown, it was a vivid red. It had far more
magic than it should and embedded in the red was a pattern of a person.

Carefully Harry looked around for the matching pattern but as he had half suspected he didn't have to
look that far. Circling below him, grey eyes scanning the area for the Snitch was Draco Malfoy, a
bright yellow light. The patterns matched perfectly.

:Find it.: Harry instructed firmly. :But only tell me where it is if Draco sees it too.:

:Master.: 

He sensed the shadows agreement before he let his eyesight return to normal and looked at the
players again. The score was 210-110 Gryffindor favour with Alicia in possession of the Quaffle.
She spun around Zabini with almost contemptuous ease before charging Quirke who zagged out of
her path at the last minute. Only Pucey remained but Katie and Angelina had him pegged and were
zipping around him with all the agility of angels. Both Bludgers were in the clear and with a burst of
speed, Alicia swooped into the scoring area, ducked under Keeper Bletchley and scored. 220-110.

:It's coming again Master.: 

Harry nodded and looked over. The Bludger had indeed changed its course and was heading straight
towards him. Here I go again. He thought as he spun out of its path and dove back towards the
game. Fred shadowed his movements this time. Apparently the Bludgers actions hadn't been un-
noted.

"Harry!" The Weasley twin shouted. "Call time out!"

"No! I can't prove it. Just keep playing. I'll be fine. Tell the ladies to get that score up. When I catch
the Snitch I want to annihilate Slytherin."

Fred looked worried for a moment before he grinned predatorily. "You got it boss," he shouted as he
pealed off, hitting the Bludger following Harry with all his might.

He wove his way between the players, missing them by millimetres. As the Bludger followed him,
bouncing off the Slytherin Chaser's more than once he couldn't help but look up at Malfy and grin.
The blond boy was chewing his lip worriedly but maintained enough arrogance to sneer back.
Harry drove himself up and felt Pritchard's bat brush the tail of his broom. He growled softly. *That* was distinctly unsporting. With a sharp U-turn Harry fixed emerald eyes on the Slytherin Beater, barely noticing as the Bludger sped past his ear. If you were going to hit someone, you did it like this!

A single burst of speed had him flying neck and neck with Caine and another had him ahead of the Slytherin Beater.

Harry swung his arm out and slammed on the breaks. Caine cried out as an armoured forearm appeared in front of him and pulled up himself but as Harry almost impacted with him, he pulled his arm back in and dropped, missing the Beater by a hairsbreadth and grinning as the Bludger crashed through the tail of Pritchard's broom.

"Foul!" Malfoy screamed as Harry flew low, circling the pitch.

"Play on!" Madam Hooch replied. "No contact was made between players," she added giving Malfoy a stern glare.

Harry's move inspired the Gryffindor team and as he continued to zoom around the pitch always two steps ahead of the be-spelled Bludger, they lost their fear for him and devoted themselves to scoring.

230-110.
240-110.
240-120. Well, it couldn't always be one way.
240-130. They were going to pay for that one.
250-130. Vengeance strikes on swift wings.
260-130. Score against us and we take two in return.
270-130. Hah! Gryffindor were the best team.
280-130. No rogue Bludger was going to stop them.
290-130. Let Malfoy catch the Snitch what did it matter?
290-140. Oh well... The game would be a draw but everyone knew who had won.
290-150. Where was that ruddy Snitch?
290-160.

*There!* Dammit! It was on the other side of the pitch. He could see it glittering in the sunlight between the churning mass that was the Chasers. And it was near Draco.

He surged upwards. At the moment the Chasers were too tightly knit for him to risk going through them. He'd have to slow down to much and that would be fatal. The Bludger was right on his tail. He would hear it whistling through the air behind him.
"No!" Harry moaned to himself as he saw Draco finally see the golden ball. The blond Slytherin's eyes became alive and grey met emerald for an instant, long enough for Draco to declare his victory. *It's not that easy!*

Harry wrenched his Firebolt upwards. He could feel gravity pressing down against his chest and it was difficult to breathe but he didn't stop. He'd never risen this sharply before and he could almost hear the charms on his broom straining. This was going to be close.

The Snitch flitted away from its position and Draco swooped, his arm outstretched towards the small ball. Harry was still rising until finally he was about three times the height of the scoring rings. He locked his legs around his broom and closed his eyes as he pitched back. It was exhilarating. For a moment he was suspended in the air, held still by it's embrace and then slowly at first, he was falling. As he fell the Bludger flew through his previous position and then turned to follow him down.

Harry guided himself with small shifts of weight and he opened his eyes, watching with increasing trepidation as Draco got closer and closer to the Snitch. The entire stadium was holding its breath. The Firebolt creaked as gravity forced it past it's endurance but Harry held it together. This was going to be really close.

:Level out.: 

He lowered his legs, pushing them down and pulling himself out of his dive, but still keeping an incline. There was a jolt as the charms on the Firebolt reactivated but Harry ignored it as he shot through the air like an arrow. Draco was chasing the Snitch. He intended to sweep past and intercept the golden ball.

Emerald eyes narrowed as Harry assessed the distance. Faster... He had to go faster. He bent his knees and hooked his feet over his broom as he flattened himself against the full length of the handle. He tucked his elbows in as the wind whipped his hair out of his eyes. Everything was free.

_Faster,_ he urged the Firebolt, willing it past the bounds of it charms. Behind him the Bludger cleaved through the air with lethal precision but Harry couldn't even feel it. His whole being was focused on the small golden ball. He had to catch it and to do that, he had to be faster.

:Master..?: The question was obvious.

:No need,: Harry responded as he assessed the distance once more before pouring his aura into the charms on the Firebolt. They quivered under the force he exerted but responded and he felt himself speed up. *Perfect.*

Draco was still chasing the Snitch, his arm outstretched and he hadn't seen him approaching from a right angle. The blond Slytherin almost had his hand around the small ball and while his face bore a look of concentration, there was a smirk of satisfaction. *It's not over yet,* Harry thought as he raised his own hand towards the Snitch.

:It will be soon, Master.: 

The ground was a blur. The whole world was a blur except for the small tunnel of air that lead towards the tiny ball. Harry could see nothing but that view and as he closed the distance, he cried out, the effort almost too much to bare.

In a flash it was over.

Harry's fingers connected with the Snitch and he swooped passed Draco, going so fast that they didn't even collide. Draco looked confused for an instant but then he realised what had happened and
he was dumbfounded. The Snitch had been literally within his grasp and Potter had somehow managed to steal it. Where was that Bludger?

WHACK!!

With the force of a cannon ball, the Bludger ploughed into Draco but it didn't stop. It had gained too much momentum and as the Slytherin Seeker plummeted into the pitch the Bludger drove onwards, seeking out it's target.

To reduce speed and because it was traditional, Harry pulled his broom about in a long circular motion, loosing his gathered momentum and holding the Snitch high as he zoomed through his victory lap.

"Harry!" The whole crowd was calling his name and he grinned. Some things were just perfect.

He looked down and saw a flash of red beneath black robes and smiled at his unconscious reaction. The glow of satisfaction he was feeling from the 440-160 score line was accompanied by another as his emotions flooded back through him and he was warm, cherished and beloved. Nothing could go wrong, not when he was watching over him. He was safe. With a tentative touch he reached out and found himself wrapped in love.

Was it possible to love someone he barely knew?

Harry still wasn't sure but it was possible for him to like them.

A lot.

He didn't even see the Bludger.

===

Sirius had watched Harry in the game with his heart in his mouth. But even with the danger he was forced to conclude that the boy was good. Every movement was smooth and considered and he never lost his calm. James, just look at him!

Even now that Harry was circling the pitch with the Snitch held high his movements were professional but there was still a knot of worry in his gut and as the sun glittered off a dull surface Sirius recognised where the worry was coming from. “HARRY!!”

For the rest of his life he would remember the sight. The Bludger that was still pursuing his Godson zoomed in and crashed directly into the grinning boy. Then everything exploded.

All around Harry the air became alive, seething with magic of different colours – red, blue and green – and the air seemed to throw off sparks of every conceivable colour. But that was only for an instant before the air cleared and as quickly as the power appeared it vanished, to reveal Harry still airborne and unfazed. Of the Bludger there was nothing, save a few falling pieces of debris.

Sirius blinked, shaking his head before he turned back to Harry. He had seen one more thing but the boy was normal now. He wasn’t the image of a mage warrior robed in magical armour and bearing a sword in one hand and a wand in the other accompanied by a tangible aura of power. His eyes were smiling, not narrowed with concentration. And the air around him was filled with sunlight, not inky black, strangely compelling and protective but infinitely powerful. He was just Harry Potter, the boy who bore too many pains and too many hopes upon his young shoulders, just the child of James and Lily Potter – his Godson.
And he was completely unharmed.

Sirius breathed a sigh of relief but couldn't help wondering what had the power to protect Harry.

Chapter End Notes

Gryffindor Team
Chaser: Alicia Spinnet 7th Year
Chaser: Katie Bell 7th Year
Chaser: Angelina Johnson 7th Year

Beater: Fred Weasley 7th Year
Beater: George Weasley 7th Year

Keeper: Oswald Richards 3rd Year

Seeker: Harry Potter 5th Year Captain

Slytherin Team
Chaser: Adrian Pucey 7th Year
Chaser: Blaise Zabini 5th Year
Chaser: Jastin Quirke 6th Year

Beater: Caine Pritchard 7th Year
Beater: Mikhail Usaran 6th Year

Keeper: Isadon Bletchley 4th Year

Seeker: Draco Malfoy 5th Year Captain
Harry frowned in his sleep. His bed seemed cold. It was missing something and as he curled around a pillow he unconsciously recognised what it was. He thought Red Eyes would be here. The celebrations after the Quidditch Game had gone on for a while - no one could remember any team beating Slytherin as well as Gryffindor had today and even Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff were happy about it. With the continuing war the Slytherins had been almost unbearable and it was great for someone to put them in their place - but Harry had been sure that his unknown lover would be waiting for him.

He had sensed him during the game and very strongly when the Bludger crashed into him but after that Harry had been so distracted by everyone else that he hadn't sensed his departure.

_I wanted to see you._

:Not yet, Little One, not yet.:  

The response was gentle but firm and carried it's explanation within the simple words. Harry felt a burst of shame. Red Eyes loved him without reserve and was prepared to stay with him but could he really expect that when he hadn't given him a response, when he wasn't sure of his own feelings? Enclosed in the words was the feeling of love and of the assurance that it would always be there but until Harry was sure, Red Eyes would remain distant so that Harry would not regret any action in the future if the love was not returned. But similarly there was the assurance that when Harry admitted his love, Red Eyes would be more than happy to spend as much time in his bed as they both desired.

He shivered for an instant, feeling as if something was missing inside before he fell further into sleep and the dreams that haunted him.

It wasn't Voldemort this time. Harry could sleep through the dreams of the Dark Lord torturing Muggles or Mudbloods with ease, although recently the Dark Lord had been torturing no one - at least, he hadn't dreamed about it and while the war was raging there were no unusual reports of missing persons. He wasn't sure what to think about that since enough people were dying fighting.

But this dream wasn't Voldemort and it wasn't the war. It was something else.

The world was covered in darkness. It was if he was seeing everything from a great distance. Slowly he began spiralling closer and things became clearer. The Ministry buildings lay in ruins. Gringotts was one smoking hole that had crows and ravens fluttering around it. And Hogwarts...

Harry almost felt a wave of reassurance hit him when he saw the castle but it never blossomed. Hogwarts was intact but it was draped in black. There were black pennants streaming from the towers and black banners rippled over the walls. It was almost as if the whole building had been stained.

The playing fields weren't green but were charcoal black and he saw with a lurch that half the Forbidden Forest was similarly afflicted. The spindly tree limbs reaching upwards were not black with leaves so dark a green as to be pitch but were mere skeletons of their former selves. The animals within were hunted and Acromantula's scuttled freely, pouncing on anything that came within their
domain. The Whomping Willow was a charred stump, a silent rotting tombstone for the forest.

Trolls drooled and guarded the gates but they were too stupid to be the real guards. Werewolves walked amongst them, their human forms somehow devoid of thought or humanity and in the deep shadows he could see glowing red eyes. Lesser Vampires were watching over everything and in the distance a dragon was chained, its fiery breath burning everything.

Closer still he spiralled and he saw more. People now. People in chains. Muggles chained and pulling large stones in worker gangs. Over them stood black robed wizards and witches, their wands held as if they were lashes. Every now and then they would strike at one of the Muggles who would scream and fall, their skin broken and bleeding.

In other places he could see other wizards but these one's weren't dressed in black. Rather they were clothed in rags and each one of them had a heavy collar of iron around their necks. There were more wizards and witches watching over their brethren but where the one's watching the Muggles were simply cruel, the one's watching the trapped wizards were malicious. They took pleasure in inflicting pain, in knowing that they were superior. The captured wizards were being forced to do magic but with each use of their power they were driven to their knees by the collars, screaming terribly at the pain.

With a slight sway and the slightest feeling of something passing through him Harry descended further into the castle, leaving behind the parapets lined with Vampires and trolls and the slave gangs that toiled relentlessly but futilely at some grand project that could never be completed.

Inside was worse. Torches spluttered and smoked, filling the corridors with an acrid stench that seeped into everything. Small dark shadows moved continually making reality seem as if it was constantly shifting. Harry blinked dream eyes a few times in an effort to clear them but before that happened he was sucked through the wall, ghost like, and into the chambers of the castle.

At first he thought nothing was wrong, that he's stumbled into a girls dormitory and he tried to avert his eyes even as he looked around. And that was when he realised something was terribly wrong. All the girls were sitting on their beds with lacklustre expressions. They weren't talking, they had no life. They were breathing but around them the air was dull. Harry stumbled back as he realised two further things: each one of them had a collar, like the wizards outside and each one had a belly distended with child. He gagged. The oldest was about 19 but the youngest... She couldn't be more than 12. He shrank back, through the wall and into the next room.

Another dormitory with captive witches. They weren't pregnant but they had the same lacklustre expression on their faces. As Harry watched the door opened and all the girls shrank back. A wizard walked into the room, his robes inky black and well kept and a superior expression on his face. He looked like an older and fit version of Goyle. He gestured with his wand and Harry recognised the Imperio curse. It struck one of the girls and with glassy eyes and a blank expression she followed him from the room. Harry trailed along behind but pulled up short at the adjoining room. It was like the dormitory but it had only one bed.

The wizard instructed the girl to lie on the bed and spread her legs. A quick flick of his wand and she was naked, her skin rippling with gooseflesh the only reaction the Imperio allowed her. Harry knew what was going to happen to her. It had happened to him all his life and he hadn't the comfort of the Imperio but just as he thought that the older Goyle released the Imperio and fell upon her.

She screamed and struggled but Goyle was already in position and was stronger than her. He pinned her shoulders and levered himself up, pumping his hips and Harry saw the exact thrust that lead to penetration. Her scream and struggles changed as she attempted to force him out of her rather than off. Before things could progress there was a swirl and Harry's dream carried out of the room and
with a sinking feeling he knew he was going towards the Great Hall, the centre of everything.

He saw glimpses of rooms as he spiralled towards the Hall. There was a room splattered in blood, but it was the blood of childbirth and next to it there was a strange set of scales and instinctively Harry knew that they measured the magic of the children. Those without magic were discarded and those with magic were placed in a long nursery, trained from birth to use their powers. But then everything vanished as he emerged in the Great Hall.

The Hall was changed from anything he had known. Its enchanted ceiling still reflected the sky but the sky was perpetually covered in seething clouds and so the room was dark. The long tables of the Houses were gone as was the head table. The banners were all black with a crest Harry didn't recognise in the centre and interspersed with the banners were cages. All were occupied - some with live prisoners and some with rotting skeletons.

The Hall was dominated by a large throne and Harry knew the person sitting in it. Lucius Malfoy. Draco stood before him, a ring of gold on his brow, the mark of a prince. Narcissa was also there, gowned in jewel-encrusted velvet. She stood at her husband's side, the Queen attending her King. Around the throne other wizards and witches gathered, all gowned richly and before the dais, on one knee was a supplicant.

Harry didn't care what was being said. He floated around looking for people but all he could see were those he knew had dark intentions fawning. After a moment the supplicant bowed his head further at something Lucius said and then other wizards stepped forward. These ones were wearing robes that looked like armour and had swords strapped to their waists accompanying the double wand sheaths Harry could see.

As one they bowed towards Lucius and then the leader stepped forward.

"How goes the war?" Lucius asked smoothly.

"Well, my Lord. The Muggles are retreating to the Americas."

Lucius nodded. "Where our allies shall meet them."

"Father..." Draco broke in.

"My son?"

Draco turned to Lucius with a smile and Harry could see the fangs on the boy. He was a vampire.

"I want to go."

"Is your current meal not enough?" With a gesture Lucius summoned something.

Harry screamed when he saw what it was. Chained into a frame that drained his magical power, dishelved, with long ragged hair and clothed in tatters was himself.

"No!" Dream Harry managed to gasp, floating upwards where he hit the ceiling. "No!"

Draco walked over and gently stroked his face, raising it to the light. "No," the younger Malfoy licked his lips. "He is more than adequate," Draco said as he nipped at the throat of the captive Harry, licking at the blood before he drew back. "But this will be a feast such as never will be seen again and I wish to follow my Sire."

"I am your Sire." There was a note of frustration in Lucius' voice, as if this was an argument he had
had many times before.

Draco nodded as he wrapped himself around the captured Harry, nipping and licking at the blood all the time. Not a single drop fell to the floor. "You are the sire of this body but you are no longer the Sire of my power."

The guard captain stepped forward again. "They will fight hard, my Prince, before they surrender. The Muggles shouldn't be underestimated... Their weapon, the Solar Flare is capable of killing even someone of your formidable power. It would not be safe for you to accompany your Sire."

"All the more reason to go," Draco drawled. "There is no fun in hunting those who have been defeated, it is only those who can fight that make it worthwhile."

Lucius' eyes glowed. "So you have defeated him?"

Draco suddenly looked chagrined. "..."

"Have you defeated him, my Son?" Narcissa asked softly.

"No," Draco breathed.

"Then our agreement stands," Lucius said firmly. "You may not leave my side until he bows willingly before you."

"He will die before that happens!" Draco objected.

"Then you will stand by my side."

With a sudden growl Draco jumped off the captive Harry and levelled his wand at him, snarling the curse with all the force the blond could summon. "Crucio!" Draco screamed and dream Harry watched as it flew through the air towards his captive self.

The captive Harry didn't flinch or cry out. The curse slammed into a brilliant red barrier which sparked and dissipated the force before vanishing again. Draco snarled but was not surprised and cast the curse again, with an odd flick of his wrist.

Again the red barrier flared but this time the curse pushed through it, not that dream Harry could detect any change in his captive self. Maybe there was a slight tensing of his muscles but nothing else suggested the curse had hit. Lucius was watching his sons display of power with mild amusement, obviously enjoying the fact that captive Harry's strength was forcing his son to remain subservient to him.

"Yield," Draco commanded.

Captive Harry looked up into still grey eyes. "My punishment is not served."

"They are dead!"

"And I am alive."

"I killed them."

"But you have not killed me."

"You have not yielded. Kneel before me and your pain will be over."
"My punishment is not yet served."

"For who?"

"For him."

"Who is he?"

At this captive Harry fell silent once more, closing emerald eyes and twitching slightly as the curse continued to work.

"Who is he?"

As Draco added another few curses, captive Harry opened his eyes once again and looked at Lucius. "How much more?"

"Eternity," the older Malfoy responded with a regal nod.

"I am not immortal."

"You are."

"I will not suffer for you forever."

"Yet you are the only one with the power to end it."

Captive Harry smiled but it was mocking. "I am the only one with the power," he murmured, ignoring the fuming Draco and the bewildered members of the court. "My punishment is over," he announced suddenly and there was a flare of power.

The chains vanished and the rags that had clothed him transfigured themselves into neat black robes. They were plain but comfortable. "My punishment is over," he said again and looked up.

Emerald eyes bore into emerald eyes. "It is time," the words weren't even a whisper but dream Harry heard them all the same and suddenly he was plunging to the ground. He landed with a small tap, his eyes never leaving his captured self.

"What is this?" Lucius snarled, rising from his throne as he was confronted by two Harry Potter's but before anyone could cast any magic, captive Harry cast a freezing charm on everyone.

Somehow he knew... It was as if he had always known. He didn't know everything that had lead to this world but he knew how to free himself from it and for the moment, dream or not he wielded power here. "It is time," Dream Harry agreed with himself before he looked around once more, meeting Draco and Lucius' eyes. "I will never bow to you," he said.

He looked again at himself and raised his hands. He didn't need a wand, not for this, all he needed was truth and he knew that. "Avada Kedrava." The words were solemn and his gesture precise. The green light shot from the tips of his fingers and stuck his captured self squarely in the chest.

Captured Harry nodded to him, his eyes alive. He made no sound as he toppled to the ground and as he drew one last shuddering breath, a testament to the power he held, to breath even after death, he looked over at his dream self gently.

"Be true to your heart."

There was a moment of silence and then Harry screamed. The dream vanished, ripped away as if it
was never there and he was wrapped in darkness, the words echoing through his mind as he tried to awake. But something was holding him to the world of dream and while he struggled he couldn't bring himself to consciousness.

In the real world, Harry felt two presences wrap themselves around him. It wasn't Red Eye's or Ginny but they were something else. The shadows were warm and there was something more tangible encircling his arm. Once he realised he was safe his dreams opened again...
For an instant he thought he was reliving his previous dream. The world was covered in darkness but then he realised it was the dark of a moonless night, velvety black and cold but natural and comforting in it's own way.

Once again he started from a distance and slowly spiralled closer. The Ministry was whole although it did look as if it had been repaired. Some of the facia panels didn't have the encrusted dirt of centuries. Gringotts was as geometrically unsound as it had always been. He shot north and quickly came upon Hogwarts.

Relief washed through him. The playing fields were green. There was a flash of movement from near the centre of the oval and Harry zoomed closer. There were two people there and as he swooped closer he recognised red hair that was washed to almost grey by the dark night. The other had black hair and was shorter than their companion. He gasped and was surprised and pleased when he realised who they were - Ron and Hermione. Ron had his arms around her and Harry realised with a start that she was pregnant. The two of them were laughing about something and seemed completely content. He felt good seeing them. It felt right but dream or not he didn't want to intrude on what was their private time and so he left.

He rose again and looked at the Forest. It was whole, it's darkness almost absolute but darkness it controlled. The Whomping Willow swayed slowly as if blown by a gentle wind. The Shrieking Shack had almost completely collapsed but Harry could still see it through the dilapidated and rotting wood. He paused for an instant, looking at the pennants that fluttered from the towers of the castle. From most of the towers the Hogwarts Crest flew but from the highest tower, surmounting the castle was a different crest.

Harry flew closer to examine it. He didn't recognise it. It was black but drawn on the black in fire was a serpent. It didn't look dark though and after a moment Harry recognised it as a Basilisk. It had a long red crest and its eyes were picked out in emerald. But while the symbol was strangely non-threatening, Harry still moved forward and peered into one of the lit windows.

By some quirk of physics or just the fact that this was a dream he was looking straight into the Great Hall. There were still four long tables and he could see students sitting there laughing and talking as they ate. He looked towards the Head Table and saw many familiar faces but Dumbledore wasn't there.

Relax... He told himself at the surge of not disappointment but slight concern that passed through him. This is the future... Dumbledore isn't immortal. He looked back over the High Table. McGowanall was there and Vector... He recognised Madam Hooch and several other teachers but some were unfamiliar. I guess that's okay... He thought. Things change.

And with that, he spiralled away, not seeing the phoenix that landed atop the highest spire and cocked it's head at the black pennant that waved there.

Harry didn't know where he was going. He flew over so much land and sea that everything became a blur before it cleared again. He looked around. There was another castle and like Hogwarts this one was set in a forest but it had no playing fields. This wasn't a school. This was a castle, a centre of
defence, the place of rulers. Atop every tower was the black flame serpent pennant and it was
embossed onto the crest that was affixed to the gates.

As before he passed through the walls like a ghost but unlike before there wasn't much to see in the
chambers of the castle. The rooms were neat, tidy and functional. The people in them were dressed
neatly in some sort of uniform and were going about their tasks quietly and efficiently. There was
nothing unusual happening here.

Silently he passed through the chambers and corridors before he emerged into the Great Hall of this
castle. Like his previous vision this Great Hall had a dais and throne with a rich red carpet lining the
approach to it. There were still richly dressed people gathered around the throne and in the Hall all
talking quietly amongst themselves. Banners still hung from the rafters and they bore many crests,
some he vaguely knew and others were new to him. But the banners were of many colours and the
black flame serpent that identified the castle was visible only in one place, behind the throne.

But what was incongruous about this dream was that while there were no cages interspersed with the
banners and there were no prisoners or slaves in evidence, lining the walls and standing guard at
every important point were people Harry would have sworn were Death Eaters. They wore black
robes, held their wands or swords at the ready and were masked in red. They looked and felt like
Voldemort's Elite. But over their hearts was the flame serpent.

But if they were Voldemort's, why was Hogwarts intact? And where was his symbol, the skull and
snake?

Harry looked to the throne. It was occupied by someone who had chosen to keep their hood up and
Harry couldn't determine who they were. There were two others on the dais, their hoods similarly
raised. They appeared to be waiting for something.

Finally there was a stirring at the door and a basilisk appeared, silently slithering along the carpet. It's
eyes were closed but it's movements were sure. It reached the dais and reared itself up, hissing softly.

-It is nearly complete.-

Harry noticed that three of the people on the dais nodded while the others watched on. The serpent
only continued once the person on the throne gestured towards them.

-The Forces are in position for when the call comes.-

The was a waver in reality beside the serpent and Harry almost cried out when the waver solidified
into darkness and from it stepped three people he knew. Charlie Weasley, Remus Lupin and Sirius
Black.

Charlie didn't look much different except he was older and had a few more scares. His clothing was
made completely of dragon skin and had the look of armour. Remus looked wiser and was well
dressed in fine robes. The strained look that graced his features every time Harry saw him was gone,
the stress of being a werewolf somehow accepted by him. And Sirius... The haunted look that never
seemed to leave his Godfathers posture was gone. Like Remus he seemed relaxed and at ease in the
fine robes that covered him but unlike Remus his robes were still alive with the dark and as Harry
looked closer he could see the ties that existed. Somehow Sirius had become a part of the darkness.
He was still himself, still separate but he could call on that power, he was that power. It was reflected
in his eyes. They had always been fiercely black but now they were fathomless.

As one the three of them bowed their heads but showed no further sign of submission and Harry
breathed a small sigh of relief. He had always known his Godfather to show respect but there was
something about him that said he would die before bowing to anyone. Sirius wasn't being forced or coerced. The respect he felt for whoever was on the dais was real. But that only raised Harry's curiosity and he floated forwards, hoping to get a glimpse of whoever was beneath those hoods.

Charlie stepped forward and spoke. "The Dragon Knights are ready."

Remus stepped forward next. "My Brethren will enjoy this night. The ancient enmity will come to an end."

And finally Sirius stepped forward to speak. "We are yours to command. Say the word and we will know life."

The three of them had spoken to the person on the throne but it was the being standing at the right hand that nodded and pushed back his hood to respond to them. Harry stifled a cry of disbelief. Red Eyes!

At least he thought it was Red Eyes but after a moments contemplation he was confused. This being was young. Their face was mature and bore brilliant crimson eyes but they still looked too young. He couldn't remember much about his unknown lover but he had been sure that they were older. How else would they have had the experience to truly understand what he had been through and to accept absolutely. Harry shook his head. This couldn't be Red Eyes. The magic aura he remembered was older. This person looked and felt like a younger version of his Lover.

"Wait for Xeoaph's attack so that when our strike comes it will seem like a gift from their Gods."

"What of the Vampire himself?"

Young Red Eyes glanced towards the throne before he continued. "Bring the Vampire before us. I promised once I would show him what mastery means and he is long over due for his lesson."

Sirius smiled, his glittering black eyes becoming alive. "I will see to it personally, my Lord Voldemort."

Voldemort! Harry drew back. That couldn't be true. That wasn't possible. Sirius would never... could never... No...

This wasn't true...

But if that was Voldemort... And if that was really Sirius... Then who was on the throne? Who had the power to make them both bow down to them?

No! This was just a dream... Just a sick twisted dream that bore even less resemblance to reality than the previous one. It wasn't true.

It would never be true!

"Never!" Harry bolted upright in his bed. "That's not true!" He gasped after a moment, his breath whistling through his teeth. He struggled to calm himself as he noticed that the shadows were writhing around him. They had reacted to his distress and were seeking a target to attack.

-Master?-

Harry looked down to his arm and was only mildly surprised to find a serpent twined around it. He had felt it earlier. "Just a dream," he murmured to it and to the shadows that had stilled somewhat but were still restless. Snuffles was still curled at the foot of his bed, slumbering peacefully. His coat
blended well with the darkness and for an instant Harry could see how the two could merge. He shook his head again looking back to the snake.

-How long have you been there?- The little serpent blinked and seemed surprised at the question. It was midnight black and had a small plume on the crest of it's head, almost like a feather. It's eyes were emerald although Harry had the strangest feeling that they didn't have to remain that way. There was something hidden within them but he didn't have time to contemplate that because he realised that this little serpent was the exact replica of the black flame serpent banner.

-I have always been here,- the serpent responded.

-Always?-

-I was born for you.- Harry frowned, that didn't make sense but then he understood what the serpent meant. -How old are you?- He asked. The snake had always been with him because it had known no other life. Someone had set it on him to guard. But who had power of serpents? Did Dumbledore know anyone? Because the only person Harry could think of would never think to guard him.

-I am three months old.- Three months..? That was right after he'd been attacked.

-Why are you here?- -Master... The King set me to protect you.- -The King?-

-The Serpent King?- -But you are that.- There was no way that the person Harry knew as the Serpent King had set this little snake on him.

-I am a Basilisk,- the little serpent confirmed, nodding it's head. -I am a servant of the King.- It was with trepidation Harry asked his next question. He had to know but at the same time he wasn't sure he wanted to know. -Who is the King?- The little serpent looked confused. -The King is the King,- it responded after a moment. -The King is Voldemort,: the Shadows confirmed Harry's fears.

-Voldemort..?- He whispered. The basilisk nodded. -The King is your mate.- -Your mate?- -My what?- -Your mate,- the small basilisk said again. :We tried to tell you:
-My mate...- Harry whispered. -I do not want him,- he said suddenly. -Not him,- he repeated. -I want someone else.-

-The King has chosen you.-

-I have not chosen him. I don't care what he wants,- Harry said fiercely. -I do not want him.-

The little serpent blinked. It didn't understand. If Harry didn't want the King, why had he slept with him and why were his thoughts towards the King bordering on love? Did Harry not realise Voldemort only wanted to help him? It didn't make any sense. -I was sent to guard you. Anything else is not my decision to make.-

Harry nodded, thankful that the small serpent was letting the matter go. Red Eyes was not Voldemort. Although it was possible Voldemort had sent the snake to guard him. After all, the Dark Lord wanted to kill him personally and if someone killed him before that where would the satisfaction be?

:Master, the danger remains. You can not be blind to it forever.: 

Harry frowned and drove away the thought. He didn't want to think about it now. Once more he looked to the serpent on his arm. -Do you have a name?- 

The little snake seemed surprised. -No,- it hissed with a half regretful tone. -Names are not necessary.-

-They are. I need something to call you by. What would you like to be called?- 

-I don't....- the little snake considered the question carefully. -I don't know.- 

-Sebastian?- 

-No.-

-Salamir?- 

-No.-

-Slytherin?- 

-No.-

Harry frowned, he was running out of snake names. At least, he was running out of those names he considered appropriate for a snake.

-Salazar?- 

-No. None of these names feel right,- the snake hissed with a considering tone. 

-Any idea on what would feel right?- :Any idea!: 

:Not from us Master. We have no need for names.: 

-I will know it when I hear it.-

-Severus? Syissa? Samuel?-
-Not 'S'. It will not begin with S.-

-Oh...- Harry frowned. -Hmm... Karand? Uyran? Xellos?-

-No... None of them.-

-Basil? Xephon? Zetsuei?- 

-Basil the Basilisk?- The little snake questioned with a laugh. -I don't think so.-

-Chaos?- Harry paused as the little red plume rose slightly.

-No... But it's close. Cha... Xaos.- The serpent nodded. -I wish to be Xaos.-

-Xaos,- Harry said softly. -Basilisk Xaos.-

-I will guard you, Master,- Xaos' emerald eyes looked up at Harry. -But when the King comes, I will do nothing against him but I will do nothing against you either.-

Harry blinked slowly. -I understand.-

Xaos looked slightly sad but then curled up again. -Sleep now.-

-Not yet.- Harry looked up at the shadows. -What did they mean? My dreams... They were visions... What did they mean?-

:The first was a warning. The second a presage.: 

"Will it happen?" While he hadn't seen himself in the second vision, he didn't want to see a future where Sirius was bowing to the Dark Lord, even if Voldemort was bowing to someone else. He didn't want to see it, even if he was dead, he didn't want it to come to pass.

:It does not have to. There are many futures but Master... Please don't let the first come to pass. A variation on the second... But nothing of the first... Please Master!: 

"What are you afraid of?"

:The future... We have no desire to be trapped.: 

"I can't let Sirius bow to Voldemort."

:Then don't but remember the warning - 'Be true to your heart.':
Harry looked down at the wand that sat on the desk in front of him. It was eleven and a half inches of holly that he never thought he would see again. Dumbledore had given it back to him a few days ago with twinkling eyes and a smile that said quite clearly that the Headmaster thought that everything would be okay now.

Harry wasn't so sure. If he hadn't been attacked, maybe everything would have been all right but everything had changed with that. Something inside had changed, and it was more than the ability to suppress his emotions when necessary, and it was more than the fact he now had two bonds with other people, it was something more fundamental.

He almost felt as if he didn't need his wand. But all wizards needed a wand to do magic.

:What about the magic you did as a child?: The shadows both questioned and reminded him.

:That was just childhood stuff when stressed,: Harry responded with the line they had been taught in first year.

:Stressed or not, childhood or not, you performed magic without a wand then, why should you suddenly lose the ability?:

Harry frowned. Why should you lose the ability? It was a very good question. There was no reason at all.

Ah... Harry nodded slowly as he considered it. It was almost too simple. You lost nothing but you gained control and with control came focus and the seeming dependence on wands.

Control and focus meant that you learnt to use the wand. After all it made performing charms easier and after a while you got so used to having a wand that most people just forgot about the ability to do magic without one. Well, maybe forgot was too strong a word, it was more like the ability was out of one's mind since childhood magic wasn't that precise or reliable.

Even so he still felt as if there was something wrong. He didn't need the wand. Every time he used it, there was an itch inside him, something was out of balance. He hadn't actually tried any charms without a wand. For the past few weeks he'd been using Ron's in class and he'd just assumed that the odd sense was due to the fact that the wand wasn't his. But this was his wand and it still felt wrong.

With a sigh, Harry picked up the wand and pocketed it. Whether he needed it or not was not the question at the moment. There were too many people watching for him to experiment now. Later, he would have to do it later and for now, he had to focus on the class even if he was jumpy about using his own wand.

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The Dark Lord Voldemort examined with calculating eyes the map that lay in front of him. It showed the layout of streets in central London and all the buildings stood, rising out of the parchment as small illusions. Small red dots showed where his forces would strike and small blue dots showed where the Ministry's response was expected to be strongest.
He smiled thinly. This would be the opening strike, although they wouldn't know that until too late. A lightning attack on a small unguarded cluster of Muggle Official Buildings would be the start before the attack widened and with one swoop he would isolate Diagon Alley. Then the Ministry would have no choice but to strike. They couldn't afford to lose the Alley and Gringotts. And once they struck his forces everywhere would move.

It was slightly out of character, he had to admit. He hadn't given any warning of this strike. He hadn't been slowly escalating his attacks. Tomorrow, when the first strike came there would be nothing to say that this wasn't like any of hundreds of strikes he'd been co-ordinating recently. There would be no hint of anything until it was too late. By the end of the day, Diagon Alley, Knockturn Alley, Gringotts, St Mungo's, and the main Ministry Offices would be his. He had forces lined up to strike at the Daily Prophet but they were primed to destroy only. The paper would be necessary in the future but he could forego it making wild accusations for the moment.

His attacks would Leave Hogwarts and Hogsmead as the only two focal points of Wizarding in Britain. And once they fell...

His smile widened at the thought but he controlled himself quickly. Despite its separation from the mainland, Britain was the focal point for Magic and once he controlled it, it was a simple step to conquer the whole European Continent no matter how hard the Vampires resisted his rule.

The Vampires...

Voldemort's features became cold. They should have learnt from Xeoaph but it appeared they had taken exception to his demands and were intent on teaching him a lesson. He'd never been too popular with non-human dark creatures, mostly because he knew the truth, that any wizard who wasn't afraid of the dark could defeat them. They were only so powerful and feared because the light let them be. If you were willing to use all your power creatures like Vampires and werewolves were easily controlled.

The Shadows were the only dark creatures that a prepared wizard could not hope to defeat but they were pure dark and even they bowed to their human master.

No... The Vampires would regret their choice. He had no more use for them so perhaps he would endear himself to the Muggles by destroying them utterly.

It was them behind the uprising in his followers. He was sure of it. But at the moment, since the ringleaders hadn't come forth there wasn't a lot he could do about them. He knew they were there and he knew they were being backed by the Vampires.

Severus had warned him of the dissidents but had been unable to give him anything more than a vague idea of what they were protesting against. Something about the purity of blood and the fact that he had betrayed them. The Dark Lord gave a soft sigh which sounded more like a growl as he suppressed the urge to itch at his skin. The power surges hadn't stopped. He supposed the dissidents had a minor point.

He had always insisted upon the purity of blood but at heart he had always believed in the purity of power. Blood meant nothing without power and the will to use it. It was just that those of the blood usually had more power and they had the will of lifetime's knowledge. Their beliefs weren't tainted by any Muggle upbringing.

But those of the blood without power were worthless. And he had always maintained that. Many of his followers had killed their squib relatives to reassure him of their loyalty and devotion but he had never demanded that his followers kill their Mudblood relatives. It was only the Mudblood and
Muggle relatives of those who refused to follow him that he destroyed.

Some of his followers had noticed this but it appeared some remained stubbornly shortsighted. His red eyes narrowed. Those who were foolish enough to strike against him would pay the price. He would annihilate them, expunge their existence from the world. Wives, husbands, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, cousins, fathers, mothers. There would be nothing left of their lines once he was through. No one who dared to raise their power against him would survive. No one.

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Lucius looked at the vial before him. Despite all his plans he was still trembling. This was the moment, the moment everything had been leading up to. Once he swallowed the contents of the vial he could not turn back. Once he swallowed it, everything was set in motion and he couldn't afford delays for by the time the sun set on the morrow, it would be setting on one Dark Lord's rule and the night which rose would be the inauguration of his rule.

He had checked and rechecked his plans. Tomorrow the Dark Lord was making his assault on all targets except Hogwarts and Hogsmead. He planned to regather his strength before taking on the premier magic school in the world. At least that's what he'd told his followers but Lucius knew he was trying to keep Potter safe until he could abduct him. "Foolishness!" He snarled. Potter was nothing. He was an obstacle that shouldn't have been allowed to exist. He was a weak minded pathetic individual whose only redeeming feature was the fact he was a pure blood.

"Sacrifices must be made," Lucius said. And Potter was an acceptable sacrifice. It wasn't necessarily the boy's fault. Lucius was mature enough to admit that but he couldn't be allowed to live any longer. By himself he was simply an above average wizard but it was the symbol he presented to the wizarding world that was too dangerous to be allowed to continue.

Potter offered them hope. Hope that the darkness was not all encompassing. And that it could be fought. It was that hope that couldn't be allowed to continue and if the Dark Lord wasn't going to destroy that hope then he would.

And so it had to be tomorrow. When the Dark Lord struck, he too would strike. Not at Hogwarts. Despite his desire to remove the Potter pest he was wise enough to realise that the school was far too well protected. Once he was in control of the rest of the magic world he could starve them out. Hogwarts would not be attacked by his forces tomorrow but for a completely different reason than the Dark Lords.

He picked up the vial, remembering Ikhan's words. When you strike, call us and we will come. The promise of an elder...

And he remembered the other words... You are powerful Lucius Malfoy but as you are you could never defeat Lord Voldemort. His power is far more than you understand but this will allow you to stand equal for a time so you must make the best of it and crush him while you can.

"I will stand equal to him," Lucius said the words but there was a small tremble in his voice as he brought the vial to his lips. "I will stand equal to him," he repeated as he swallowed the blood.

The vial was heavy. It had always been heavy but the blood that slicked its way down his throat settled heavily in his stomach. He gasped and clutched at his midrift, struggling to breathe as he felt the power roll outwards.
It was pain greater than anything he had felt, even the Cruitias curse didn't hurt like this. It was as if every cell in his body was dying. The blood power traced its way outwards and he could feel it pulsing forwards. As it moved up his throat he choked and clawed at his skin, digging in his nails as he primatively sought to open his wind pipe. The pain continued unabated and he couldn't even scream.

It was nothing but pain. But beneath it all he could feel the power singing to him. It had sung to him in the vial but now... Even while it killed his cells it sung to him, a sweet lullaby and he felt warm.

"A little longer..."

Blood-shot grey eyes snapped open at the voice and Lucius was confronted by calculating blue eyes that were watching his pain with abstract interest.

"It's nearly over," the being said softly.

Almost as soon as Lucius comprehended the words through the pain, it vanished and everything returned to normal, except that now he could feel everything. His blood rushed through his body and he could feel the cells bumping into each other and everything as they circulated through him. He could hear the wet rushing noise as his blood surged through him. And he could feel, in every cell of his being the power. He raised his hand and wasn't surprised to see small flickers of energy dancing between his fingers. He looked back at the being who now sat opposite him.

"My name is Xeoaph," the vampire introduced himself.

"Ah," Lucius nodded.

"You needn't worry. The deal is still on. I just wanted to meet the man who will betray his master."

"He betrayed us first."

"Indeed," Xeoaph sighed. "But you still do not understand why."

"Potter."

"Yes, Harry Potter. The one being who's will the Dark Lord will bow to."

"He would go that far?"

"He doesn't really have a choice."

"What is the boy?"

Xeoaph smiled. "That is the question," he murmured. "I am here because I wish to confirm something."

"Oh?"

"Harry Potter. What are your intentions towards him?"

Lucius smiled coldly. "Right after I thank him for distracting the Dark Lord long enough for me to do this, I intend to gut him like a butchered hog. After that, I'll cut off his head and crucify his body before I present it to those who still have hope."

"Ah..." Xeoaph's eyes narrowed. "You can only do that if you disrupt his power. You don't understand the reason your Lord will bow to him."
"And I don't want to!"

The vampire rose. "There is still time. You must strike quickly though, for if you allow too much time to elapse, your Lord will call upon his personal reinforcement and not even my power can help you stand against that power. If the Shadows know life, you have lost Lucius."

With those final words Xeoaph vanished after giving Lucius one last penetrating look.
As I've said earlier, this is the first time this fic has been posted here but I actually wrote it quite some time ago.

It was while I was writing this chapter that 'Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix' was released.

What that actually means, is not much, except to show how old the fic is but it also means that I lingered a little on St Mungo's and a bit on the Ministry Buildings because we then had at least some structure for them. If things seem a little strange for the upcoming chapters, please forgive me.

Voldemort smiled as he felt the apparation of the Auror's. His forces had taken out the Muggle buildings easily before the Ministry was even aware of them and then they had continued on to the Muggle entry of Diagon alley. The Ministry had to respond then but by the time they had, his Death Eaters had already entered Alley. The Aurors were coming in exactly where he had anticipated them and his forces that were lying in wait would have no trouble disposing of them once he gave the signal.

At the moment he was standing in the middle of the Alley. He'd been here before. He'd just never been here with armed forces behind him. It hadn't changed too much. Some of the store displays were different but those stores essential to wizarding life were the same as he remembered from the first time he had come here. The owls were different, some of the potion ingredients had been moved but the stores hadn't changed. Even Ollivander's dusty windows were the same.

"Mr Riddle."

The Dark Lord turned slowly at the voice and found himself looking into silver eyes.

"Mr Ollivander," he greeted the wizard.

The aged wizard didn't even blink as he looked up and down the length of the Alley and Voldemort knew those silver eyes were seeing everything, even those Death Eaters who were still in hiding. "I see you've been busy," he commented before looking back to Voldemort with calculating eyes. "And you have given up your wand," he added.

"For the greater gain."

Ollivander smiled and nodded. "I no longer have the other wand," he said.

"Mr Potter's," Voldemort nodded. "I know."

"Dumbledore brought it to me to repair."
"Were you successful?"

"Partially although probably not in the way he wishes."

Voldemort felt something strange at that. It wasn't elation and it wasn't depression but something like the two of them together. "Things never happen the way he wishes," the Dark Lord said coldly but his venom was not directed at Ollivander.

"Sometimes people wish to be blind."

"He was in a position where he could not afford to be blind. Was my pain somehow less because of who I am?"

Ollivander looked on, his eyes showing nothing. "No," the wizard answered truthfully. "Dumbledore still does not know why."

"Then I will tell him at the moment of death. Even he should then see the irony of truth."

"Yes, I believe he will. I understand now," Ollivander nodded as he turned back towards his store.

"Understand?" Voldemort's red eyes glowed dangerously.

"Take care of him although I believe he will take care of you even if you have not yet chosen to reveal everything."

"In time he will know."

"Yes, he will eventually know that your understanding could only come through experience. Come again, Mr Riddle, come again."

With that Ollivander closed the door to his store, disappearing into the gloom inside.

Voldemort inclined his head a fraction towards the man - Ollivander was not a wizard you crossed, no matter how powerful you were - before he turned his attention back to his campaign, his mind somehow clearer for the encounter.

The Aurors thought they had him surrounded. They thought he was just another Death Eater. He could smell the fear on the young one's but he could also sense their assurance. After all, he was but one Death Eater surrounded.

"Show your hands!" The lead Auror ordered.

Voldemort complied, holding his hands out, raising them slowly to the hood of his robe. He pushed it back and was rewarded as recognition flooded into the eyes of the Auror. A small chill smile settled on his features as he allowed the magic to spark between his fingers before he cast it out, catching the Auror squarely. The man fell but by the time his body hit the ground the Dark Lord was already moving. It was time to show these insipid fools exactly what was true power.

With the lightning reflexes of a cobra he lunged left, not even pausing as he landed precise blows on the woman. Her wand clattered uselessly to the ground as she clutched her throat, desperately trying to draw breath. A punch landed directly between the eyes of another Auror and they fell before two others managed to line their wands up on him. He flicked his hand out, catching the spells and with a peculiar twist of his wrist he sent them back, amplified before he ducked and swept the legs out from under three others who had decided to try a more physical attack.

As he fought the Dark Lord frowned. He could integrate physical and magical fighting seamlessly
but he had never liked the image of himself doing it. This was one thing a traditional classical education would have helped with, and the one thing he was jealous, even after all this time, towards those purebloods who had such an education. Malfoy... Snape... Pucey... Zabini... They were all old wizarding names and they all learnt sword play. Lucius was especially graceful, if pushed adequately but only Severus could really do that and he hadn't allowed his servants to fight that way for years. He could easily hold his own against them, and defeating them required just a little more power but their styles were graceful. He always felt that his was clumsy, effective but clumsy. Growing up in the orphanage had taught him the common way to fight. It was rough, it was low and it was tense. He could never seem to relax enough to make his movements flow.

Bemused by his thoughts, Voldemort paused, pushing back the remaining Aurors by sheer force of will. He snapped his fingers, hauling the Aurors into the air and ripping their wands from them. He twisted his wrist, holding his palm up as he locked the Aurors into position. They hung in the air like slabs of meat. Their robes swept against the ground. As two red robed Elites stepped into a guarding position, Voldemort apparated away.

The Alley was his. It was time for the Ministry to fall.

"That's the signal! Let's move."

"Wait," Draco's voice was soft but it was heard. He held up a small ball like device that was flashing. "It is the signal... But we should wait until the battle is fully underway. Once the idiot teachers are distracted, or better yet, once they've rushed off we can strike."

"How long?" Crabbe was impatient.

"About an hour or so... We should have news by then."

In the corner Blaise smiled as did a few of the older Slytherins who were going to help. The group nodded. "We wait."

"We wait," Draco repeated, stroking his wand. "Tonight though, it ends. A new Dark Lord will arise and that pesky Potter dies.

Lucius looked down at the pulsing device in his hand. Around him the assembled Death Eaters cheered at their Lord's call to arms. The Dark Lord had left him charge of this battle group and was expecting his forces to attack St Mungo's, joining several others who would make the assault from opposing directions. No one was to escape and only those who offered leathal resistance were to be killed. The Dark Lord wanted as many 'followers' to survive as possible.

The elder Malfoy had feigned honour when given the task although inwardly he seethed. He was a senior Death Eater, he deserved more than to be attacking the weak. But at least the Dark Lord had recognised that he should lead. Lucius smiled. He would lead. Before the night was over he would lead the Dark. In the midst of the battle his forces would strike and he would face off against the Dark Lord and everyone, from the most loyal Death Eaters, to the still surviving Ministry Aurors would see his triumph but for now he still had to make the call to arms.

He held up the glass, it's pulsing light warm through his glove. "By this sign our Lord calls us to resume the battle that was paused with his downfall. By this sign we shall retake the rightful place of purebloods as the rulers of the Wizarding World and then we shall crush the Muggles. Rise up now
and strike at those who would oppress you. Rise up and fight!"

Around the darkened room there were cheers at his speech before the assembled Death Eaters began apparating. Several stayed behind a few moments more, meeting Lucius' eyes. They were his chosen leaders. He nodded at them before apparating himself. The time to fight was now.

It was relatively quiet at St Mungo's although Lucius could see that security wards keeping Muggles out had been broken but temporary illusions had been placed and two lesser Death Eaters were flanking the brief. Lucius strode past them, his wand at the ready but as he continued further in all he saw were stunned patients and Healers lying in pools of lime green. Every now and then he would pass a Death Eater who had been stationed to guard but so far the Dark Lords plan was proceeding smoothly.

Lucius hid a smile. The Dark Lords plan..? He wondered which Dark Lord historians would attribute the plan to but then decided he didn't care. Plans didn't matter, only the battles outcome mattered. He reached into his robes and pulled forth a small mirror, taping it with his wand to activate it.

Voices issued from it and he listened with a critical ear as the other attack squads reported in.

"...West wings fallen..."

"There's still resistance in the east ward, fourth floor. We're over coming it but some Auror's have barricaded themselves into a ward..."

"Send extra troops to the East Ward," Lucius ordered and was pleased to see two younger Death Eaters salute him before they trooped out. He tapped the device again, widening its area of communication so that he could report in. "My Lord," he began respectfully when the small glass ball flashed once to indicate that he had the Dark Lords attention. "St Mungo's is almost yours. There is some minor resistance from the East Ward but it is being put down even as I speak."

"Very good Lucius," Voldemort's tone seemed happy and Lucius was hard put to refrain from curling his lip in disgust. He wasn't a dog but the Dark Lord was treating him as such. "Fortify your own position. Ministry forces are responding."

"Yes, My Lord," Malfoy responded, inwardly growling. He could see those Death Eaters loyal to him moving into position but right at the moment those loyal to Voldemort were surrounding him. He looked around. "Fortify our positions and drag the Head Healer here. If the Ministry want a fight, then they'd better be ready to lose their Healers."

There were dark smiles around him and he was pleased to see several lime robed forms being levitated into a central position. Lucius raised the communication sphere again, listening as reports continued to flow towards the Dark Lord. Over all the attacks were proceeding well and he couldn't help a small surge of satisfaction. The more conquered now, the less he would have to revisit.

"...we're being pushed back from the Halls of Records..."

"...they've barricaded the Ministers Office..."

"...Muggle Relations wings have been captured..."

"Auror's have sealed the Department of Mysteries..."

Lucius smiled. Things were progressing well, despite the seeming resistance he knew that trapped Aurors were dead Aurors. With an odd wave of his wand he let the communicator globe drop. It
shattered on the polished floor causing several Death Eaters to turn and look at him. But by then it was too late. Around him had gathered his loyal Death Eaters and in a blaze of stunning spells and *Avada Kedrava*'s those loyal to the Dark Lord fell. He reached into his robes and brought forth a second communicator sphere. He didn't even bother to tap it with his wand to activate it but instead stretched forth a small amount of borrowed power. It flashed red but then settled on a steady glow.

"Attack," he murmured the word, knowing the order was what Xeoaph's forces were waiting for.

Throughout Britain, the darkness rose.

--------------------------------------------
Harry jumped as another log on the large common room fire popped. He'd been jumpy all day. It wasn't his wand. He still didn't feel right using it but he had grown accustomed to that sensation and had found that he could relive it by performing small spells without his wand. He hadn't done anything more strenuous than a few Lumos and Nox charms but he had found that they released the tension he was feeling. But his current jitters weren't caused by that.

He frowned slightly as he recalled the last warning the shadows had given him. Two visions... Two visions of the future... But one they didn't want and the other he didn't want.

But in the one they didn't want he had given himself a warning to be true to his heart and that combined with the other warnings the shadows had given him were confusing. Danger was stalking his beloved. That's what they had insisted. Danger in the form of rebellion but that didn't make any sense.

He shook his head. That wasn't what was bothering him... Or rather it was, but it was only a part of it. Another log cracked on the fire and he jumped again, earning a glare from Snuffles as his foot jerked.

Harry hadn't been sure how the Gryffindors would take to Snuffles but after he had out pranked Fred and George, leaving the Weasley twins with brilliant neon pink hair, and fluorescent orange skin the other Gryffindors had treated him like one of their own. After all, anyone who could out prank Fred and George and who didn't say a single word about them breaking curfew was brilliant in their books. Snuffles wasn't quite the mascot for Gryffindor Tower but he was coming close.

"Sorry..." he murmured before returning to his contemplation. The feeling that something was wrong had been growing all day. It had been a tiny bud in the morning but now it was fully-grown. He closed his eyes, turning inwards.

The bond with Ginny was still there and it was still closed. He could sense her dimly as a blue presence. They had spoken about what she had done. With her in his head they could hardly not talk about it and for the moment they had agreed that they would leave things as they were. He knew she didn't want that but he wasn't ready to have her with him all the time so it was the only choice. He liked her, he really did. But like was not love and while he knew she had done this in his best interests it was a huge step for him to take. In future he would open the link but he would do it slowly, so that they could both get used to each other.

At the moment though he could tell without even looking that she was studying hard. She had an essay for Transfiguration due and was working whole-heartedly to get it done. She was slightly worried about it but that was normal school worry and it wasn't leaking over into his mind. The edginess he felt wasn't coming from her.

He sighed as he moved his focus towards Red Eyes. The bond with him wasn't fully open but it wasn't as closed as Ginny's was. It was almost as if this was the more superficial bond but he knew it was because he hadn't taken the next step. He was holding himself back but the other person didn't seem to mind. He concentrated. Their presence was with him all the time but today they had seemed distracted. Sometimes during class he had almost felt them nudging him towards the answers and he
He just *knew* things. He didn't know how but what he knew was extensive and even the things he had struggled with now just seemed to make sense. He knew how to transfigure a raccoon into a rodent and he knew that adding salamander blood to a strengthening potion after the eighth clockwise turn meant that it was less than worthless but if you added it with a ladle made of the heart wood of an oak on the ninth clockwise turn then the potion would be twice as powerful. Snape had been most upset when he'd told him that but had just pursed his lips and moved on without saying another word.

Red Eyes had been distracted today but that wasn't unusual. Red Eyes was often distracted but the secure feeling of love that Harry could sense was the same. But even though nothing had changed he was jumpy. It was something to do with his unknown lover. Something was wrong with them. He was sure of it.

Softly Harry growled in frustration and stood up. Snuffles jumped up beside him as he strode to the portrait hole. "I just need to think," he said to Sirius and Xaos, who was coiled around his arm, as they all scrambled out of the hole.

Snuffles nodded and Xaos squeezed his arm reassuringly as the Fat Lady swung closed again.

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"Water! Bring water!"

"Forget water, just bespell it."

"We won't let you do that."

"What?!"

About twenty black robed people stood in three rows, arrayed so that all the rows could attack and defend without interfering with the others. "Our Master wishes your destruction."

"*Stupefy*!" The curse was shouted by several harried new-comers.

"*Protes*!" The second row of Death Eaters cast the shield charm over the entire group.

"Elliot! What are you still doing here?" One of the group that had shouted the 'Stupefy' curse yelled at one of the wizards who had been trying to put out the fire.

"Editor, we have to defend the presses!"

"Idiot! If we are being attacked, everyone else is. Get out there and get the news! We'll protect the presses!"

"Hahahaha! A noble sentiment but do you truly believe you can fight us?"

The Editor laughed. "You're just a bunch errand boys. This paper's seen Dark Lords come and go. What makes *you* believe your master's any different?"

One of the sub-editors turned. "Bryant, haven't you left yet?"

"B... But..."

"Nothing has ever stopped us from publishing and nothing ever will."
"It's hard to publish if you're dead!" The lead Death Eater spoke again, as the forward row cast 'Avada Kedrava,' scattering the gathered editors.

The head Editor jumped towards Elliot, "Get going boy! Or that front page won't be yours!"

Elliot blinked and watched for a moment more as the Editors regrouped, casting their own curses back towards the assembled Death Eaters, striking only the multi-colour shields but holding their own while another two serendipitously began putting out the fires in the presses. "That page is mine."

"That's the spirit, me-boy."

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Voldemort surveyed the Atrium with critical eyes. Most of it was still intact although some parts were blackened where a curse had gone astray. The damage so far was a lot less than he had anticipated but then he reminded himself that the Aurors had only begun to respond. His forces had caught the night shift unawares and had managed to occupy a goodly portion of the Ministry before they had responded. But they were beginning to fight now. He could feel the Auror's apparating in, their battle squads tightly defined and their movements professional.

He smiled. Attacking the Ministry meant that only the best would respond and he was looking forward to savouring this battle. He drew his dagger in preparation as his loyal Death Eaters moved around him. He had been pushed back from the Halls of Records and some Auror's had barricaded the Ministers Office but those were just token places. If you wanted to conquer the Ministry you had to take the Department of Mysteries and the Aurors who had sealed it were going to learn just how powerful he was.

He had considered just destroying the Ministry, blowing the entire complex into nothingness, leaving one gaping hole but that could not be covered up and the Muggles would know and he wasn't quite ready for that, so he would have to capture the Ministry Department by Department.

"Julianad, Yhathi, you are curse breakers, go and unseal the Department of Mysteries," he murmured the order. "Linme, Rugan, Deoiva, Paiska, go with them and guard. You may kill the Auror's but do not damage what is in there. There are things I wish to recover." His named servants bowed before they melted away into the shadows, leaving him accompanied by three guards.

"There!" The shout was ringing and came from the upper balconies.

Crimson eyes flashed upwards before the Dark Lord narrowed his eyes and waved his free hand, deflecting the spells that had been rained down upon him. He heard but didn't acknowledge the awed and frightened groan that passed through the younger Aurors. The older ones, the one's who remembered him just gritted their teeth with determination and continued to advance. He flicked a couple of spells back but frowned as he felt more apparation signatures in areas his forces controlled before he relaxed. It appeared someone would be receiving his thanks for sending reinforcements. Perhaps the forces he had sent to attack the Daily Prophet had destroyed the insipid paper faster than anticipated.

There was a burst of static from his communicator but he ignored it as the Auror's poured on to the Atrium floor. They'd probably cast some sort of interference charm, not that it would do them any good since his communicators were charmed against any regular disruption and it would take power equal to his to break their charms. Instead he nodded to his Death Eater guards as he swept forward to meet the advance, casting several curses into the gathered forces. Barring Hogwarts, this was the final battle and he intended to enjoy what fight the Ministry could offer. It would be a pleasurable
diversion before he crushed Dumbledore and those idiots within his ranks who thought they could betray him. Once he was finished up, he could then amuse himself inventing new ways to torture those who had attacked his beloved at Hogwarts, unless of course, Harry took up all his time.

He smiled, thinking of emerald eyes as three Avada Kedavra's sped his way. Perhaps that was why Harry's eyes were so appealing - they hid the lure of death within their depths. He blocked the curses with his dagger, Slytherin's personal weapon of choice and one of the rubies adorning the hilt became an emerald, containing the magic and by then it was too late, he was among the Auror's fighting with curse and dagger.

His movements were like lightning and he could smell the fear of the Aurors as he moved amongst them. It was in the subtle sweat covering them, the crack of bones breaking from his blows, the thwack of curse impacting with flesh and their screams and groans of pain and loss. He was far more than human and far more than a match for them. He had known it, but it was almost disappointing that the best the Ministry could offer were not even a diversion. Voldemort almost sighed as he reined back his true strength. He needn't waste his energy destroying those that to his eyes were already dead.

And so it was that the curse, aimed for his shoulder blades startled him. He pitched forward but did not fall and turned smiling softly, summoning his power, intending to congratulate the foolish Auror before he blasted them into oblivion, and was surprised.

It lasted an instant before it was replaced by cold anger as the realisation came to him - the traitors were moving early. Inwardly he admired their planning. It was a superlative piece of timing, as they would have marshalled themselves while he was marshalling his true forces, their rebellion hidden within legitimate gatherings of his forces. And now any ground he had conquered would fall to them if they could defeat him. Perhaps this wasn't his last battle with the Ministry. The Dark Lord felt a small surge of anticipation pass through him. Now that the Ministry knew how dangerous he was, perhaps they would train their Aurors better so that they could offer him a true fight next time.

For now though, he had a rebellion to crush.

"MacNair..." he whispered, extending a small pulse of power through the Dark Mark to the man.

As expected, the man screamed as the skull and snake burned into his arm constricted. Dissenters rarely bothered to think... He marked his forces as his own. They were tied to him. They could not run. They could not hide. And they could not escape. If they were powerful enough they could block his presence but only if he wasn't actively seeking them. Their oaths to him, enforced by his Mark were not something that could be reneged upon. His mark was a dark magical contract. And they always seemed to forget that.

"MacNair," he whispered the name again. "Where is your leader?"

"I am here, My Lord."
Mendacious Darkness Strikes

Chapter Notes

If you don’t recognise the curses in this chapter, I made them up and there is a list of them at the bottom, which says how I came up with them and a short description of what they are meant to do although some will be almost self-explanatory. I’m not that good at Latin that I was going to look up particular words and phrases.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Possession
Chapter XXXVII - Mendacious Darkness Strikes
-----------------------------------------------

"Lucius..." Voldemort murmured.

"My Lord," the man repeated again as he stepped forward, his wand drawn.

Around them Death Eaters and Auror's still fought but it was unclear who the Death Eaters were fighting for. Red eyes flickered, examining everything in the Atrium again and the Dark Lord smiled grimly. He was surrounded. "So the Vampires offered you aide?"

"You betrayed us!" Lucius snapped, ignoring the question. "But I am merciful, my Lord, you will be remembered as a great Dark Lord."

"Remembered?" Voldemort spat, gathering his power. "A fine mercy... One I will not grant your line." He struck through the Dark Mark, driving his anger and hatred through it towards those who were not loyal. Screams echoed around the room as Death Eaters fell, clawing at their arms.

"No!" Lucius snarled, bringing his wand up, it's tip glowing orange. Streams of magic flew out from it and wrapped themselves around the Death Eaters who were screaming in pain. Other streams just disappeared into nothingness, heading towards Lucius' forces.

"I see, they are giving you more than aide."

"The power is mine now."

"Try it!" Voldemort invited, spreading his arms and allowing his power to surge through him. Around him his aura flared into existence and for an instant it wasn't a human standing in his position but a giant serpent. Flames curled off him and his skin mottled as he felt himself become the snake.

"I will, my Lord," Lucius said as his allowed his own power to flare.

"Expelliramus!"

Lucius dodged left as he cast his own opening curse. "Eviscate!"

The two curses sped towards each other and met with a dull boom. Dust blew up around them, clearing a circle for their combat.
"Darkshale!"

"Luminos!" Lucius countered before adding his own curse, "Petrifis!"

"Ohayo!"

"Jawlock!"

"Masticular! Serpensamind!" Voldemort hissed as he cast the mind-destroying curse, reputedly one of Grindlewald's favourite charms but one that Dark Lord could never draw true power from.

"Mongooshield! Avada Kedavra!"

"Crucio!"

"Avada Kedavra!"

"Avada Kedavra!"

"You've learnt well, Lucius... It's almost a pity to kill you," Voldemort purred. "And you have grown weak. The Dark Lord I followed would have had me dead with the first curse. But Potter's and Wormtail's blood has weakened you."

"So that's what it's about." Crimson eyes narrowed. "You still have much to learn. My father's bone was used of necessity, Wormtail's flesh because he alone could not betray me and Potter's blood..."

He paused, looking deep into the shadows. "You may come to understand his power soon," Voldemort concluded raising his hand once more and allowing power to collect there.

Lucius smiled. "I doubt it. His power will come to an end soon," he said softly before he flicked his wand, murmuring several curses.

Red eyes widened fractionally before Voldemort relaxed slightly, countering Lucius' curses. No one and nothing was going near his beloved, not with the shadows standing guard, not this time. Around him the Death Eaters had stopped fighting and with the Auror's were now forming three distinct groups watching the dual. And even though their hoods were drawn and their masks on, he knew who had betrayed him. There would be no return to the fold for those traitors, not now, not when they had dared to actually raise their power against him. The openings in his ranks created by their departure could be filled easily enough. The Dark Lord gestured, red energy flew from his fingertips but Lucius dodged, drawing his sword as Voldemort twisted his dagger, holding it against his forearm.

They clashed with a hail of sparks but the conflict wasn't purely physical, curses flew in the closer quarters more often striking their target than those cast in the distance. After the shock of the initial meeting they pulled back slightly, circling before closing again. Lucius growled, pulling more power from his blood, feeling it sing to him as it hardened his muscles, giving him the strength to hold up against the pressure the Dark Lord was exerting.

"I think I'll give Draco to Harry," Voldemort purred and almost laughed as Lucius' eyes flashed in anger. The Dark Lord lunged forward, slipping under the blond man's guard with a cross body slash. Lucius flung himself backwards so the dagger only caught his robes but the curse caught him square on the chest.

Lucius coughed blood and spat, "Assuming your precious Potter lives!" He snarled summoning still more power allowing the energy to ripple outwards, driving everything before it.
Voldemort crossed his arms before him, his robes falling back gathering at his elbows. He hissed as the energy passed over him. The Vampire’s blood mixed with someone of Lucius’ power was potent but the strength it offered didn’t last forever and the Dark Lord was willing to bet that Xeoaph hadn’t told Malfoy of all the side effects. "You have become powerful, Lucius, but not powerful enough." He hissed the spell in parceltongue, calling on his true power as Slytherin’s heir. Iridescence flared around him and then contracted, wrapping him in a protective cocoon.

Grey eyes burned red and Lucius gritted his teeth. "This is just the beginning, my Lord."

"I would be disappointed if it was anything but," Voldemort purred as his former servant summoned his own shield. "Let us begin," he intoned formally as his power collected in his eyes, making them burn even more deeply crimson. The magic streams opened themselves to him and everything shifted, becoming vibrant, alive. Their audience became large multicoloured masses of power, each colour swirling around showing awe and anticipation but none were strong enough to interfere with this battle. Lucius was an intense beacon before him, yellow, burning. His power was flowing around him but the Dark Lord could see the points where he was being feed extra energy. The lines ran over the ground, faint but visible to him, leading off to the Vampire who had provided the blood. It was a nice piece of work and to Lucius it would seem that the power was coming from within. Voldemort smiled... The blond really did not understand the consequences of the power that had been given to him.

"Crucio!" He hissed the spell, the sudden desire to see Lucius writhing in pain taking over.

The curse flew true and struck the dome that surrounded the blond man. Malfoy laughed, confident, as he felt his shield give slightly but maintain its cohesion. The Dark Lord's eyes narrowed as he watched the curse rebound, flying through the darkened Atrium, hitting a support column, marking it with a vicious burn. "Masonitroy!" He said the charm easily and was pleased to see Lucius frown slightly. The second spell again was on target and hit the shield, rebounding at a different angle. Voldemort altered his aim slightly "Masonitroy!" He cast again, aiming to the left of his former servant before casting again, this time aiming to the right. "Serpentosia!" The Dark Lord added the final curse, smiling slightly as a huge basilisk materialised between them. The serpent pulled itself up, readying itself to strike but holding back at the mental command of its master.

Lucius admired his shield as he felt the Dark Lord’s charms impact but he couldn't help but feel a slight curiosity as the man cast the stone destroying charm. It would have no effect on his shield but the Dark Lord's eyes were burning as he cast it again and again in quick succession. It wasn't until he heard the crack that he understood, but by then it was too late. The first 'Masonitroy' had weakened the ceiling support charms and the follow up charms had driven through them, and now stone was raining down. He gritted his teeth, pumping energy into his shield as small pebbles pinged against it. They were quickly followed by larger stones which ricocheted and bounced around the Atrium, some few crashing into the hapless groups of spectators. Lucius groaned at the strain. Shield charms were good against magical attacks but physical impacts were a completely different form of energy and blocking them required much more strength. Strength he wasn't sure he could spare even with the Vampire's blood coursing through his system.

"No!" Lucius growled. He had more than enough power. The only question was how he used it. He just had to be as efficient as the Dark Lord. And to do that, all he had to do was use everything to his advantage. That was where the question of superiority would be answered. The outcome would be decided by the one who could use everything - even a shattered shield.

He reached out, mentally re-establishing his link with this failing shield. It would be gone soon, and he had disassociated his power with it so that the backwash of its destruction wouldn’t affect him. But he could use the destruction and the remains of the shield. The charm cracked but he didn't let
the magical pieces fall. Instead, Lucius grabbed at them, and turned them ninety degrees, honing the cracked edges to a razor point. With a growl he hurled the shards at the Dark Lord, bypassing the Basilisk by flinching right before he threw them.

Voldemort felt his red eyes widen slightly. It appeared that all his insistence that his servants use everything to their advantage was paying off. Humph! Well, Lucius would learn who was a true master of magic. He reached out, stretching his powers and pulling the energy to him. The shards flew at him and impacted with his barrier, driving themselves through the iridescent light to strike at his body.

He felt one, press into his arm and snarled, as his blood dripped to pool at his feet but he continued to gather his power. The wound was nothing.

"First blood to me," Lucius purred ignoring the amazed gasp that came from their audience although deep inside he acknowledged it. He had hurt the Dark Lord, something years ago he would never have conceived of but he was inexperienced then and now he knew, first blood was not victory and it would take a lot more to bring down Voldemort. Around his former Lord power was still gathering in visible waves.

It was warm. Voldemort sighed at the feeling. The power gathering to him was warm, like the sun on rocks in summer. He closed his eyes briefly as he felt it but they flew open a moment later when he felt something else. More energy was coming to him, focused on his injured arm. This power wasn't warm. It was cold and angry but its anger was not directed towards him. Where his energy was red, this power was green. It wrapped itself around his arm forming a solid green band that seeped inwards. It didn't hurt and once the band was gone, so was the wound. Voldemort smiled and reached out, :Who..?:

:Hmm?:

:Thank you.: The Dark Lord smiled softly as he felt the shadow.

:I told you he unconsciously wishes to protect you but I cannot do much more.: Voldemort nodded, sending a small pulse of emotion towards Harry, feeling a confused but contented reply before he turned his attention towards Lucius again. The boy was progressing and would be ready when the time came but for now his confusion was endearing.

The Dark Lord's power shimmered around him. Brilliant red flames illuminated his body and rippled over his robes. "I suppose I should give you some credit, Lucius," he began conversationally. "You are only the second person to successfully land an attack upon me." He gestured to his arm and to the now non-existent wound. "But in landing your attack you have awakened power..."

"The Shadows do not yet know life." The voice rang with conviction from above.

All eyes in the Atrium turned towards it to see a group of beings with ivory white skin looking down from one of the balconies. "Xeoaph..." Lucius murmured.

"Vampire," Voldemort said strongly. "Watching your pet?"

"Pet..?" Xeoaph shook his head. "You misunderstand, Lord Voldemort."

"Puppet then?" Red eyes glittered at the rising apprehension from Lucius.

"Nothing of the sort," Xeoaph smiled himself. "You do not understand. The blood was given freely. There was only one stipulation."
"I'm honoured," Voldemort laughed. "But you forget, I have your blood as well."

"But not my backing."

"Ah..." The Dark Lord sighed as his summoned basilisk wrapped itself around him protectively, hissing spitefully up at the Vampire. "Thankfully, I have never needed that."

"The Shadows do not back you either."

Voldemort nodded easily, acknowledging the statement.

"You still wait for them?" There was a slightly incredulous note in the ancient Vampire's voice.

"I have time." Voldemort frowned. "You did not truly believe I took your blood for power?" It was the Dark Lord's turn to be disbelieving.

"What else is there?"

"Eternity."

The Vampire nodded in understanding. "The Shadows do not back you," he repeated.

"I have time and it is later than you believe." Voldemort held up one hand, gathering a small ball of green energy that flared briefly before dissipating. His demonstration brought hisses from the lesser Vampires gathered around their Master but Xeoaph remained silent. Finally though the Vampire elder's eyes flickered and he turned his attention to Lucius.

"If the Shadows know life, you have lost, Lucius," Xeoaph repeated his warning before gesturing towards his children. They nodded at him before they spread out watching the battle. "It ends here, Voldemort," the vampire whispered softly, reinforcing the Ministries anti-apparation wards.

The basilisk hissed and began to uncoil itself but the Dark Lord placed a calming hand on its flank. -I will protect you, my King,- it hissed at him.

-Just keep them away,- he murmured the instruction before turning back to Lucius noting the vague look on the blond. "Don't worry Lucius, my pet is instructed to keep interlopers away." He cast a significant eye towards their audience, lingering on Ikhan and Lucius' loyal Death Eaters. "It would be a shame if something was to interfere, now wouldn't it?"

"I wouldn't have it any other way," Lucius nodded as he felt more power flow into him from Xeoaph. It felt like power without limit and he trembled as he gathered it to him. He didn't need anyone's help to defeat the Dark Lord, nor did he want it. If someone interfered, it would only lead to dissent in the future. He would defeat his former Master alone and then he alone would be proclaimed the next Dark Lord. "I don't need anyone."

"Good," Voldemort hissed, once more gathering his power. "To the death."

Lucius nodded. "To the death."

Chapter End Notes

Curse Explanations
Evisucate – Variant on word 'Eviscerate' meaning to disembowel.
Darkshale – Casts darkness around the individual targeted meaning that they can't see and thus can't fight
Luminos – Illuminates the individual who was hit or nearly hit by Darkshale – note based off Lumos
Petrifis – Petrification spell, but unlike the one Hermione used on Neville, this one uses time petrification so the person or thing affected ages. A person would become something akin to a dried up mummy.
Ohayo – 'Good Morning' in Japanese – Counter for Petrifis curse. I couldn’t think of anything else but it makes a strange sort of logic to me.
Jawlock – Locks the jaws of the targeted person so they can't speak and therefore can't cast magic.
Masticular – Variant on word 'Masticulate' meaning to chew and I thought a nice counter for something that locked the jaws.
Serpensamind – 'There's a serpent in my Mind.' A curse that destroys the mind of the one targeted while allowing the caster to leech information and power from the effected mind. A suitable charm for the Serpent King
Mongooshield – Mongoose hunt snakes so I thought it was a good counter charm for Serpensamind.
Masonitroy – Mason and Destroy – Destroy Masonary, destroy stone. A powerful charm that shatters stone. No real combat purpose, except when you can have stone dropped on to you from a height.
Sirius looked up at Harry. His claws clicked upon the stone as he trotted beside his Godson. The boy... He shook his head. Harry was no longer a boy; he had grown up. He had had no choice but to grow but he was still utterly transparent in some ways. And Sirius could see that he was worried about something. He was tense. There was a slight creasing of his forehead and his lips were pulled taunt. Snuffles growled slightly and he changed his form as he walked.

"Harry," Sirius began. "What's wrong?" Not the most original opening but direct and to the point and while he hadn't always been there for his Godson, he did know enough that you had to be direct.

"Harry..?" he asked again after receiving no response.

"Siri..." Harry's voice was soft.

"What is it?"

"I... I don't know."

"What's bothering you Harry? You can tell me."

Harry eventually looked towards his Godfather and sighed... "I had a dream," he began uncertainly.

"And?" Sirius prompted.

"Voldemort had lost."

Sirius frowned. Harry wasn't telling him something. "That's good, isn't it?"

"The Dark had a new Lord."

"Who?"

"Lucius Malfoy."

Sirius nodded, black eyes lost in thought but inwardly he breathed a sigh of relief. He'd been afraid of Harry saying his own name. "Snape did mention something about a rebellion brewing in the Dark Lord's forces but Malfoy ought to be easier to defeat than Voldemort. What was the problem with the dream?"

"The Light had also lost," Harry said heavily. "Lucius succeeded where every Dark Lord has failed. He was the Ruler of the World - Muggle and Wizard alike."

"That's not possible, Harry. There are plenty of Wizards and Witches who can match Lucius' power and there is no way to increase your power that much. Someone would have defeated him."

"The Vampires backed him."
Sirius felt his eyes open wide. Harry hadn't got to Vampires in his studies... There was no way he could know about the power a Vampire could give a Wizard. But the price... "Harry," he began, putting as much power into his voice as he could. "That's not going to happen."

"I was there too," Harry continued, almost as if he hadn't heard Sirius. "I was chained... Draco's pet, but Draco was a Vampire... He said Lucius was no longer his Father..." Green eyes unfocused as he looked around wildly, remembering before he fixed his stare on Sirius. "I killed me... I didn't even think about it. I killed me and the chained me was grateful."

Sirius enfolded Harry in his arms, stroking his hair. "If you dreamt that, no one would blame you and any one would have done the same." He stepped back, looking at his Godson.

Green eyes blinked, coming slowly back into focus. "He warned me though... He told me 'Be true to your heart' and then I had another dream..."

"This one was different... Everything was intact, it was almost as if there had been no war. Hogwarts was fine. The students were happy but a flame snake banner surmounting the castle but everything else was fine. Then I went somewhere else... I went to another castle and this one flew only that banner..."

"There were many wizards there and a basilisk came in and spoke to someone. I don't know who... I never saw that persons face but there were three people on the dais, one enthroned, the other two served them. After the serpent spoke three more people appeared - Charlie Weasley, Professor Lupin and you."

"Harry... A snake isn't necessarily bad... You can speak parceltongue but that doesn't make you evil and serpents aren't all evil."

"I know," Harry gulped. "That's not it. You called... You called one of the people on the dais Voldemort," he finished the sentence in a rush.

"No..." Sirius whispered the word. "That wouldn't happen."

"It... it wasn't Voldemort though... He was too young and even if it was Voldemort he wouldn't bow to anyone... And he was. He was bowing to someone. Who has that type of power?"

Sirius frowned. No one had that type of power... No one had had that type of power for over a thousand years. "It was a dream."

"It was more than a dream! Divination isn't exact but even I know the difference between a true dream and something my imagination brewed up. This was a true dream. It was the future I dreamt, both times..."

"Harry even when you dream the future, it doesn't have to be. I know. Believe me I know. Only you can create the future. So create the future you want Harry, but I would still agree with your doppelgangers advice. Be true to your heart."

"Sirius...?" Harry tried to interrupt but his guardian was speaking, remembering the past and determined to get the warning out.

"I don't know what you are afraid of Harry but if you are happy, that is what is important. Don't worry about the rest of us Harry - follow your heart. If I'd have truly followed mine perhaps we wouldn't have been in this position, perhaps Lily and James would still be alive because we would have dealt with the suspicions we had at the time, rather than letting them fester and letting them make us make our mistake."
Harry gasped as he felt a wave of emotion come from Red Eyes. It was a mixture of thanks and love. He sent a wave back but couldn't hide his confusion at the thanks. He hadn't done anything.

"We did Master. We healed him."

"Thank you," Harry whispered in his mind softly but the Shadows weren't finished yet.

Around the corridor they came to life, flitting and flickering, skittering softly over the stone floor.

"What is this?" Sirius exclaimed jumping back.

"Master, you cannot let your first vision occur," the Shadows actually spoke, their echoing voices serving to confirm their existence to Sirius.

"I will not let the second one happen!" Harry snapped back.

"We only want you to be happy. Do not let the first one occur, change the second but do not let the first one occur," they almost seemed to beg.

"Who? What?" Sirius' eyes were wide.

"We are Harry's power."

"So why do you care?"

"We want our Master to be happy. We have to obey him but it is easier for us to get what we want when he is happy," they explained to Sirius before turning their attention back to Harry. "And we will protect your happiness. Master, the vampires do not understand. They do not understand what we know, what he knows."

"What?"

"Without light Master, there is no dark. They are arrogant enough to believe that they are the dark and that they can survive without light. But that is not true. Without dark, there is no light. That is the other truth. Even Dumbledore knows that."

Sirius watched as Harry nodded. He knew his Godson was conversing with the Shadows and despite the fact that he was now excluded from the conversation he didn't feel excluded. He trusted them. He'd felt them before. The one time at the Quidditch game they had been there, mixed with other power but they had been the one's who had destroyed the Bludger. And they had claimed to be Harry's power, Harry's inheritance. It made sense. James had always had more luck that anyone should rightfully have, when hiding in Shadows.

"But Dumbledore wants to defeat Voldemort."

"Yes. It is a balance. We want it one way, he wants it the other but both know there is a balance. Dumbledore wants to defeat Voldemort, he would like to defeat the Dark but he knows that is impossible. Xeoaph does not understand. Lucius does not understand. So you have to help the Dark Lord."
I have to help Voldemort?: Harry hissed. I will not let the second vision occur.: 

You do not have to, Master, but you must help him or else you will never be whole. The vampires are helping Lucius and they do not understand. Xeoaph does not understand.: 

What don't they understand?: 

Without light there cannot be dark so some light must be allowed to exist and the Dark Lord, like us, has chosen what light he will allow.: 

What light..?: 

Master; the Shadows laughed: You...: they whispered in a tone full of amusement. 

What?: Emerald eyes snapped wide. 

Voldemort has not lied to you Master. He is the one you know as Red Eyes and everything he has said and feels is the truth. You cannot lie mind to mind Master, not when you are tied as deeply as you are.: 

No...: 

"Harry?" Sirius questioned as his Godson stiffened. 

Master, be true to your heart. Whatever future you create, be true to your heart.: 

"Harry?" 

"Sirius," Harry's voice trembled. "I don't know what to do. I can't... I can't love him... 

"Harry, no matter what happens there is only one thing to do. Know no regret and be true to your heart." 

How can I love him? How can I even like him? Why would he even...? Harry's thoughts swirled and he swallowed hard. "No... You don't understand... I don't know what to do." 

"You can die." 

Sirius didn't even blink he was reaching for his wand before the sentence was finished and had a Proteus charm around himself and Harry before he looked towards the voice. The Shadows skittered and stillled, settling back into darkness, for the moment unwilling to act. 

"Draco," he hissed. "Too afraid to strike him from behind as before?" Sirius added the jibe, moving Harry to a position behind him. 

The blond boy smiled. "Last time was a mistake. This time, we finish it."

Black eyes flashed and Sirius growled softly as other black robed Slytherin students stepped forth, their wands drawn and a fanatical light in their eyes. 

"You might be fully trained," Draco began, casting a light charm at the shield, "but we far out number you and you can't hope to hold up to our strength."

-Sssh shss ss shshss.-

Sirius' spared a glance at Harry and saw a smallish serpent slithering its way out of his godson's
clothing. It was black, with a red crest and its green eyes were slowing changing colour becoming yellow before their glow intensified to a deep and angry red. Its tongue flickered constantly sampling the air and with a sudden surety Sirius knew the serpent would report this back to its Master. No matter what happened now, everyone here was doomed.

"Xaos," Harry murmured as the snake surged forwards, through the shield charm, its mouth opened wide, striking at one student who'd gotten too close.

Before anyone could react it was too late and a girl Sirius vaguely recognised as being a Slytherin seventh year screamed, falling to the ground, trying to clutch her leg as she convulsed, foaming at the mouth, gurgling as she tried to draw breath against the poison now burning through her system. The serpent hissed again at her, dismissing her thrashing with a sharp flick of its tail before it turned brilliant ruby eyes towards one of the others who was watching it with morbid fascination. A fatal mistake.

Everyone knew the consequences of looking into the eyes of a basilisk but very few people had ever seen the deadly efficiency of its most potent weapon. There was no noise, no scream because there was no time. There was no sudden gasp of breath as the body knew surprise. There was no stiffening of limbs as shock passed through the nervous system. There was only death, irrevocable and silent as the body simply ceased to function and fell in a graceless formless heap.

The movement though broke through the confusion of the other Slytherin's and they jumped into action, casting spells at the shield charm Sirius had raised as the serpent retreated fully into its safety.

Harry blinked as the curses and charms splashed up against the shield, then he drew a shuddering breath, bringing himself back to the present. Whatever turmoil he might be feeling he knew one thing with absolute certainty, he was not going to let Draco get any further. "Xaos," he sighed happily, holding his left arm out to the serpent. The black serpent coiled itself there, resting his head on the back of Harry's hand, tongue flickering and eyes mockingly daring anyone to meet its gaze. -Good boy,- he added the compliment as he drew his wand, eyes narrowing as he looked towards Draco. "If you start running now Malfoy, you might be able to outrun Xaos but I doubt it."

"And if you start begging, I might kill you before the end of the night."

Harry smiled grimly as he remembered his first dream. "Never happen, Malfoy, never happen," he said with conviction, feeling strangely reassured at the memory.

Draco flushed, grinding his teeth in annoyance of the confident tone underlying the Gryffindork's voice. Well... He'd have the last laugh, looking into glassy dead eyes. Oh yes... He would have the last laugh. His Father had spent the summer teaching him a number of very advanced charms specifically for this day and he wasn't going to fail now. "Shatterous."

"Argh!" Sirius groaned as the curse hit his shield sending brilliant lines of colour over it in a crackled pattern.

"Sirius, don't waste your strength," Harry said as he threw several minor curses through it. They were intended more to irritate than incapacitate. He had no illusions about this battle. It was kill or be killed or worse and he was not about to let that happen.

"All right," Sirius responded, licking his lips as he picked out his targets. "Three, two, one!"


Three more of Draco's cronies fell and Sirius snarled in pain briefly before he cast the counter charm
for a curse that had slipped through his defences. They didn't want him. That much had been clear from the attack but they were prepared to go through him as necessary. Harry was covering his brief pause, sniping randomly at the various students and masterfully intercepting their charms as Xaos hissed spitefully. His Godson was good, he could not deny that. He was better than James. Harry might even be the best dualist in centuries but the Slytherin students were coming from everywhere and they were persistent. They couldn't hold them off forever.

"Enough," Draco snapped, stepping forward. "This ends now! Avada Kedrava!"

"NO!" Harry cried, pushing Sirius down, without thinking.

But even as Sirius fell he turned himself, looking up at his Godson. "No, Harry!"

It was too late. The deadly green curse had already impacted with Harry's chest, outlining him with an unearthly glow before it disappeared. Sirius held his arms out as Harry fell, cradling his body as they both came to a rest on the cold stone.

"Harry..."

Harry coughed, blood flecked around his mouth and his green eyes were dull. Xaos hissed softly, sadly, nuzzling his head into Harry's hand. Harry met Sirius' gaze as he swallowed the blood.

His mouth moved and it was a few moments before he could speak, his breath coming in small gasps. "I love him, Sirius," he sighed, blood gurgling in his throat and a tear tracing it's way from the corner of his eye as he realised the truth. It didn't matter that Red Eyes was Voldemort, it only mattered that he'd never really get to knowingly say 'Thank you' to the man who had saved him. He'd never be able to look into those crimson eyes and say 'I love you'. He had slept with him, true, and it had been sweet but now that he knew how much more could it be? But it would never be and he regretted that. The chance had gone... Thank you...

I'm sorry...

"I love you," he voiced the statement he'd never get to make, as the Shadows wrapped around him, and he breathed no more.

Chapter End Notes

Petrifis - Petrification spell, but unlike the one Hermione used on Neville, this one uses time petrification so the person or thing affected ages. A person would become something akin to a dried up mummy.

Sonici - Sonic - A sound attack utilizing sound waves to paralyse the target.

Absenta - Blocks all sensory input so that the target cannot hear, feel, smell, taste, touch or speak.

Darkshale - Casts darkness around the individual targeted meaning that they can't see and thus can't fight.
Silettos - Stiletto - long thin blades are cast out at the target.
Voldemort countered Lucius' curses easily, casting his own back with calm air. He'd learnt early that no matter how stressed you were, you never showed it in combat. Lucius was powerful and the Vampire's strength was making him formidable but the Dark Lord could see the strain and worry beginning to show on his former servant. He hadn't learnt that lesson.

They hadn't clashed physically again. Both of them knew that it was useless. They had equal physical strength. Their last clash had proven that. It was going to come down to their mastery of magic and the breadth and depth of charms and curses that they knew and could cast. On this score Lucius unfortunately had the benefits of a classical education and it would take a while to push his education to its limits.

Around him, the air burnt with magic, the streams alive and brilliant. Oh, there were the set charms and wards of the Ministry, the standard security wards - the anti-apparition wards were particularly bright, their force highlighted by Xeoaph's power - but there was also the combat magics, the whipping force vanishing almost before it was seen, their shimmering power flowing in deadly curtains throughout the Atrium. There was also the magic of the people, but the assembled wizards and witches watched the duel with their own power dampened from within at the audacious strength displayed.

But something was wrong. He could feel it. It wasn't something with him. His power levels were stable. Lucius' increase in power had brought the former Death Eater only to his Lord's normal level of power and Voldemort could counter that at any time. It was only a pity that at the moment he wasn't experiencing a power increase or Lucius already be dead. Mentally Voldemort shook himself, bringing himself back to his contemplation. It wasn't anything wrong with his body. There was no poison in the air and he had sustained no cuts or injuries through which a toxin could have been introduced. It wasn't anything that was wrong with him.

Something else was wrong. "Harry..." he whispered, flicking his hand out and allowing his mind to counter Lucius without thought. :Shadows?: He hissed in his mind.

:We're busy, Dark Lord, what do you want?:

:Your Master?:

:What do you think we are busy with?:

His heart skipped a beat. :Problems?:

The Shadows were silent and Voldemort felt his eyes widen fractionally. :No...: He reached out with his mind, trying to brush up against his beloved but felt...

...nothing...

That wasn't possible.

Voldemort paused. "...harry...?" He whispered.
"Harry?" The call was more urgent this time.

Nothing.

That wasn't possible... That wasn't possible unless...

The Dark Lord felt his lips curl back in a guttural snarl as his eyes flashed. Anger fuelled his power and he could feel it burning through his body as he gave up any pretence of defence.

There was no choice.

Or rather there was but he had faced this choice in the past and he had always chosen this path. The only difference this time was for the Dark Lord to acknowledge that he would eventually pass beyond the veil to his beloved but it would not be by the hand of a petty servant. It would not be at the bidding of a vampire. And it would not be before the world knew his vengeance for his mate, not before the world understood the gravity of its crime in letting Harry die. Only then would he consider that journey.

However before then...

Lucius and all his miserable forces would be screaming for his mercy before the sun rose. But that would be nothing compared to what he would do to those who had touched Harry at Hogwarts. He'd let Dumbledore watch. The man should have protected his mate but had just let it happen again. Dumbledore would know, as he watched, he would know that his dream was dead and that there was no hope for the future. He would hear it in every blood choked cry. He would see it with every laceration made. He would smell it by the perpetual stench of blood and shit. He would taste it in the blood that would be as wine and he would feel it with every fibre of his being. The Headmaster would know and that would be torture beyond anything the Dark Lord could do to the aged wizard personally.

"Evisucate! Imperio! Crucio! Petriris!" He snapped the curses out with a speed Lucius couldn't hope to match, laughing coldly as the blond was forced to dance in an ungraceful jig to avoid them. "It's not that easy, Traitor," he added, signalling to the basilisk that had been waiting for his command.

The serpent hissed in triumph and surged towards the blond, fangs bared and eyes alight with a sickly yellow glow as its master began to cast spells indiscriminately into the watching wizards and witches. Voldemort didn't care what curse he cast, so long as it hurt and the screams of the afflicted were like music to him. The whole world would be screaming before he was through.

Lucius dodged the basilisk, regaining some of his grace as he drew his sword with a tight smile. Did the Serpent Lord truly believe he was unprepared to face his minions? That with all his planning he had failed to develop a counter to even the most deadly serpent. Well, if the Dark Lord believed that, he would soon have him educated about the truth of the matter. He cast a quick shield, blocking the serpent's open-mouthed strike before he slashed at the snapping jaws driving them back. The serpent was quick to retaliate, coiling its body defensively and lashing its tail as a counter to his strikes. Scales met steel with a hail of sparks and Lucius knew he couldn't penetrate the thick skin with a slashing motion. He lunged forward, extending his blade and was satisfied as he felt the tip meet the spongy resistance of flesh. The great serpent hissed, an almost strangled stream coming from it and the sharp tang of its blood filled the senses of those who could detect it.

The wound wasn't serious and Lucius was smart enough not to gloat as the serpent shifted, twisting so that the wound could not be attacked before striking again with its tail and fangs.
The blond bided his time blocking each attack nimbly. He was immune to the poison of the great serpent but the fangs could still rip and tear at his flesh and while the yellow eyes could not kill him, they could still leave him stunned and that would leave him as good as dead. All he needed though was one opening and that would be enough. The Dark Lord's servant would fall before him, a symbol of his forthcoming victory over the Lord himself.

The serpent though, despite being a magical construct was skilled. Its attacks were careful, planned and showed thought beyond that of an animal. Lucius sweated as he continued to block and it wasn't all due to exertion. The huge basilisk was alternating it's attacks, switching between whip like strikes with its tail and lunging, venom filled bites but with every attack it was careful not to over reach itself, never putting itself in a position where Lucius could strike at it's tail, slashing the sensitive tip or where he could drive his sword through the soft palate and into the creatures brain. No... it was too cunning for this.

Grey eyes narrowed and Lucius looked out from his long lashes, a soft smile creasing his features. The serpent was being careful... too careful. With a fluid motion he holstered his wand, sliding it home into the small of his back, a place where it was protected but still on hand, before he drew his short dagger, spinning it to hold it in an imitation of the Dark Lord's fighting style. He flexed his fingers around the hilt of his sword, adjusting his grip minutely, feeling the leather pads of his gloves stick to the cotton binding of the sword before they came away, bonding with his fingers before he pressed them down again. He could almost feel the individual atoms joining with each other and felt vaguely reassured. He couldn't afford to lose the long blade now.

He lunged forward, spinning and striking at the serpent, ignoring the sparks his slashing attacks made with the tough scales. The attacks weren't meant to damage the constructed basilisk, they were only meant to distract it, and keep it's sharp fangs off him as he manoeuvred himself into position, creating an opening to attack that the serpent could not resist, no matter how cautious it was being.

Lucius suppressed his smile as the serpent began to move, slowly uncoiling itself, its eyes beginning to glow in anticipation. It thought it had him trapped. Well, he would be happy to educate it otherwise but it would be an expensive lesson.

He stepped left and then lunged forwards straight into the waiting coils. With a hiss of triumph the basilisk pulled it's bulk in tight, wrapping itself like a boa around the blond man, craning it's head to look down at him, it's brilliant yellow crest raised in a full display of power.

Lucius growled as the coils tightened around him but he didn't lose his grip on his sword and while he couldn't drive it into the serpent's body, he did keep it upraised the ward of the poisonous fangs. Almost lovingly he laid his head against the cool scales of the summoned basilisk, listening for the magical pulses that were present in every quasi life form.

For an instant Lucius thought he was lost. There was so much sound. With the vampire blood coursing through his system he could hear everything and the serpent that was wrapped around him was an almost overwhelming cacophony of sound that in no way represented a living being.

In the Dark Lord, twisted though that life may be, he could hear the beat of a heart, the sloshing of blood and the hiss of breath. The basilisk was a magical construct and he assumed that it would be silent save for the soft whisper of the magic source that was sustaining it but it was alive with noise. The skin crackled with energy and now that he was closer he could hear a watery like noise coming from the deadly yellow eyes, almost like the magic was circling like tears, keeping the eyes moist, reinforcing the deadly killing gaze. But the sound of magic was not limited to things that maintained the constructs external appearance.

It was everywhere - pinging against the skin, maintaining the illusion, roaring back and forth down
the length of the body, spiralling around and around in a loop that perpetuated the construct. It was almost as if the entire thing was filled with magic and Lucius suppressed a shudder at the thought that the Dark Lord was that strong but then he clenched his teeth, as the coils tightened around him and forcibly reminded himself that he could match whatever power was put forth. He frowned slightly, focusing his hearing, listening for the node of power. If he destroyed that, then the magic could no longer retain it's form and the serpent would be destroyed.

To say nothing of the pain the backwash of magic would cause the Dark Lord.

There... The noise of the magic was concentrated in one spot. It wasn't louder than anywhere else on the construct... No... It was more controlled. It wasn't rushing around with blind haste instead the movement of the magic at the node was precise, an elegant dance controlling everything. And it was physically located at the back of the snake's head... almost where the brain would be.

Lucius shook his head irritably. No... it wasn't almost where the brain would be, it was deeper. If the great serpents crest was flat against it's scales, the node would be there, almost on the first coil where it was well protected.

A basilisk was a near perfect being. Its scales were tough enough to repel most attacks and if you wanted to kill a large one, the only sure way was to pierce its cranium, but no one had the strength to puncture both the skin and skull so the only way to do that was to attack through the eyes or mouth. It protected its eyes through its deadly gaze and if you got close enough to the mouth, its fangs dripped with poison, enough so that even if you did pierce the brain and killed it, you would have been bitten in the process and be killed yourself. An almost perfect being... save for its slow reproduction rate, slow growth and the difficulty in controlling them.

If the Dark Lord had located the node of magic where the brain was usually situated, Lucius could have killed the construct easily. By moving it back, he had ensured that the blond would almost be swallowed in any attempt to pierce the node through the soft inner tissues.

The blond gasped, breathing shallowly as the coils tightened again. There was more than one way to strike! He looked up, grey eyes narrowing as he considered the options.

The serpent was weaving above him, its mouth parted slightly and its eyes half closed in pleasure, their glow muted. The brilliant red crest was raised and almost seemed to be burning as the shadows shifted over the feather like texture. Lucius raised his arm, flipping his sword over as he murmured the charm.

Without the vampire blood coursing through his system he would never have attempted this, but he could feel his muscles making minute adjustments and his fingers moving slightly as everything worked to make his aim perfect and even as he threw the blade he could feel his little finger push forward, tapping the hilt slightly, nudging the point into a perfect alignment.

It was a beautiful shot. The distance was only a metre and a half but had to be was exact and Lucius smiled as he saw the blade pierce the magic node precisely, the charm embedded in the steel activating, white blue lines of power rippling outwards, defining the longitude and latitude of a sphere. Within the sphere there was nothing but a space devoid of magic.

In a flash it was over. The sphere expanded and literally wiped the constructed basilisk from existence before the white blue lines disappeared and the free magic rushed into the void. The creature didn't even have time to hiss in surprise although Lucius almost saw the hatred in its eyes. He dropped easily and with a deft movement plucked his falling blade from the air before he turned to face the Dark Lord grinning in anticipation of the pain.
He was not disappointed. The intensity of the curses cast by the Dark Lord had forced several Auror units together so that most of them could pour their energies into shields while a few others cast back pitiful resistance. It was resistance the Dark Lord had brushed aside as he expanded his range, including the vampires and Lucius' supporters within his attacks. It seemed impossible that one man should be capable of so much magic but Lucius knew this was the man he had formerly given his allegiance to. This was the man devoid of emotion and filled entirely with power that the world should bow to. The blond suppressed a shiver at the thought before he shook his head slightly. This was the man who had fallen, who had betrayed them he reminded himself as the energy backlash struck.

The Dark Lord swallowed the curse he had been about to cast as he felt the destruction of the basilisk, too late to raise even rudimentary defences. The pain washed through him but he gritted his teeth, turning to face Lucius, his mind already reaching for new charms to cast at the blond. With a determined shrug he ignored the pain. Physical pain was nothing. No one got to his level of power without mastering purely physical reactions and he had experienced pain far worse when learning the Dark Arts. The backwash of a broken charm was nothing compared to the pain of rebirth, or the pain of death. *Avada Kedrava* was not painless... Not when you had the power to fight it.

Lucius knew *nothing* about true pain. About the pain of losing half your soul but he would... Before he died, Lucius would appreciate pain in every form, in every nuance.

Ruby eyes glowed as pain was translated into power, adding to the burning aura surrounding the Dark Lord. With a snap of his wrist he copied the blonds previous actions, creating a shield around himself as Lucius re-sheathed his dagger and drew his wand again.

"You should have let my servant finish it, Lucius. It would have been quicker."

"And you should acknowledge that you are no longer fit to rule us and submit to what mercy I may grant."

Voldemort smiled grimly. Lucius was growing bold again but he would fix that. With a second wave of his hand, he extended the shield, surrounding them both within its dome and effectively isolating them from their audience. "There will be no more distractions."

"There will be no more escape," Lucius countered, as he began to circle.

They cast their charms simultaneously, both dodging as the curses struck each other with a flare of magic, before each consumed the other and disappeared. Further curses followed but each one was countered and the magic dissipated in brilliant flashes of energy. While the Dark Lord didn't show it, he could feel himself becoming frustrated with his former servant.

The man was happy to use power when he had no conception of the consequences of that power... He should be showing the strain of vampiric blood but it appeared the blond was untouched. Voldemort spared a glance towards Xeaph and he understood. The vampire's face was contorted in concentration. He was shielding Lucius. What cost? He thought to himself as an *Avada Kedrava* curse brought his attention back to the battle.

:Hold still! Do not defend.: The shadow's voice was annoyed as they brought their power to bear. In an instant they had wrapped themselves tightly around him, physically restricting his movements, holding him in the direct line of fire for the curse.

Red eyes burned and the Dark Lord extended a personal shield around himself through sheer force of will. He didn't need a gesture. The power was his and he would use it as he saw fit. Nothing would stop his vengeance.
This is the way it must be.: The shadows hissed at him but Voldemort snarled at their voice.

You don't really think we'd let our Master die that easily, do you?: The shadow's voice showed both exasperation and an anger that rivalled his own.

Voldemort froze as the implications became clear. The shield faded and he raised red eyes to look at Xeoaph, smiling up at the vampire as Lucius' curse struck, outlining him with an unearthly green aura.

"You've lost." His voice was strong, even as he felt his body collapse and he ignored the fleeting glance of the looks of surprise that were showing on every Auror and traitors face. Even Lucius seemed stunned.

Darkness closed around him and he felt warm with the assurance of eternity. The shadows gave him the strength to utter one last sentence... a warning, a promise, a description of what was to come.

"Vengeance will be mine."
Hermoine paused in her reading as a chill passed through the Common Room and almost instinctively her eyes snapped towards Ginny. It was only because she was watching that she saw it, and that alone was reason she knew what had happened.

Ron’s little sister stiffened, her quill stilling over the parchment and her luminous blue eyes went wide with a look of pain that almost made Hermoine cry out just seeing it. Tears welled at the corners but none spilled out and she mouthed one word. "Harry..."

That was before Ginny screamed. It wasn't articulated but was more a keen of soul searing loss mixed through with her denial. It wasn’t loud but despite the din that permeated the Common Room everyone heard it. It touched their minds, bringing back forgotten memories of pain, making everyone shiver with loss.

Ginny looked around frantically, her eyes unfocused before she slumped over her work, knocking over the ink well where it fell, spilling ink in dazzling array over the rug in the now silent room. Her lips were moving and Hermoine could just hear the words.

"...I love you for I am you. I will love... I will live... I will kill... I will die... For you... I will die for you... I will die for you..."

"GINNY!" The worried shout came from her brothers, who as one leapt towards their sister, their carrot topped faces alight with concern.

Hermoine went with them, and moved to hold Ginny's face, stroking her hair as Fred took his sister into his arms, holding her close and rubbing at her to calm the quivers that were racking her body.

"Ginny," she said gently, calling out to the girl who was still trembling violently. "Ginny... Tell me what happened."

Blue eyes latched on to her own and Hermoine suppressed a shudder as she almost drowned in the intensity of the girls stare. Ginny gulped, visibly gathering herself as she became partially aware of everyone surrounding her. "Harry... It's Harry," she whispered as her eyes glazed again and she was lost again with the struggle within, her lips moving silently now as she continued to repeat her promise.

"NO!" The scream broke through their confusion and with the denial Ginny began thrashing, her arms and legs windmilling wildly. "No, no, no... I will die for him!"

"Someone get McGogonall!" Ron shouted, his voice shrill with worry.

"No need, Mr Weasley," the Deputy HeadMistress' voice sounded calmly from the portrait painting.

"Professor!" The wave of relief was almost palatable.

Minerva didn't acknowledge the reaction, instead she looked around with narrowed eyes, seeing everything before her lips pursed. "Misters Weasley, please bring Miss Weasley and with Miss Granger come with me." With that she turned back as if to leave.
"Professor?"

"The rest of you, remain here and do not try to follow as the Dormitory will be warded once I leave. Curfew is in effect tonight as of now and please do not try to leave in the morning until I come to remove the Warding."

"Professor, what's happening?"

"Any number of things Miss Brown, any number of things which do not concern you."

While Professor McGogonall had been speaking Fred had bundled the still trembling Ginny up in a blanket and with George's help they had carried their sister to the portrait and were carefully manoeuvring her through it while Hermoine and Ron ran interference, keeping their good intentioned but generally overbearing and overly curious house mates away.

As expected of any gathering of gossip prone students, the whispers and speculation broke out even before the Fat Lady's portrait closed after the Professor. Minerva said nothing as she briefly surveyed their small group before turning, raising her wand to cast the Warding.

"Professor..?" Hermoine began uncertainly but fell silent as the older woman turned to face them once more, her lips pursed to the point where it almost seemed as if she had none.

"Where is Mister Potter?"

Hermoine and Ron shared a long look. "He went for a walk," Hermoine began.

"With Sirius," Ron was quick to interject. Over the past few weeks things had become clear, even to them, that Harry was never unattended. Even when eating in the Great Hall they'd noticed that some of the professors always had a careful eye trained their way.

For an instant Professor McGogonall looked even more severe, if that was possible before the lines around her eyes eased slightly. "Well, Mr Black will..."

She would have said more but was cut off by a chilling howl. It didn't seem human but as it echoed through the corridors they recognised the call.

"Harry..."

"Sirius!" Hermoine gasped, her eyes wild at the note she could hear in the older man's voice. There was something not right there...

Minerva's eyes hardened again and she drew her wand as she set off down the corridor, motioning to them that they should stay behind her.

There was another howl of loss, this one was accompanied by a keen from Ginny and neither were overly hindered by the control of sanity. They were animalistic cries and the group wondered for an instant what they might find. They hurried down strangely still corridors. The shining armor lining the walls was still and portraits were quiet. Every painting was shivering, some even going so far as to hid within the confines of their landscapes. Even the torch light seemed still. The flames didn't flicker but they still burned, their yellow light casting deep shadows.

The echoes faded as they got closer but cry became clearer, and Ginny began to provide her own echoing sobs, her eyes closed tightly but tears still escaped.

"Harry... no... har...ry..."
Professor McGonagall paused before rounding the final corner, allowing the small group to catch up to her. She took a deep breath, the wrinkles around her eyes showing the toll the situation was taking on her, before she tightened her grip on her wand and stepped around the final corner.

It was like a painting of hell that seemed to go on forever. There were only four colours.

Black. The shadows were inky and fathomless, their jagged edges extended in sharp angles over everything. Broken puppets of darkness were strewn over the floor in haphazard heaps, twisted with the violence of their passing.

Yellow. Sand stone had been used as a feature in this section of Hogwarts and under the still burning torches, it was starkly obvious and was several shades more lurid than it was usually. It was coldly but garishly brilliant.

White. Froth, still bubbling on lips stained black by poison and stark skin, like alabaster, clawed hands and strained eyes but there was no colour in the flesh, no colour in the faces that stared glassy eyed back at them.

Red. Still fresh, still bright - oxygenated by wrongful exposure to air - and pooled liberally around the heaped darkness. Smudged over white skin and splattered onto the armor suits, to drip thickly from weapons held at the ready.

Sirius was in the centre of it all. His hands and face were white and his black eyes were fathomless, with no glitter at all. They looked dead. Tears streamed from the corners but he made no move to wipe them away and the salt crystals dried on his skin and robes. He was still holding Harry's slight body close to him without moving, crying quietly all the time.

Gathered in the protective embrace of Sirius' arms, Harry looked as if he could be sleeping. His eyes were closed and his face was composed. He looked content, his soft smile looked happy. The burdens that had been thrust upon his small shoulders, burdens that would have killed many full growth men, were gone and he was finally himself.

"Oh, Harry!" Hermoine wept, clutching at Ron desperately. The red head raised his arms to cradle her, unsure of what to do but knowing he needed her support just as she needed his.

"I killed him."

The sentence was soft, almost so soft that they didn't hear it.

"I didn't... I couldn't... I killed him."

It was stronger this time, as Sirius twisted to face them.

The group shuddered. His voice was broken, his eyes were dead. Ron shivered, remembering what Sirius had been like just out of Azkaban. It seemed as if he were back there and Ron wouldn't have been surprised to see a Dementor gliding down the corridor. From the way Sirius looked now, loosing his soul would be a mercy.

Sirius looked back towards Harry, whispering to himself but they could hear his words. "Harry... The darkness is not the end. There is light and you belong in light. Lily is there, and James and you will never again be alone. You will be safe there. No one will hurt you. He will be there. He is waiting for you and he'll hold you close and you'll be warm. You'll always be warm and everything will be all right."

"Sirius!" Minerva snapped, coming out of her daze. "Now is not the time..."
She paused as his black eyes settled on her, his dark gaze burning. "Now is the time. Now is the only time," he said before he turned back to Harry.

"Sirius..." Hermione began uncertainly. "Who is 'he'?" She finished in a rush.

He didn't look up but shook his head. "I don't know. Harry didn't say... He only said he loved him and then he died."

The group shared a long look. While Fred and George didn't know what had happened to Harry as a child and what had happened to him recently, the others did and they couldn't fathom Harry having a relationship with anyone. They'd have known if he was seeing anyone... especially if he'd thought enough of them to speak of them in death.

Hermione was about to speak again when a serpentine hiss interrupted her, a hiss that was followed by the serpent itself. It crawled out from between the folds of Harry's robes where its bulk had been hidden. The closed eyes gave evidence of its species. Gently it butted its head against his hand, as if trying to wake its Master from slumber. It hissed softly when it received no response, this time with a definite note of frustration before it butted its head against his hand harder this time.

"No Xaos," Sirius murmured, remembering what Harry had called the little basilisk. "He's not going to wake up."

Xaos hissed again, crest rising and eyes opening slightly to reveal glowing green irises. »It is time.«

:Yes, it is time,: the Shadows agreed before they moved.

The painting melted. From every point of black a shadow rose. Some were thin and sinuous, others squat and fat but they all moved, making it seem as if the vision was crawling as they converged on a central point, Harry.

"NO! Harry!" Sirius cried, curling his body protectively around his Godson's but it made no difference. The shadows kept coming, at first slithering around Sirius' form but as they became more numerous they simply passed straight through him, disappearing into Harry. Sirius shivered but remained as he was, determined to do what he could to protect him.

The shadows kept coming. Dark folds of robe seemed momentarily lighter when a shadow left but they quickly darkened as a new shadow took form and surged towards Harry. The silence was palatable and the small group behind McGonagall were held in rapture, unable to move at the phenomenon they were seeing. They were used to unusual things, but this was beyond what they knew, each shadow radiated such power that none of them dared to interfere.

Finally when it seemed that both Harry and Sirius would be consumed by the surging shadows, there was a sharp cry and Harry's body jerked as it burst into black flame before a visible wave of power ricocheted outwards, freezing everything between one breath and the next and making the world turn negative.
Harry floated. He was warm, he was comfortable and he was content. The worries he knew had been plaguing him were gone and he couldn't quite remember what it was that had been worrying him. It was quiet here and he could feel his limbs gently swaying as he lay with a languid calm. He sighed contentedly, prepared to drift into sleep when there came a sharp tug on his senses.

He didn't even think about it as he unconsciously swatted at the thing disturbing him but Harry was further surprised when his efforts were met with a laugh.

:Master... You cannot get rid of us like that...: The voice had many echoes, as if there was more than one person speaking but they were all amused.

Green eyes opened and looked around. There was nothing to see but he recognised where he was. He'd seen this nothingness before, felt the almost liquid resistance to his movements in the past... after Millicent had raped him... So why was he here this time?

:We brought you here,: the shadows said and Harry frowned. There was something else there.

:Sirus..?: He questioned uncertainly as he vaguely recognised the presence.

:Oh...: The shadows said in a saddened voice. :He will be changed by us, Master. We brought you here to save you and we can do that without changing you. We are sorry, Master, he has already taken us into himself and we cannot undo that... not without loosing you and we will not allow that.: The shadows made the statement with such force that Harry mutely nodded at them, accepting their words without question. :He will be changed.: They repeated although their entire meaning was unclear.

The presence that was Sirius was only faint, as if he wasn't fully here but Harry still felt his Godfather bob his head in recognition. :It's alright,: Sirius' voice seemed to come from a distance, echoing faintly. :But I would like to speak to you at another time,: his voice faded as his presence seemed to rise through the darkness, disappearing.

The consciousness that seemed to be the darkness appeared uncertain but Harry privately thought it would be useful for both of them. :As our Master commands,: the shadows then said after a slight pause and while all feeling of Sirius had vanished, Harry was sure that he had heard and he dismissed the matter, knowing that Sirius would not rest until he was happy.

:Save me?: Harry questioned as the implications of what the darkness had previously said became clear. :Why do I need saving?:

:Look!:

In the complete nothingness that was everything an image appeared and Harry knew it was an image of the past. He was in it, so was Sirius, and Xaos was curled at his feet, hissing spitefully at the black robed people gathered around him and his Godfather. Instinctively Harry looked towards his arm and wasn't surprised to see Xaos curled there, tongue flickering and green eyes burning intently as the little basilisk watched the image as well.
-Master,- Xaos said softly, tightening his coils slightly to reassure Harry as the image began to move.

He watched as Draco and his cronies began to cast curses at him and Harry's fingers twitched as he suppressed the urge to mutter the counter charms. He growled unconsciously as Sirius was hit, making sure he noted who had done it. He could do nothing now... There would be time for that later.

Draco stopped casting and Harry frowned as the blond spoke in the image. By the twisted expression on the grey-eyed boy's face it wasn't hard to discern the Slytherin's frustration but for the life of him, Harry couldn't remember what Draco had said.

...for the life of him... Harry snorted at his own feelings as he saw the Slytherin cast the all to familiar green spell at Sirius.

He'd heard about people who claimed to have watched things in abstract, floating above their bodies as things happened and this was close but unlike them Harry wasn't dispassionate. His eyes glowed and a cold anger gathered in his gut as he watched himself take the spell for his Godfather. He wasn't angry with himself, he'd do it again to save Sirius and he wasn't angry with Sirius. From the look of anguish on the black haired man's face, Sirius was wishing that he had been hit a thousand times before he would even conceive of his Godson doing that. No... Harry was angry at Draco... more than angry... The Slytherin had crossed the line... He had no concept of the power he used...

Harry wasn't a fool. Voldemort used that curse, used it often but the Dark Lord, his beloved, knew of the power, knew of the potential consequences of taking even one life... Draco just saw the power, just saw the spell and the fact that it could be used... He had no concept of true power... And that is why Harry was angry...

:Send me back!: He demanded of the Shadows, his green eyes literally throwing out motes of power.

:There is something else,: they countered, although they did not seem upset.

:What?:

The image changed and Harry vaguely recognised the darkened stone of the Ministry Atrium. It was crowded, every vantage point was packed. From the cut of the robes he could see, there appeared to be three groups. The Death Eaters he recognised easily from their masks and jet robes, the Auror's were similarly familiar but there was another group, in coloured robes he didn't recognise until the image focused on a pasty white face. Vampires. He recognised them from his dream and he felt a faint swirl of disgust coming from the shadows.

There was a small clearing though and the shadowy image spiralled to focus on that and Harry instantly recognised the two people fighting there. Lucius Malfoy and Voldemort. He watched them trade curses and felt a vague pride mixed with admiration at the way the Dark Lord fought. There was no wasted movement, no wasted magic. Every curse was cast precisely with a grace Harry hoped he'd be able to imitate one day. It was beautiful.

As he watched though he could see Voldemort becoming agitated and frowned slightly, wondering what was causing such obvious, at least to him, distress as the Dark Lord cast several curses in quick succession, signalling to a waiting basilisk that it was free to join the battle before he turned his magic on the spectators.

It was awe inspiring and more than a little chilling as Harry recalled, somewhat inappropriately how those hands, that were now wielding the most deadly magics with ease, had made him ache with pleasure. Harry wasn't distracted by such thoughts for long as he watched Lucius kill the constructed
Basilisk and then turn with gloating eyes to watch the spell back lash into Voldemort.

He watched, with a soft smile of satisfaction as the Dark Lord ignored the pain of the broken spell to cast his shield charms perfectly before launching new attacks at Lucius. Attacks that the blond had the bad taste to counter. Harry could feel his ire rising as watched. At least now he knew where Draco got his unthinking arrogance about power. His father was equally, if not more stupid than the son, in thinking that he could use a vampire's strength.

:Help him!: He hissed the command to the Shadows as the blond continued to stand against his beloved.

:No.: 

:Then let me!: 

:Not yet. It is not finished yet.; the shadows returned his attention to the image as the older Malfoy cast Avada Kedrava.

"What!" Harry exclaimed when his beloved did not move but he felt a slight stir of relief when the Dark Lord cast a personal shield but that vanished with the shield.

What had Lucius cast to incapacitate his beloved?

As the green spell struck Harry felt his power explode within him. He could feel every cell in his body pulsing with energy in time with his heartbeat. He saw red as he watched the Dark Lord fall and he unthinkingly cast about, searching for the way out of the endless dark. "Unforgivable..." he snarled. "Help him."

:No.: 

:Help him.; Harry's eyes narrowed at the defiance and a small lash of power rippled out from him. 

:Make us.: There was a note of malice in the Shadow's voice that he had never heard before.

Red energy collected around Harry and he whipped it through the darkness, into the presences he could feel there.

:Heh! You think such energy will hurt us?: The question was scornful. :Why should we obey someone who is so weak?: The shadows exerted their own power back at him, nudging into him painfully and Harry suppressed a hiss of pain. They would obey him or their fate would be no different to Lucius'.

:You would let the vampires win?: He countered. 

:They cannot win over us.: 

:I can though.: 

:A human? Defeat us..?: 

:You are the power of Gryffindor and I am Gryffindor's Heir. You will obey me.; Harry snapped at the shadows as Xiaos squeezed his arm reassuringly.

-Master,- the little serpent hissed, looking up at him with green eyes that mirrored his own.

Harry blinked but after a moment he smiled. Xiaos had said a lot more than the single word. He took
a deep breath, releasing his anger. He didn't release it completely, since he would need it to be able to strike effectively, he just released enough that it was no longer interfering with his power flows.

:You will obey me,: he repeated, this time gathering pure white energy into his hand. He felt the shadows flinch back from it. This was his true power. Any wizard could strike with the red energy he had been using, the energy of rage but such power was of the shadows and it could not compel them. This energy though, this light was his and it was the true power of Gryffindor - the power to destroy the shadows and that which could destroy them, could rule them. :Now, help him!: He commanded forcefully.

:We cannot, Master,: the Shadows recognised his ability, :not until you are there.: Harry nodded, understanding what they were saying as he gathered more power into himself. He could hardly interfere in a wizarding battle as he was, not if he wanted Xeoaph and Lucius to take him seriously and not if he wanted to remain anonymous, and for the moment, anonymity would be useful to him.

The dark nothingness did not change but around Harry his energy gathered in tangible lines. Green swirled around him, transfiguring his cloths and he could feel the Shadows weaving their own power into his new raiments. A long hooded cloak wrapped its way around him and on his shins and forearms he could feel the weight of armor. A breastplate appeared under his robes protecting his heart and a long sword appeared beside him. He could feel a wand resting against his left forearm. Harry frowned, the wand was warm with contained power and it tingled in much the same way as his had done when he first touched it in Ollivanders. But he knew he'd left his wand in his pocket on his right thigh so where had this one come from..? He shook his head as a hiss came from above him.

Xaos had been included in his change. The small black serpent had left its usual place on his arm and had grown and was now wrapped around him. Black scales and shadows twined together imperceptibly and in the nothingness it was impossible to say where one ended and the other began. Xaos' green eyes had changed, and now glowed a brilliant ruby red, the true eyes of a basilisk. His crest was raised in a traditional threat display and his fangs were barred as he reared protectively over his Master, the warning obvious.

:Say the word, Master, and we will obey.: The Shadows affirmed their loyalty quietly when Harry was ready.

:Save me.:
McGonagall blinked. Something had changed between one moment and the next and she wasn't quite sure what it was. As a teacher she had developed sharp eyes. It was only natural when dealing with the likes of Fred and George Weasley. She knew when notes were being passed around and without looking knew who was working and who wasn't. She could read the minute changes in her students expertly and adjust her class for that. And right now, she knew that something had changed, in much the same way that things changed when she was teaching, how all at once a class would go from not understanding to complete acceptance of the concept. That was an important but subtle change and this felt the same but she couldn't work out what it was.

The stark colours were still in evidence and she could feel the trembling of the group behind her at the sight. Not that she blamed them. The sight of Sirius cradling Harry was something that would haunt her forever. It was a sight of ultimate defeat and there was a chill in her bones as she considered it. Hogwarts was meant to be safe but Mr Potter seemed to have inherited his father's knack for getting into trouble, or maybe trouble went out of its way to find him. Whatever it was, Hogwarts had let Harry down in the worst possible way and such a thing had not occurred since the true Heir of Slytherin, Tom Riddle had been here all those years ago.

Minerva shook her head. Right now she had to get everyone, including Sirius into the safety of the Headmasters Office.

"Sirius!" She took a step forward and froze when it hit her what had changed. The man was no longer cradling Harry's body as supporting it and she gasped as his emerald eyes snapped open, the expression on his face changing from one of repose to one of grim determination.

"I have to go," Harry said softly, his hood shadowing his face, as he raised his hands, allowing visible lines of energy to flow between his fingers. With a burst of light he was gone.

Sirius slowly rose to his feet, his black robes clinging to him. He looked at the small group with eyes of complete shadow. "I will protect him." His voice was raspy but recognisable and with no further explanation, Sirius followed Harry.

It wasn't until that moment that Minerva realised the full extent of the change and was shocked that she had not noticed it earlier. Harry had been the change. Harry had been the complete change. It had happened in an instant. His school robes had transfigured and had resembled the robes worn by Auror troops when they went into battle. She'd caught the flash of steel and knew he was armed but she had no idea where the sword had come from. But it had been more than his clothes that had changed. Harry had felt different. There had been about him a sense of contained power, of surety in his abilities that she had never felt in one so young. It had been disconcerting and she had only identified the feeling now.

Minerva shook her head. With everything that had transpired this evening, she supposed it was only natural that Harry would also change. The main forces were moving and he could be counted as the only one, not yet to move on this night. Now everything could be decided.

In the corridor where the two had previously been there was a multicoloured swirl of magic, that vaguely resembled the glyphs of symbols used in arithimacy but they were broken and some were
swirling uncontrollably. Both McGoganall and Hermoine frowned at the complexity of the glyphs that slowly began weaving themselves back together but it was Hermoine who realised what they were first. "The protection spells..." she breathed both horrified and amazed at the practical demonstration of Hogwarts protection and the ease with which it could be broken.

Ginny moaned loudly, in a voice that begged... "No... I will... die for him..." she whispered brokenly before she fell unconscious again leaving the small group staring at the place where both Harry and Sirius had vanished as the Hogwarts wards slowly repaired themselves.

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Lucius shivered and struggled to draw breath. It was as if his lungs were also trembling. His limbs felt weak and an odd tingling spread through his body.

It was over... And it was over far more suddenly than he had ever dreamed possible. While he and the Dark Lord had fought, they had not yet truly begun to fight. The curses and charms they had cast had been serious but preliminary. The true battle would have come when they were both exhausted, and were drawing on their reserves of both strength and knowledge.

But it was over... One curse, which the Dark Lord could have countered, or dodged and it had all ended. One curse...

He drew another shuddering breath and stepped forward carefully. His footfall echoed loudly in the silence. It seemed impossible that it had ended so easily. The entire Atrium was filled with disbelief and all the gathered groups were watching the crumpled black robed form with eyes like hawks.

The Auror's had a sense of relief about them. The Dark Lord was gone and while it might mean the rise of new one, no one would eclipse Voldemort. The Vampires watched with a veiled but rising gloating. Dead, before them was a human would had sought immortality to take their control of dark but he had failed. They were the true immortals of the dark. The Death Eaters, both loyal and rebels were watching quietly, both sides too stunned to speak of a Lord who had always seemed invincible brought low by one most of them had considered gifted but never trusted. One or two Death Eaters narrowed their eyes as they watched their fallen Lord. Their Masters final words had not been those of a man fearing death, but were those of a man who's plans were unfolding neatly. His voice had been sure. There was more here than they understood and their Lord would except them to stand strong.

Lucius continued to approach the Dark Lord cautiously, his wand and sword held at the ready for any attack. The Dark Lord was not above ambush, even at this stage and in a battle where the winner took all, any tactic was valid, especially if it lead to victory. But if his former Lord was truly dead, then he would confirm it by taking his head!

A small serpent crawled out of the Dark Lord roles but Lucius disposed of it with a quick kick, sending it into a stone wall. It hissed but lay still and Malfoy snorted his derision. Such things were hardly worth his time. He nudged Voldemort's body with one boot. It moved easily but limply. It appeared the Dark Lord was truly dead. His red eyes were glazed and stared outward blankly and his white skin was even more pallid than usual but his expression was not one of fear but was assured and the blond felt another shiver pass through him.

No! The Dark Lord was dead. He had won and once he took the head he would rule supreme and purebloods could finally take their rightful place.

"You were a powerful Lord until you became corrupted. Now is the time for a new Lord, for my rule!" Lucius raised his sword, grey eyes glowing as he prepared to strike. "Good bye, my Lord
Voldemort!

He drove his sword downwards to cleave through flesh and bone.

The clear sound of steel on steel rang through the Atrium and Lucius smelt ozone as he furiously blinked to clear his vision from the burst of light that had assaulted his senses.

As the stars cleared he heard murmurs from the gallery and looked towards the Dark Lord. Standing over Voldemort's fallen form was yet another black robed figure, their sword crossed against his and their face in shadow. The person was small though but by the pressure exerted through their weapon, they were very strong. The blond could see armor beneath their concealing cloak and he could feel waves of power rippling off them.

"Who...?" He breathed. If the Dark Lord had possession of a fighter of this calibre, every ranking Death Eater would have known it and feared them.

The figure seemed to chuckle, as they moved to stand in a ready position still covering Voldemort's body. "Lucius Malfoy, I presume?"

"And you are?" A note of arrogance crept back into the blond's voice.

The figure shook his head. "Not important," he murmured, as he looked around the Atrium, his gaze eventually seeming to come to rest on the Vampires. "Xeoaph..." he greeted the ancient vampire with an odd familiarity. "Your blood was tasty."

"What?"

There was that odd chuckle again. "Did you think the Lord Voldemort took your blood for himself?"

"That's not possible..." Xeoaph's voice trembled.

"Why not?" The figure shook his head. "It's not important any more, Xeoaph. It's over."

Xeoaph seemed to slump before the ancient vampire squared his shoulders and looked back, his blue eyes burning with the power of his species. "Not yet."

"As you wish," the figure said quietly, sweeping their sword before them. As the blade cut the air, magic flowed along it and in its wake broken charm glyphs shimmered before vanishing. Xeoaph hissed in pain as his wards were broken.

Lucius was forced back by the power and when he looked back he was surprised to see the figure supporting the body of the Dark Lord. Behind them both a black basilisk reared, red eyes flickering everywhere, its tongue tasting the air constantly. It hissed something that the newcomer responded to with a sibilant whisper as another taller figure appeared in front of them, wand held at the ready, black eyes burning as they swept over the Atrium before coming to rest on Lucius. The hood of the newcomers robe was swept back but the cloth drawn over his features hid his face.

"Internal squabbles should be concluded in private," the smaller figure said directly to the blond before amplifying his voice so that it was heard throughout the Atrium. "Death Eaters, retreat. It appears now is not yet the time for domination." As his final word echoed around the room, he vanished, taking Lord Voldemort with him. The taller newcomer nodded once, his black eyes never leaving Lucius' grey.

There was a moment of stunned silence before the taller man laughed coldly. "Get going Malfoy. He'll be disappointed if he can't present your head to the Dark Lord."
"But he's dead!" One of the Auror's objected.

"A state that is easily rectified if you know how." Black eyes shifted their gaze to Xeoaph. "You though, Vampire, are not an internal matter." A small curse of pure shadow flicked towards the ancient vampire but was intercepted by one of his children, a childe that screamed and was ripped apart by black shadows, blood, bone and gore splattering over the Atrium and raining down on those below.

The vampire's death was the trigger to everyone to move. The Aurors started screaming at everyone that they were under arrest, and stunning spells rippled out from their gatherings, hitting some but missing others. Death Eaters both loyal and rebels began apparating away although the rebels were unsure where their destination should be. No one had been expecting an outcome like this. The vampires retreated while under heavy fire from the taller wizard who had appeared in the middle of proceedings. Many of them fell in defence of their Father but eventually the remainder transformed themselves and flew to safety as the man growled in frustration before apparating himself as Auror's closed in.

Lucius stood stunned, looking at the place Voldemort had vanished. It wasn't possible. The Dark Lord just did not have any servant that strong and he would never be a pawn for anyone else. It wasn't possible. His dream couldn't have vanished like that. He could feel the power Xeoaph had given him fading from his blood. It wasn't over. It couldn't be over.

"Lucius Malfoy, you are under arrest for use of the Unforgivable Curses among other things. You are surrounded, surrender."

"It's not over yet!" The blond screamed as he apparated, several stunning charms, impacting in the air he had just vacated. I'm not defeated, not yet. A Malfoy doesn't lose that easily! The thought was snarled as Lucius fixed his destination. He didn't need the help of anyone. He would defeat the Dark Lord once and for all, and then there would be no question of his superiority.

He smiled. This was actually to his advantage. Defeating Voldemort alone would quash any notion that he was beholden to a vampire for the power to defeat his former master.

"Wait for me, my Lord. It's not over yet!"
Harry apparated. It was the second time he'd done it and he didn't think of his ability to do it, he just did it, especially this time, when he was apparating to a place he had never seen before. He looked around the room and smiled softly. The room was bare but that was because you were meant to focus on the Lord and the Lord alone. He could detect the faint odour of blood but he sighed easily, it was to be expected. He was no fool.

Xaos hissed from behind him before bending slightly, fixing his lips on the back of the Dark Lord's robes to hold him upright while Harry did his work.

"Help him," Harry ordered the shadows. He was expecting company soon and his beloved had to be ready.

From all around the room, the shadows gathered and approached the Dark Lord but they did not enter him as they had their master.

:You must come as well, Master.: Harry nodded and sat back into the throne that was his beloveds. "Keep the rebels jumping until we are ready."

:It will be our pleasure, Master.: Harry closed his eyes, reaching out for the Dark Lord's presence in his mind, the red presence that had always been so gentle with him. :My Lord,: he whispered in the silence of his mind at the presence that was now cold. :My Lord,: he whispered again, reaching through the veiled darkness he knew was death. Emerald eyes opened and he fixed his gaze on red glassy eyes and he felt himself drawn forward. :The only one to know me, my love.: The room disappeared.

Once again he found himself in the dark timeless nothingness that was everything. There was another here and this time it was not an abstract feeling that had been Sirius' presence, this time, the other was fully with him.

"Harry."

He shivered at the timbre of Voldemort's voice. It wrapped around him and he felt warm. He raised his hand to his mouth as he felt his eyes fill with tears. He had denied for so long what he should have realised what was truth. The only one to ever have understood him, to have ever truly cared was the one they would have him call enemy. "I'm sorry," he whispered as the tears traced down his face.

The Dark Lord smiled and stepped forward. He reached out, cupping Harry's face gently and wiping away the tears with one thumb. "There is nothing to be sorry for."

"There is everything to be sorry for," he countered looking into red eyes that were watching him kindly.

"But there was no other way," Voldemort refuted him. "You were taught nothing else and in truth, it
was not until now, that I was ready. But then is the past, and now is now and we can make up for the
time that has gone." The Dark Lord reached out with his other arm and pulled Harry to him, stroking
his back soothingly, as he lowered his head to breathe in the scent of Harry's hair as small arms
reached around his waist.

"Why?" Harry whispered, so softly that the Dark Lord had to strain to hear him. "Why me?"

"Why you?" Voldemort's voice was amused, as if the answer should be obvious. "Any number of
reasons - you are attractive, you are very powerful and for one like me, who seeks power over
darkness, you are the ultimate prize and I will never let you go."

"No," Harry shook his head. "Tell me the real reason."

Voldemort half closed his eyes as he sighed. How was it that this child understood him, knew him
inside out, knew everything when he'd barely spent five cordial minutes in his presence? And those
who had spent their lives with him knew nothing. How did he know? -Because...- he lapsed into
parcilmouth. -Not even I want to spent eternity alone and you are the only one who could even hope
to stand with me.-

Harry twisted in his arms, fierce green eyes looking up at him and a smile that was almost a sneer on
his lips. -And what makes you think I want to stand with you?- He asked in a hiss more suited for
delivering a challenge, than talking in the arms of a lover.

-Heheheh!- Red eyes glittered with mirth, he'd expected nothing less. -Who else could be your
equal?-\n
Harry looked away into the nothingness, -True,- he conceded the point before he stepped away. "But
there is still much between us that must be decided now."

"True," the Dark Lord echoed his words. "I want to rule," he said firmly.

"Fine," Harry countered. He hadn't really thought that Voldemort would give that up so easily no
matter who was asking it. "Muggle and mudblood killing?"

"Ah," the Dark Lord responded carefully. "What about them?"

"Will it stop?"

"I have never killed without consideration."\n
"I know. And I know that no matter what others think, you remember as well."

"Her eyes were fathomless weren't they?"

"Mother or daughter?"

"Daughter."

"So clear. There was no other colour there, just blue. Her skin was milk white and that hair was the
softest blonde I've ever seen."

"A possibility gone," Voldemort said. "Every life is a possibility and it's gone now. Who knows? She
could have been the greatest ally I have ever known but that possibility is over but let's not
consider the irrelevant. I have killed, Harry. I have killed hundreds and through the path I have
chosen I have caused thousands to die. I do not apologise. I do not regret."
"But you will stop?"

"No. I'm not about to make a promise I cannot keep," Voldemort explained. "Random muggle and mudblood killings are no longer necessary but if I perceive reason, I will not hesitate." Harry was intelligent enough to realise reason meant threat and he spoke the truth about the muggle and mudblood killings. There was little need for them now and the killing of mudbloods was just placing a large strain on the wizarding community and it was a strain that would not be necessary, not if he was ruling.

"Lucius is mine," Harry said suddenly.

"Oh?"

"You got the one's who hurt me. I owe you the one's who hurt you."

"So you will give me Dumbledore?"

"I would prefer to give you the ones directly responsible but I gather I am too late for that," Harry sighed. "In time then."

"In time," the Dark Lord echoed, his red eyes smouldering. "So what about now?"

:That is the question,: the Shadows whispered. :We do not want our master hurt.: 

"I do not want your Master hurt," Voldemort agreed with them. His eyes narrowed as he forced himself to consider the situation with the calm and logic he had employed during his rise to power. As much as he wanted Harry, allowing his emotions to interfere too deeply with this would only led to disaster. "The problem isn't so much now but what happens in the weeks ahead."

Harry nodded as the shadows fed him information about the Dark Lord's plans and what had transpired during the night. He growled softly as he realised how much damage Lucius' rebellion had wrought. It could be rectified but any position would be precarious for some time and that was where the problem lay. The Ministry would use the time to re-group and the Dark Lord's forces would lose the gains they had worked towards in the past months. And while Lucius wouldn't be a problem for much longer others could be tempted to follow his path. Not to mention the machinations of the Order.

Everyone would be planning and plotting and it was almost certain that no one would ask his opinion.

The Dark Lord looked disgusted as he turned back to Harry. "You'll have to go back to Hogwarts," he said.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" Harry asked dubiously.

"Oh, I don't think so," Voldemort hissed, raking his eyes over the younger boy predatorily. "While I still do not know who they are but if they get within ten feet of you, I fully expect your..." he paused, a feral smile on his lips, "protectors to take action."

"So what if I don't want to go?"

"Harry now is not the time to be stubborn. I do not want you to go either but there is no choice. It is partially for bluff, partially for protection," the Dark Lord spoke frankly. "The Ministry does not concern me. They cannot raise enough defences to stop me, not even if they join with Europe. And I'm sure you will deal with Lucius thoroughly. It is Dumbledore who worries me, and the vampire.
"The vampire is comparatively easy... but Dumbledore has had decades to scheme."

"But he lacks one thing," Harry said suddenly, understanding something that the older wizard had been trying to convey to him.

"Oh?"

"A weapon."

Voldemort unexpectedly smiled as everything became clear. "So why don't you become that weapon?"

"What?" Harry gasped before he laughed, admiring the cunning of the Dark Lord. "That could work," he mused softly. "There are still..." He hesitated, looking up at the older man to assess his reaction to what was to be said. "There are some people I wish to protect."

Ruby eyes narrowed slightly before Voldemort nodded. "Your friends?" He asked.

"Yes. They have never betrayed me."

"But they are so poor."

"That is Malfoy talking," Harry snarled, emerald eyes blazing angrily. He didn't stop as Voldemort flinched at his words. "It seems to me that you have forgotten a basic premise. You want wizards to take their rightful place and to rule Muggles but you forget that to rule, there must be wizards. Those old families with their pure blood and single child could never rule and are asking for their own destruction. The Weasley's might be poor but they have ensured the survival of their bloodline and their magic and those that survive rule. They have also ensured that in a few generations their bloodline will dominate. If those old families were truly devoted to their ideals - Narcissa, Arianna, Bellatrix, Gwyna - would all have presented their husbands with at least three to four children. After all, it's not like they can't afford it."

"Urk..." Voldemort looked both disgusted and sickened. "A dozen Lucius' in the next generation... And they call me evil."

"I said if!" Harry objected. "That is not the point though. You are going to have to accept my people."

"I know. I'll need them anyway since you and your allies are about to create some rather large gaps in my forces. You are right, my little one, bloodlines that breed true, no matter who they are, are valuable. Children may be trained."

"And since you don't wish to wipe out whole civilisations and your rule will be fair," Harry said easily, "most wizards will accede to your desires."

"Those that don't will be destroyed."

"If they actively fight," Harry added, his green eyes hard. "There is no point in wanton destruction, and they may live as they will, if they don't interfere."

Voldemort closed his eyes as he considered Harry's words. He should have been expecting something like this and his supposed he should be willing to give his young paramour something as Harry had already done in acknowledging his desire to rule. "If they don't interfere," he agreed.

"So what happens now?"
"Now?" Voldemort asked as he stepped back towards Harry. "Now, you entertain me."

"Entertain?" One eyebrow rose above a green eye, glittering with mirth and a sly smile on his lips. "Tell me your pleasure, my Lord."

"Hahahah!" The Dark Lord laughed aloud, red eyes brilliant. "Right now, my pleasure is you. Followed, I think, by your plans for Lucius. After that," he licked his lips, as a thrill of pleasure passed through him when his mind provided him with a vision of Harry splattered with the traitor's blood, "who knows."

"I'll give you the world," Harry promised as the older man embraced him again.

"Not, if I give it to you first."

Around them the shadows swirled and Voldemort felt the exact moment his heart began beating again. Back in his throne room his body jerked as it reflectively drew breath and the pallid tone of death retreated from his skin.

"Ahh..." he sighed, "You are a very useful person to have around," he purred, rubbing up against Harry experimentally. The boy was ready for something more physical than just talk. He was ready as well but he sensed their time here was almost at an end and the next time they lay together was too important to waste with an effort, no matter how pleasurable, that was rushed.

Harry seemed to sense this as well, and looked up at him through liquid green eyes, the small arms around his waist tightening their grip slightly. -Kiss me?-

-All you had to do is ask.- He raised his long fingered hands to Harry's face as he lowered his lips to the waiting cherry petals.

Harry was as sweet as he remembered although this time the sharp complimenting tang was stronger. He bit softly on Harry's lower lip before extending his tongue, tracing it over the boy's lips before demanding entry. Harry submitted to his desires for a few moments before he accepted the challenge implied in the Dark Lord's kiss and pushed his own tongue forward.

They parted only when they both needed to breathe although desire still burnt strong in both their eyes.

-Oh yes, I will never let you go,- Voldemort hissed as Harry panted slightly.

The shadows swirled again and red eyes blinked as black nothingness disappeared and reformed into the vista of his throne room and he found himself looking into green eyes that were shining in relief.

"Comfortable?" He asked before laughing at the blush that coloured Harry's cheeks as the boy realised where he was sitting.

Xaos curled around the throne protectively, -My King,- he greeted the Dark Lord before resting his head in Harry's lap, forcing the green eyed boy to remain seated. Harry looked mortified but he couldn't do anything and his hands automatically moved to pet Xaos' crest, a gesture the now giant basilisk hissed appreciatively at.

Voldemort grinned before his expression returned to its usual superior sneer as he realised they were not alone. He reached out, tugging Harry's cowl so that the shadow it cast over his face was complete. :It's better this way, my little one,: he purred through their link reassuringly. :You have the same right to that throne as I do and if nothing else, it will confuse the hell out of Lucius.:
Harry nodded before he spoke aloud. "Are you ready?" The question was directed to Voldemort and to the loyal Death Eaters who had gathered along the edges of the room, their red masks the only point of colour on their black robes. Only two of them had any inkling about who now sat on the throne but the others were content that so long as their Lord seemed to accept this being, they would follow his lead.

There were murmurs of assent all round and at Voldemort's sharp nod, Harry looked deeply into the shadows. "Bring the traitors here," he commanded his voice older than his fifteen years. The shadows churned and obeyed, depositing the black robed, white masked forms of Lucius' forces before another, deeper shadow formed, delivering the blond to the feet of the Dark Lord and his beloved.

Voldemort smiled cruelly at him. "This is just the ending, my Lord Malfoy," he mocked his former servant, echoing the words that had been spoken to him what seemed ages ago. "I trust you won't be disappointed."
Harry sat quietly as the Dark Lord baited Lucius. He had cast a lot of magic today and the strain of the day was beginning to affect him. He was tired and the room was warm, making him sleepy. Xaos was hissing softly as he stroked the feather like crest, his eyes gleaming from under half closed lids. Well, Voldemort could play with Lucius for a while but he would deal with the traitor's final disposition. He let his beloveds rich voice flow over him leaning back in the throne, relaxing.

Lucius and his followers seemed stunned as they took in the sight of the living, breathing Lord Voldemort standing at the right hand of another who seemed completely at ease in the Dark Lord's throne. It was incongruous. It wasn't so much the fact that the Dark Lord was alive; it was the fact that he was ease with another in the position of power.

Several of the traitorous Death Eaters, shook off their shock and banded together, knowing that their only chance of survival lay in fighting their way free. "Protes!" They cast the charm as one before they began urgently whispering at their fellows, urging them to fight with them so that at least some could survive. None of them had visualised this place when they apparated but they could not question that now. They had to fight. It was the only choice.

Harry blinked as he felt the power of the charm before he raised one hand, making a small archaic gesture, almost as if he was slashing downwards. The shield cracked and disappeared and Harry went back to petting Xaos as the Dark Lord smiled chilly, raking his eyes over the assembled wizards who had dared to betray him. They were not all here, his throne room was not big enough for that, but these were a sample from which he would know all. These were the ones the shadows had deemed the most powerful and so were the ones it would be wisest to destroy now and it certainly seemed as if his little one, even if somewhat tired, was more than equal to the task.

"Do you wish to try something else?" The Dark Lord dared them mockingly.

"Who?" One of them breathed, stepping forward to cover Lucius as the blond began weaving his wand in a more complex charm.

"Ah... I apologise," Voldemort said smoothly. "I have been impolite. Allow me to make some introductions. I am your Lord, the Serpent Lord, and this is the Shadow Lord. The Basilisk Xaos is the living representation of our union."

"Your Master?" One of them made the insinuation.

The Dark Lord decided to humour them as he felt his little ones amusement at the words. "And my slave," he said easily, loving their confusion as they tried to discern meaning. A crystal laugh echoed in his mind.

"So he doesn't talk?" One of them sneered.

Xaos' tongue flicked and he shifted his coils restlessly as he hissed softly. "Shh ss suu."
"Not to you," the Dark Lord provided the translation and would have spoken further but he was interrupted.

"My Lord, forgive me!" Three of the Death Eaters broke rank, throwing themselves to the ground at the feet of their former lord. "It was all Malfoy," they begged.

Voldemort's expression did not change as he looked at them. There were always some like this who thought they could play it both ways. Did they truly believe that he would accept them back? And even if he did, did they truly believe they would live? They had made their choice when they had followed Lucius, when they had failed to report the dissent to him, their rightful Lord.

He looked down coldly, fingering his dagger, Slytherin's weapon. These traitors were dead, but they would serve once more, as they died. The daggers hilt was adorned with rubies and emeralds, its pommel stone was a large emerald held in the jaws of a snake but when the weapon had been gifted to him, it had been decorated with nothing but rubies. It was a true magical blade though and he'd quickly worked out its ability. Each ruby on the encrusted hilt could catch a charm, any charm, funnelling the magic into its structure, protecting its wielder and in containing the magic, the ruby was transmuted into an emerald. It was a useful tool but there were only a limited number of rubies on it and it was the final charms that Slytherin had cast on his weapon that made it truly a great weapon.

Men, like those quivering in front of him, both needed and resented their Masters. They would follow but they looked for the chance to be free of their Master, even if it meant following another. However should their original Master discover this or should they prove stronger than the upstart they had followed, these men were too weak to even hold to their conviction and begged to return to the fold, claiming that they had been deceived, claiming that they were following the new master, only for the opportunity to betray them to their former master, claiming anything, providing they could live. Such weakness was displayed throughout history but it was the blood of these traitors that sustained the dagger. They could never be allowed to return but in a small ceremony, in which they re-swore their loyalty to him, before the dagger was driven into their hearts, they could serve him again as their heart blood absorbed the magic the emeralds contained, returning the stones to a brilliant ruby. Slytherin had been wise to see that such fools always existed and to know how to use them.

The Dark Lord waved his hand, "I will speak to you about the conditions of your return anon," he said as the transported the shivering idiots to several cells, where they would no doubt spend their time before the ceremony rehearsing their speeches of abject thanks and empty promises.

He felt mild curiosity from his treasure that turned to understanding with a gentle touch in his mind, indicating that Harry had extracted the reason why he was being merciful. There was outright disbelief that quickly vanished from the other traitorous Death Eaters at his actions but most of them were intelligent enough to remember his contempt for the weak and to realise that he had chosen another punishment for them. Red eyes flicked over them and the Dark Lord noted several small gestures of impatience and his eyes opened fractionally wider as he realised their plan, even as Lucius struck.

"It's over!" The blond shouted triumphantly, pure red energy pulsing in his hands. He flung it forward, directly at Voldemort, grinning with the knowledge that nothing could block this spell.

The Dark Lord didn't move. He didn't have time to move and he was only vaguely aware of the half articulated shouts of concern coming from his loyal servants surrounding the room. The spell that had been hurled at him with all the considerable force Lucius could muster stopped and simply hung in the air as if it was a slightly discoloured lumos charm. Malfoy blinked, his features stained red in the
This wasn't happening. This couldn't be happening. The *Noitaniur* charm, the ultimate destructive magic of the Malfoy clan was unstoppable. It borrowed the force of time and creation itself and thus could not be stopped by anything but yet there was no denying what he was seeing. The first part of the charm had been halted.

Grey eyes met the Dark Lord's red and from the slight look of surprise Lucius knew this was not his former Lord's doing. His gaze shifted slightly and while he couldn't see the eyes beneath the cowl, he could feel the power. The small being on the throne was upright, a glowing red wand that Malfoy recognised only too well in one hand, pointed directly at the heart of the manifestation of his *Noitaniur* charm.

"It's not possible..." He whispered as with a precise flick of the yew wand his spell was negated.

The quietly confident voice that had addressed the Atrium spoke again. "I think that's quite enough, Malfoy. You've lost." Around the room, the shadows began to move, skittering as their Master's voice filled them with life.

Lucius shivered, blinking as he tried to clear his vision, everything was moving and Xeoaph's words flashed through his mind - *If the shadows know life, you have lost.* Was this what the vampire had meant? But who had the power to control absolute darkness?

"Who are you?" The blond snarled as every erg of power he raised was crushed.

The blond wasn't expecting an answer so he stood transfixed as the figure stopped petting the basilisk and reached up, pushing his cowl back. For an instant Lucius thought he was looking at a teenaged version of Voldemort but then he noticed the small differences. Emerald eyes, tousled hair that seemed to have no conception of the word neat, creamy white skin, cherry lips and a pale pink lightning scar on his brow.

"It's not possible!" He said again as he realised it wasn't an illusion.


"He is your enemy!" Lucius snapped, pointing at the Dark Lord. The other traitorous Death Eaters nodded their agreement.

Harry stood slowly and Lucius noted the fatigue in his movements. The boy may have been able to stop the first part of his *Noitaniur* charm but he would not stop the second. He took the two steps necessary to stand beside the Dark Lord.

"You should know Lucius. You have seen the evidence more than anyone else. You condemned a man for me but yet you still question how I can be here?"

"He killed your parents!"

Harry nodded, wondering idly why everyone insisted on making an event he barely remembered the central fact of his life. "But he saved me."

"No," the blond shook his head, misunderstanding. "He didn't save you. He didn't spare you. He would have killed you."

"You do not understand Lucius. Yes, he would have killed me then, but he did not, could not. It was not mercy then, not intended. It was my mother's final, greatest act of magic but that is not of when I
speak. He saved me Lucius and he has given me the power that is rightfully mine."

"He saved you? From what? Those Muggles?"

"Those Muggles, that wizard, these memories, this life. Once again Malfoy, pick one."

"I do not believe you."

Harry sighed. At least he now knew where Draco got the wide streak of abject stupidity from but it would be pleasurable to show Lucius the truth. He reached out and drew Voldemort to him to place one kiss on the Dark Lord's forehead, before he turned to stand in front of his beloved. Lucius was gaping at the gesture. It could not be falsehood. The Dark Lord would not allow such liberties but it was a union he had never thought possible.

"You see?" The Boy Who Lived expression asked.

"Die with him!" Lucius snarled as he released the second half of the Noitaniur charm.

This time, the red energy did fly true. It struck the black robed couple in an instant before expanding to consume the dais. Lucius laughed as the red energy seethed and churned like rolling storm clouds. "You are a child still, to believe that I would lose!" He said triumphantly, brandishing his wand as the spell began to fade.

"And you are a fool to believe that such a weak charm could hurt me," came the smooth reply when an invisible wind shredded the remains of the red energy.

The Dark Lord and Harry were both unharmed and each bore an expression of calm superiority. Voldemort's arms were around the smaller boy, one arm holding him close, one holding a wand extended. Ruby eyes narrowed slightly as he considered his power flows. Harry had slipped the wand to him when he'd kissed him but that wasn't what was offering him the surprise. The Noitaniur spell was very powerful, its main draw back was the length of time it took to cast but Lucius' confidence in it hadn't been misplaced. It should have worked.

But he had dissipated it as if it was nothing and even now he could feel his power rushing through his body as it sought release. The wand Harry had passed him was pulsing in time with his heart and from the hum of magic he could feel on it, it too wanted to be used. The completed bond with Harry and the boy's full acknowledgement of that bond had pushed both their powers to their absolute peak.

Emerald eyes flicked around the room. The shadows skittered uneasily under the gaze but they moved obediently when the order came. "Take their magic," Harry ordered softly. The shadows converged from everywhere, touching every traitorous Death Eater before pulling back as quickly as they had come. :There is no reason to rush this,: he sent the thought to his beloved.

Voldemort's red eyes glanced at Harry, his mind voice was almost trembling with fatigue and it was only then did he become aware of how much power the boy had used today and how much had been channelled to him. :You are right. They aren't going anywhere.: "While it would please me greatly to kill you now, Lucius, that hardly does your crime justice," the Dark Lord smiled as he waved his new wand at the traitors, transporting all of them to cells except for Lucius.

Two red masked Death Eaters stepped forward and grabbed roughly at Malfoy as Voldemort moved backwards, seating himself on his throne, with Harry nestled comfortably in his lap. It was only with his most trusted servants here that he displayed his affection and he could feel Harry's understanding. Xaos hissed butting his head into the boy softly before he muzzled his nose, kitten like into Harry's
"It surprises me Lucius," Voldemort said easily, "and it leaves me somewhat amused," he added, "that even after all this time, and all that you have done, you still cannot say my name. In fact, the only time you said my name was when you thought I was dead. So tell me, can *think* my name?"

The blond remained silent as Voldemort chuckled. "And you thought you could betray me? You thought you could stand equal to my power when you can't even speak my name. Say my name Lucius."

More silence greeted the Dark Lord's command. "Say my name," he repeated. "It's not that hard."

Lucius glared at him, grey eyes filled with hatred. One of the Death Eaters holding him made move to twist his arm but the Dark Lord waved it off. "You seek to overthrow me, you seek to fight me but I can sense, even now, your fear. You may have *had* the power to match me Lucius, but you have never had the will. Your inability to speak my name is the embodiment of your fear and how can you fight that which you fear?"

The blond said nothing although one or two of the red masked Death Eaters snickered and from all of them there was a feeling of amusement. The rebellion was led by one who could not even say their Lord's name? Even the petty resistance offered by Auror's was worthy of more respect, since most of them, by the end, at least, had overcome the fear enough to speak the name.

Voldemort regarded him with hooded eyes before he seemed to dismiss the matter. "Don't worry Lucius," he said as he prepared to transport the blond to a cell to wait upon his pleasure, "you'll be screaming my name before I'm through with you." He flicked his wand.

"My loyal followers," Voldemort began as the red masked people moved forward, and on mass knelt before him. "Absolute victory over the Ministry has not been achieved thanks to the petty actions of a few but victory has been achieved on a far more important matter," he glanced down at Harry, who appeared to have succumbed to sleep. "We will regroup for now," he ordered as he looked back up. "The next time we attack, there will not be a repeat of tonight. Go now, spread the word to your fellows, that for the moment we wait."

"The Ministry knows my strength. Let them know fear before we crush them."

The Death Eaters nodded before most of them apparated. Two remained behind and Voldemort recognised them as those who had accompanied him to the Muggles house, moons ago. "My Lord," the said quietly, mindful of the sleeping boy. "We wish to offer you a second oath of loyalty."

"Go on."

"We will maintain our oath to you but we also swear loyalty to your mate."

"So noted. You will be the first of our followers," the Dark Lord said.

The two Death Eaters nodded and after bowing once more at him and his mate, they apparated, joining their fellows in biding their time, secure in the knowledge that their Lord was, now and forever, invincible.

"Harry," Voldemort said somewhat regretfully. "Harry, wake up, you have to go back."

:Not for a few days,: the Shadows whispered to him.

"He has to go back, or that meddling fool Dumbledore will know something has happened."
We have already altered the memories of those at Hogwarts and no one at the Atrium knows who he was.

"What do they think happened?" The Dark Lord asked curiously.

That you sent a dedicated small infiltration unit to grab our Master. Consider it a gift to you.

The Dark Lord felt a surge of pleasure pass through him. Harry didn't have to go back for a few days... The possibilities were endless.

There are a few at Hogwarts who's memories we haven't altered, but they are not in a position to speak out however, if you wait to long they may, so this time, Lord Voldemort, it is a few days at the most.

Voldemort nodded. A few days of limited time was better than none at all. "Your gift is gratefully accepted," he said, as he rose and began the walk to his chambers, Harry cradled in his arms and Xaos slithering behind them.

"Rest now, my precious one," he murmured to the sleeping boy, telling the stirring in his groin to be patient, "you're going to need it."

Chapter End Notes

Noitaniur – Ruination – for those of you who have played FF, think ultima spell, but in red. (So I wasn’t feeling that creative when I thought this one up.)
Huh..? That pretty much sums up the feeling in the Wizarding Community today. Last night, Ministry Buildings and civilian targets were all attacked by the Dark forces. Indeed the list of places last night considered lost to the Dark is extensive - Diagon Alley, St Mungo's, Muggle Relations, International Wizard Customs, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Justice, Quidditch Headquarters - to name just a few. There was fierce fighting throughout the main Ministry buildings, although neither the Department of Mysteries or the newly appointed Minister's Offices were taken. Even this esteemed paper fell under attack from the Dark Forces.

In fact the only place that appears not to have been attacked is Hogwarts and the adjoining town of Hogsmeade although additional communication was being sought as we went to press.

But then, almost as quickly as it had started, the Dark Forces turned and fought amongst themselves. Reports from several sources, including Healers at St Mungo's indicate that a rebellion was started and that Death Eaters were killing each other, with one side being backed by Vampires. The outcome of this internal fight is not yet known but what is known is that the Dark Lord himself was attacked. And this is where things really begin to become unclear.

Early reports have it that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was defeated by his attacker but later reports merely state that the contest settled into a duel, with neither side claiming the victory.

Reports from the Auror squads defending the Atrium indicate that they were hard pressed in the battle against the Dark Forces and were slowly being pushed back step by step. From the strength of the forces it can be inferred that last night was meant to be the final overwhelming push for He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, but it was a push that was interrupted by the Rebellion from within his ranks. As the Auror's, who were outnumbered about 3 to 1, were about to retreat from the public Ministerial areas, to take up more defensible positions in the private offices in the hope of a strong defence being enough of an offence until reinforcements could even the numbers, the Rebellion forces struck.

What follows is the eye-witness account from Auror Captain Sturges, a veteran of the previous war against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and the leader of the Auror troops stationed in the Atrium last night.

"I thought it was over," stated Auror Captain Sturges, "when the new lot of those black robes began apparating in. But then they began attacking their brethren, at least, we thought they were their brethren and things went from chaotic to completely out of control and we couldn't even think about defending anything, we were too pushed just defending ourselves. And then of course, those Vampires appeared. We had Him, two lots of Death Eaters we couldn't tell apart, vampires and Auror's all facing off against each other. It was a right fine mess, I tell you. But that was easy compared with what happened next."
"I was as shocked as anyone when the spell landed on him, but he just turns, casual like and greets his attacker. Of course, that's just the beginning and it only takes a moment for that wizard to be screaming. But then Lucius Malfoy steps forward and the Dark Lord greets him by name! I don't know what happened then, they began fighting, and then they stopped and talked, and began fighting again before talking, again. It was weird. It was almost as if they were feeling each other out. Then the vampire elder comes out and He stops and talks to him. I know what was said but I don't know what they were talking about. Transcripts have been given to the Unspeakables so hopefully they will be able to work it out.

"Then he seemed to get really angry. I don't know about what and tell the truth, that scared the crap out of me. I mean, You-Know-Who is powerful at the best of times, but then, I swear you could feel the power radiating off him. It wasn't natural. He ignores Lucius, Malfoy's got his hands tied up anyway with a basilisk, and he begins casting at everyone. It was all we could do to hold the shields. And it wasn't like he was using a wand. In fact, the whole night, I don't think anyone saw his wand... Oh great another thing to worry about...

"Anyway, it's right after Malfoy kills the basilisk, constructed but still creepy, he raises a shield around the two of them and they start fighting again but this is the weird part, they only exchange two or three charms before He lets himself get hit. It wasn't just anything, he let that bastard Malfoy get in Avada Kedrava!

"He laughed... I swear on everything I know, he wasn't afraid. He laughed. Now, no one - save the Boy-Who-Lived - hit by that curse, lives, and no one has the time to talk. I wasn't even thinking that at the time. I was just so shocked, everyone was - vampires, Death Eaters, Aurors - even Malfoy couldn't believe what was happening. Then, he says something and he died. I don't lie, he died.

"That should be enough cause for celebration but it wasn't over yet. I swear, Lucius is still in shock, but I guess if you're leading the Rebellion you gotta make sure you killed him so he steps forward, I think to cut off You-Know-Who's head. Hell, I wasn't about to stop him, I don't know what would have happened if he'd done it. Lucius is obviously a Death Eater and all, but I couldn't risk any of my men to do that. He's about to cut, he's got his sword raised and everything, when there's a bolt of lightning and someone else appears.

"I don't know who this one was, and frankly I don't want to know. They scared me more than You-Know-Who and I didn't think that was possible. I don't think Lucius knew them either. They're standing over You-Know-Who, protecting him and all around him, there's these broken charms. He looked kind of like a mage warrior, you know, like from the olden times when we used to fight with sword and wand but I couldn't tell for sure, his cloak covered everything. He said something to the vampire, something about blood... Actually, I think the vampire knew who he was, but he never said. This new comer though, he picks up You-Know-Who and another person appears. There's this giant snake behind them as well. Blackest thing I've ever seen.

"By now, I'm just standing there hoping that I'll wake up. Now the little one, the one holding You-Know-Who, says something to Lucius before he orders the Death Eaters to retreat and then he just leaves. I don't know who it was, but they listened and most of the Death Eaters retreated. The snake goes as well. The other one tells Malfoy to go 'cos the Dark Lord'll want to see him or something.

"But he's dead. You-Know-Who didn't move at all, and I saw those eyes. They were dead! The new one, black eyes, black robes, black face mask, just laughs and says it's easy to fix. No body comes back from the dead, no one. It's impossible and I saw that Avada Kedrava hit! The Dark Lord was dead but I guess that hardly matters to the rest of them 'cos the vampire was taking him seriously. I don't know what he did to that vampire. It wasn't like any banishing charm I've seen.
"It did... yuk... The vampire, it wasn't the elder, just exploded and bits of him went everywhere. After
that, everyone just began running or apparating. Combat's ordered compared to that. Lucius just
stood there though, not that I can blame him - you think you've won and then something like that
happens but when we surrounded him, he finally moved. Another half second and we'd have got
him. Still, we knew his loyalties now and we'll find him. That other one though, the black dressed
one, ha! they were all black dressed, he went after the vampires. Got a few of them too before they
got away...

"And then it was over. And we've got nothing to show for it, except a few captured Death Eaters,
plenty of bodies and damaged buildings. The Death Eaters retreated from everywhere, including
those places they'd taken fully.

"I don't know what He's planning, I don't know if he's even planning anything but one thing I do
know is that we weren't ready. I don't know how badly the Rebellion hurt You-Know-Who, I don't
even know if he's still alive but I do know that we should be thankful that something stopped him. We
gotta train, we gotta recruit and we gotta get stronger. There is no choice. No one had any idea the
Dark Forces were that numerous or that strong but now that we do...

"I don't know but we are going to have to find some way to fight unless we want to be bowing down
to him forever."

And that's why the entire wizarding community is confused. You-Know-Who was in a position to
finish it last night but he was apparently felled but if we believe the words of the two who appeared
in the middle of combat he's not dead. Who were those two? They are obviously wizards of extreme
power. Are they in the employ of You-Know-Who or were they merely taking advantage of the
chaos? What are their goals and who do they really serve?

Lucius Malfoy, and all of the identified Death Eaters with him have not been seen since last night, so
the outcome of any internal conflict remains unknown. The Death Eaters have dispersed to the
winds, once again becoming the respectable citizens they are not. The vampires are in hiding as
well, their usual haunts empty.

Only the participants of the battle, those Dark Forces who saw the night out to the end may have
any idea how everything concluded and even then they may not be sure and they are not coming
forward. It could be days, it could be weeks, it could be months or it could be never before we learn
the outcome of the battle between the Dark Lord and the Rebels but for now, it obvious that the
forces of Light must regroup and strengthen themselves with prodigious haste for we are not ready
for what may come.

Security everywhere must be reviewed and the Aurors must be given the abilities and training
necessary to fight for unless we do this, we leave ourselves open to the possibility of losing our way
of life forever. The Ministry, weakened from within by the ex-Minister must now rise above that fact
and together with the Order of the Phoenix, it must prepare to fight. We must all prepare to fight.

We have been given a second chance. We have to use it.

For more eye witness accounts of the fighting, turn to page 3 - Diagon Alley - a Battle Lost, You-
Know-Who Himself Fights, Customs Taken
For the full time-lined account of the nights events turn to page 5 - Anatomy of a Ministerial
Disaster.
For a list of known Death Eaters, turn to page 7 and please note the Ministry Procedures to be
adopted if you encounter any of these individuals.
For a full discourse on the workings of the Avada Kedrava, turn to page 9 - The Deadliest
Unforgivable
Draco put the paper down with narrowed eyes. Everyone was gathered around him in the common room and had been watching him read. There was nothing in there about that dead Gryffindork Potter but he'd been expecting that. They had struck late last night and in the confusion it was doubtful that news had reached the paper yet... Tomorrow though, that would be a completely different matter.

He was worried though but not overly so. His Father's forces had struck hard and fast, obviously too hard and fast if they could not hold the territory gained, but better to give it up and reclaim it than fight a losing battle. Draco was confident that his Father now held the mantle of Dark Lord even if he hadn't been able to take the Lord's head, the curse had struck true, just like it had with Potter. Now though, he had to explain to these fools who so blindly followed a fallen Lord, who their true master was.

"The plans didn't go quite as expected last night," he began, holding up one thin hand to forestall the questions. "And that is because of an unforseen source of weakness."

"Weakness?"

Draco nodded. "Our Lord is fallen by his own weakness, the blood of the accursed Gryffindor and that insipid rat felled him but new Lord rose to take his place."

"The Dark Lord is fallen?" There was disbelief from all round and Draco narrowed grey eyes, he was going to have to take this slower or else they'd turn against him.

"It was not his fault," he said smoothly. "Our Lord was a great man - wise, cunning, strong - but his rebirth was flawed. Maybe it was flawed of necessity, I don't know. But the weak blood of the rat and that idiot Potter worked against him and he has lost his power. He could not rule the dark and no longer sought the dominance of purebloods. He was lost to us."

There were a few slow nods from around the room and Draco breathed a small sigh of relief. His Father had recruited many of the parents of the children here now, so they apparently had communicated their new beliefs to their spawn. It just made his job easier.

"Dad... dad said as much," one of the younger Slytherin's whispered.

"A new Lord is risen," Draco continued. "A pure Lord, one who will take up the cause of our fallen Lord."

"Who?" They asked, although Draco could see that some already knew.

"Lucius Salazar Malfoy," he said easily, knowing that one glance at the paper would tell them all they needed to know.

One or two looked horrified but others seized the opportunity. "Well, my Lord," they said softly. "What do we do now?"
My Lord... He liked the sound of that. He liked the sound of it a lot. "For now we do nothing. We lost some of our fellows but there is nothing to connect us with last night, even if Black is screaming bloody murder, there are more than enough witness' who will place us here. Now we just watch them crumble and enjoy the show. There won't be another like it."

There were nods from all round before they began filing out to breakfast. Draco smiled. He knew the one's who objected and they would not be a problem for much longer and he knew those who would be loyal. They would be his first followers. For now though, he supposed he should show to breakfast, least there be any suspicion on him. Once his Father ruled supreme, all would know the truth. Besides, he wanted to see how that fool Dumbledore was going to explain Potter's death!
Sirius paced back and forth in his quarters at Hogwarts. It had seemed so easy last night. Harry had chosen to go after his beloved and for him the only choice had been to follow Harry to protect his Godson.

But then he'd seen who Harry loved and if it hadn't have been for the shadowy presences guiding his movements he would have turned to his Godson and demanded an explanation then and there, regardless of who was watching, regardless of the consequences. But they had stopped him, telling him that it was Harry's choice and then showing him what to do to destroy the vampires. He'd followed their instructions, finally apparating back to Hogwarts where he'd met with Dumbledore to tell the ancient wizard about the Death Eater incursion all at their instruction and backed by their power when necessary because he had not been fit to act on his own.

The man had told him to rest, going so far as to see that he was escorted to his quarters and he could sense the guards outside even now. He couldn't rest, not now, not when he knew the truth. It had seemed so easy then but it was anything but.

How could Harry love that man? Was he even a man? How had it happened? How anything!

He wanted answers but the only one who could answer him was Harry and at the moment he wasn't available and he didn't know where his Godson had apparated to with the Dark Lord. It was so frustrating! How could this have happened?

:Because it was inevitable.: 

"No!" Sirius snarled. "I don't believe that."

:Because it was his choice.: 

"So why did he choose it?"

:It will make him happy.: 

"Volde-fucking-mort will make him happy?" Sirius hissed the question with a passion would have done any serpent proud.

:Yes. He will make our Master happy.: 

"How?" Sirius was angry and he couldn't hide it.

:Because he alone will understand.: 

"Understand what?" His vision went red.

:Everything. They paused. 'We will protect him, even against you.; the shadows' power pulsed around him, threatening and warning but still for the moment keeping its distance from him. :This is the only way for him to be truly happy.; The power flared again in a warning that was not necessary.
The anger seemed to drain out of him all at once at the words. "The only way?" He whispered.

:"The only way,: the Shadows confirmed.

:"Voldemort will not hurt him?"

:"Never,: :

:"Voldemort will not betray him?"

:"Never,: :

:"Voldemort will not use him?"

:"Never,: :

:"Voldemort truly loves him?"

:"For all time,: :

:"Harry," Sirius whispered the word, looking up at the ceiling. "Harry," he cried the name.

Sirius gulped, sniffing deeply. "James... I'm sorry. I am so sorry." This was the ultimate betrayal of his friend but he could not help it. The shadows wrapped around him and he felt warm, they were supporting him as he cried.

:"Shhh,: They whispered under his hearing, soothing but strong.

He rocked back and forth as the tears streamed down his face, murmuring his apologies to his dead friend. When he was almost cried out he felt several shadows enter him gently, slipping into his bloodstream and pulsing through him. :You are one of us now,: the voice was no longer external.

:"James,: Sirius whispered, as he wiped his eyes. "I will protect him, James. I swore once that I would guide him James, but I also swore that I would let him be his own man. Guess we never saw this one coming! But I will be his guardian for all time. I will stand with him. I will protect him, James. It isn't what we expected but if he is happy... if he is happy, James, watch him and be proud." He glanced down, feeling strangely at peace. "I guess I'd better go to breakfast," he said quietly, looking around for a fresh set of robes.

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Dumbledore looked at the gathered Hogwarts students quietly, his eyes sombre. He knew Tom had followers here but he had never dreamt that it had gone so far, but the bodies retrieved did not lie and the Dark Mark was burned into their arms. He knew then that there were others here, who hadn't died, hiding amongst the students and there were the one's who'd taken Harry for Tom. It had been a well co-ordinated effort, as all the events last night had been until Lucius Malfoy's rebellion had struck.

He turned blue eyes towards Draco but the blond lad was sitting quietly as he ate, giving no indication that he knew of his father's plans. It was possible that was the case but the Headmaster couldn't shake the thought that Draco knew something.

The media didn't know yet, but they would soon. He had ordered Sirius to rest last night, he wasn't sure the man had but he was sure that Mr Black had at least spent the night in his chambers, which would hopefully give him the strength now to go on.
It would not be easy once the media knew Harry was gone... Although, he gave a wry smile, Snape had suggested that in the chaos Harry would probably escape. It had been a snappish, snide comment but it did betray Severus’ worry. Albus was worried but he knew Harry was resourceful and no matter what most people believed to the contrary, the Dark Lord was still courting, he would not hurt Harry. Not physically at least.

There was a rather large and conspicuous empty spot at the Gryffindor table. Miss Weasley was still in the infirmary and her brothers and Miss Granger were with her. There was some quiet speculation about that and it was slowly growing. He sighed, best to deal with that now.

Dumbledore slowly rose to his feet as Minerva tapped her glass to bring the students to attention. He looked around slowly, noting the worried looks on many of the faces looking up at him. They might be young, but many had already read the paper and knew what that meant, they were not stupid. Even some of the youngest looked scared, knowing that even though they were witches and wizards, it may not be enough to save them from the Dark Lord.

"Last night, as I'm sure many of you are aware, the Lord Voldemort launched attacks on many Wizarding Buildings throughout our country and I'm sure many of you are also aware of what the Auror's are saying. You are all old enough to understand the truth, so I will not hide it. It was a very close thing and had it not been for a Rebellion within his ranks, Hogwarts may this morning have been the last hope for the Wizarding world.

"But this is not the case and while names have been named in the paper, we will not judge any related to those names. The actions of one are not the actions of another and everyone here will remember that. Anyone found prosecuting another student will be suspended without question.

"However, last night Hogwarts was not spared attack as the Daily Prophet would have you believe. A small group of Death Eaters were dispatched and with some help from several students here they infiltrated the castle. Their task was very specific and as I'm sure you have noticed there are missing places from both the Gryffindor and Slytherin tables." Dumbledore's voice was serious and his eyes, while still twinkling, did not show their usual mirth.

"While it pains me their mission succeeded and Harry Potter has been removed from the confines of this castle."

He paused as intense speculation broke out at his words but he hastened to reassure them. "Miss Virginia Weasley, her brothers and Miss Granger are absent at the moment because Miss Weasley is currently indisposed in the infirmary. They were not involved with the attack in any way."

There was a collective sigh of relief from throughout the room and he couldn't help but feel a small surge of pride. It appeared that everyone had been worrying and while there was still worry for Harry, it was good to see that at least some students had been worried about his friends. They would need that unity to fight.

The twinkle in his eyes died and his voice became stern as he continued, any feeling of a gentle patriarch vanishing from his stance. "Unfortunately, the other absences' at the Slytherin table are not due to anything so benign. Several students who, we believe, helped Lord Voldemort's forces enter the castle have fallen. Notification has been sent to their parents and the Auror's notified. The cause of death has yet to be determined but it appears likely that the Death Eaters, once the students fulfilled their task, were under orders to execute their young helpers. Such is the way of the Dark Lord so let this be a warning to you all."

A shiver passed through much of the Hall and Dumbledore suppressed a smile. It was a thought to give the potential followers of the Dark Lord pause and they should be aware that swearing loyalty
to him was not a guarantee of survival.

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What? Draco almost shouted as Dumbledore made his announcement but he was wise enough to hold his tongue. That had not happened! Potter was dead! They couldn't hide that. And the Slytherin students had not been part of the Dark Lord's forces, he had checked that carefully. There were one or two seventh years who were almost Death Eaters and his Father had warned him off asking them for help and while those who had helped last night would probably have become Death Eaters, none of them were in contact with the Dark Lord. And since there had been no Death Eaters here last night, how could they have been killed by the Dark Lord's forces?

Potter's pet basilisk had killed them and Dumbledore was covering that up! Dumbledore was covering it all up. He wouldn't have believed it possible but he was hearing it. What had Black told them? He cast grey eyes towards the man but the dog was slowly munching calmly through a piece of toast. He was not in the least bit distraught.

That was not right.

He blinked carefully, as a sense of unease crept around him when Black glanced at him. Draco almost swore the man was laughing at him and that just could not be. We killed him! Why isn't he raging?

There was something else happening here and Draco didn't know what it was. He had actually been expecting to be hauled out of bed last night once the dog recovered enough to go barking to Dumbledore that he'd killed precious Potter but nothing had happened. Everyone involved last night had left a doppelganger in the Slytherin Common Room, doppelgangers that had been spotted by almost all their house and Severus Snape several times when he checked the room. Had they discovered that and decided that Black was mistaken in his claims that they had killed Potter? Then why was he so calm and why was he still there, not hauled off to St Mungo's?

But if Black was here, and Black was calm, was Potter really alive? He and his followers had left as soon as Potter's body had hit the floor, so could Potter have been faking it?

No! I killed him. I saw the curse hit with my own eyes. Potter survived the Dark Lord as a baby because it bounced off, it did not bounce last night! Potter is dead and this is just their pathetic excuse to try to catch us off guard. It's not going to work.

Serendipitously Draco shook his head at his new followers. "Behave as usual," he whispered under his breath, willing them all to hear him. "They will have to tell the truth eventually and if we tell them, they will know we were involved. We say nothing and wait for the Ministry to fall."

There were small nods from all around and Draco smirked. He almost laughed when he realised that a large number of students were looking at him and had interpreted his smirk as his approval that Potter was gone. Well, let them think what they would. They were all living on borrowed time and borrowed hope and that would be crushed soon enough.

He knew the truth.
Harry stirred; luxuriating in the warmth he could feel now that he was only half conscious. It was a feeling you could get only when you were not quite awake and he savoured it to the fullest while he could but eventually the perfect temperature became too hot as he awoke fully. He stretched, working every muscle thoroughly before he rolled over and opened his eyes.

He couldn't help a half smile at the sight that greeted him but it was a smile that was tempered by thought. Voldemort was still asleep and the older man lay with a boneless grace. His expression in rest as expected was relaxed but what Harry had not been expecting was the sense of content he could feel and the absolute openness from the Dark Lord. When Voldemort was awake and in the presence of anyone, regardless of their power, there was always a sense of alertness, of wariness. To him, everyone was a potential threat but that sense was absent now as he slumbered easily.

"I should consider you an enemy," Harry whispered softly, reaching out to brush back a stray lock of hair.

You killed them. You said it yourself and you do not regret. She hated you, you know. She gave everything she was to kill you, to protect me from you and she got that last desire. Pity she did not know that you were not the final darkness. It should have been fine... I would have fought you to the death if any other family had raised me. I know that. I should fight you now but I can't. I should hate you but I can't. It shouldn't matter what you have done for me. Or rather, at the very least what you have done for me, should be the balance of what you have done to me and I should regard you with indifference...

So why has what you have done for me outbalances what you did to me? Especially when it's your fault... If you hadn't killed them, then none of it would have happened. I should hate you. I should hate you without question.

There should be no way for me to be here... No way...

So why does nothing balance? Why can I lie here and feel that this is where I should be... Why don't I hate you? Why will I spend every ounce of power I have to protect you? Why do I know that you will kill again and I will watch on and let you? Let you kill, let you rule... Let you do anything so long as you are happy...

Why can't I remember that you killed them, and that you are indirectly responsible for everything? Why do I see what you have done and count that as more when really it is nothing more than what anyone would have done?

Why do I love you?

"I don't know," he whispered, answering his own internal question. "But I do."

That fact was undeniable and unassailable in his mind. It was a truth he held forever now. "Mother," Harry blinked, feeling the white energy of Lily Potter's final sacrifice wrapped around him. It had always been there, so much a constant in his life that he didn't know what it would be like if it was
gone. But it had to go now, or else, she would never be at peace and every time the Dark Lord touched him, there would be the tiniest part of his soul reviling the gentle caress.

He reached out, feeling the shadows stirring at his movement but they provided him the power to touch the protection charm, even if it was the polar opposite of them and it caused them pain. "Mother, thank you," Harry whispered as he pulled at the charm embracing him, "but you can not protect me forever and I must make my own choice. You did everything you could, Mother and I both thank and love you for that, and what you did has become a legend. For that one moment, Mother, you surpassed us all - Dumbledore, Voldemort, me - everyone and the strength of your conviction is still present today. I love you Mother, Father, but the choices you made are now obsolete because of the bad choice of another. Thank you for everything," Harry murmured as beneath the touch of shadow the light charm began to fade. "I will always love you but this is my choice and this is how it will be."

The charm faded entirely and Harry shivered, for the first time in his life truly exposed and completely unprotected but strangely at peace.

-Master...- There came a soft hiss from behind him and Harry turned to look into Xaos' emerald eyes, grateful for the distraction from his thoughts.

-Hm?- He asked as the basilisk nudged gently into him in greeting.

-I want...- Xaos began before pausing. -I would like you to do something for me, Master,- he rephrased carefully, his voice almost inaudible.

-What do you want?- Harry asked curiously.

-I exist to protect you, Master, but I cannot protect in my current form.-

-You cannot protect me?- Harry queried. At the moment Xaos seemed more than capable of protecting him from anything. The basilisk was large and sleek, almost as large as the basilisk from the Chamber of Secrets but with a sense of contained power that far eclipsed that serpent.

-I can protect you here, Master, but very few will be stupid enough to offer you impertinence, and I can protect you on the battlefield. But I cannot protect you everywhere and that is what worries me. I exist to protect you, Master and I must be able to do that all the time.-

Harry frowned. -So what do you want me to do?- 

-Look again at the King,- Xaos instructed and Harry concentrated for a moment before looking back towards Voldemort.

His eyes saw magic now and Xaos and the room was alive with it. But he turned back towards his beloved, "Wha..?" He couldn't help the question.

Voldemort was alive with magic as he had expected but the magic streams weren't moving in the shape of a man, they were moving in the shape of a great serpent. Harry blinked, looking closer seeing both the man and serpent. He almost started when the serpent blinked back at him, its tongue flickering constantly, tasting the air magically and Harry realised all at once that the serpent and man were separate beings but at the same time were one.

-I want that,- Xaos said as Harry turned back, his eye sight returning to normal. -The King will always be the Serpent Lord and you are his mate, I will grant you similar protection, if you will have me.-
-How?-

:We will help,: the Shadows murmured.

-What will happen?- Harry asked.

-I will join with you and I will be with you always Master. When I need to protect you Master, I will come forth, much like the King’s protector and then I will return to you always. I exist to protect you, Master and one way or another, I will do that.-

-But what will happen?- 

-Look again,- Xaos instructed.

Harry turned back towards Voldemort, his eyes just seeing the corporal world. He looked over the white skin and saw a flicker. There was something there but it had disappeared beneath the covers before he could be sure. He kept watching, his eyes caressing the form and slowly it emerged. There was shadow on the white skin moving over one shoulder uncovered by shirt or sheet, a patch of skin that looked like scales. It solidified and Harry blinked as a small serpent reared off the Dark Lord's form. It was rather small, but Harry was sure, it did not have to remain that way. Despite it's size it was powerful, radiating a sense of deadly purpose.

-My mate,- the serpent hissed, nodding slightly towards Harry, before it looked over at Xaos. -You may,- it added before merging back with the slumbering Lord, fading completely.

-That is what will happen.-

Harry nodded as he looked back. -Okay,- he said quietly. -What do I do?- 

-:You, Master, do nothing. Just relax.: The response came from both Xaos and the Shadows as Xaos reared high and the Shadows came to life, their inky darkness surrounding the serpent to the point where even Harry had trouble telling where the boundaries were.

Xaos' crest raised and his eyes changed to ruby. Harry could feel the killing power there but he was not afraid. That power was his to command because Xaos was his and would soon be him. The Shadows swirled around the serpent, and as Harry watched Xaos became smaller, returning to his natural size, floating in mid air, supported by absolute darkness before he slithered towards his Master. Harry moved without thinking, raising one arm. Xaos spun his way around, lithely coiling himself along Harry's arm, with his tail disappearing behind the small shoulder, snaking down Harry's back. He laid the back of his head on Harry's palm and Harry suppressed a giggle at the tickle of the serpents crest against his skin.

Then suddenly there was no tickle against his skin and the light pressure that had been Xaos was gone. Harry looked to his arm and was relieved to see that Xaos was still there but now the serpent looked like a tattoo, an incredibly detailed, living tattoo that was shifting restlessly within his skin.

-Master,- Xaos’ voice whispered in his mind. -I will be with you forever now,- he said easily as the tattoo began to fade. -When you strike with this hand, it will by my fangs that bite, my poison that kills. When you desire my eyes will be yours and death shall come at a glance. Master...- The serpent's voice faded entirely with the tattoo but Harry knew that Xaos was still there and would always be there.

He turned back towards the Dark Lord. "I really should hate you," he sighed, his thoughts returned to their circle they had been treading since he had awoken.
"You should but you don't," Voldemort said quietly as ruby eyes opened, his rich voice full of his own assurance.

The older man just lay there, looking up at Harry. He didn't move as the green eyed boy reached out to brush his hair.

Harry gulped. "So why don't I?" He asked, his voice trembling. Watching the Dark Lord sleep was far different from actually speaking with him.

Voldemort half closed his eyes as he shook his head, "I don't know, my little one, I don't know but I do not regret it. I love you. And I will protect you and that is all I need to know."

Harry nodded as he lay back down, resting his head on his arm as he looked back over at the Dark Lord. He gulped again, tears coming to his eyes, "I love you." He said the words so softly it was almost impossible to hear. "I love you," he said again, more strongly this time, as the tears escaped. "I shouldn't but I do and I will love you forever," he sighed.

Voldemort did not move as Harry's words flowed through him. He shivered. It was more than just the words; it was everything that came with those words, the feelings and emotions that flowed through their bond. It was intense and immensely powerful and it was more stimulating than the deepest rapture - torture and ecstasy combined into one emotion - and he reciprocated with everything that he was, wrapping his beloved with his feeling as Harry blanketed him.

After long moments of passion he moved, kissing his mate gently, tasting, exploring as he opened his mind, allowing Harry to feel what he felt.

Green eyes blinked at him, the crystal tears catching in long black lashes, reflecting the light like diamonds. Voldemort pulled back slightly before he licked at the tears still flowing down the boy's cheeks, savouring the salty liquid.

"I love you," the Dark Lord whispered as he moved close again, knowing his destined mate needed to hear the reassuring words and he was prepared to say them, to let Harry feel them as many times as it took to bring his equal to his side. Harry had slept with him, true but both times he had not truly known his partner and the only times Harry had ever known those he lay with, were times of pain, were times he had been forced. This time, the boy would know and would participate willingly and the Dark Lord could sense he needed the reassurance that he was loved and that this would be what they both wanted. Harry responded to his kiss, opening his mouth to taste his tears on the Dark Lord's tongue.

:I love you.; Harry responded through their link, relaxing as he reached out to embrace Voldemort and draw himself close, snuggling into the warmth that was there. :I shouldn't but I do. You saved me, you protected me, you alone have not lied to me and for that, I will give you everything.: Harry promised silently as he ran his hands up and down his beloveds back.

The Dark Lord drew back slightly. He could have said what he needed to through their bond but there was something more permanent about the spoken word as this was to important for Harry. His mate's promise to him had already come with the admission of love despite the overwhelming sense that it should not be possible. Once this was said, words would not be necessary.

"My little one," he said, red eyes burning intensely and he could feel the serpent within echoing his words. "I promised you once that I would never let them hurt you again and soon you will know the truth of that promise. You are my destined mate and the only being who will stand with me for all time. You are the only one for whom my power is gentled, the only one who can quell my rage with a glance, the only one I love and I promise you now, I will never let you go and I shall never let
anyone hurt you again. You belong to me, just as the serpent belongs to the shadows. You have already given me everything because you have given me yourself and I will now partake of you, just as you will take of me. I will give you the world Harry simply because you are mine. I promise you Harry, I will protect you for all time." He leaned forward placing a chaste kiss on the tip of Harry's nose, smiling at his lover. "I love you, my precious one, I love only you and I will love only you for all time."

Emerald eyes had watched him the entire time he had been speaking, unblinking but Voldemort was satisfied. He could feel the final confusion fading from his beloved and at the slight tremor that passed through the small body at his last words all hesitation vanished and from that moment, he knew Harry was his, body and soul.
Harry bit lightly on the Dark Lord's lower lip, sucking gently as he ran his hands up and down his lover's back. Voldemort had similarly embraced him, his long fingers tickling over Harry's spine.

Their legs were tangled together and Harry could feel the tight heat coming from his beloved. He remembered how good his red-eyed lover had tasted and shivered slightly with the anticipation of more. It would be better this time, sweeter because he knew the truth. He pulled back, licking his lips as he brought his hands around to pluck at the ties on the Dark Lord's cloths. It appeared the man appreciated the old ways because he had conjured cotton sleeping garb for both of them, tied rather than buttoned. The garments were loose and were of such a fine weave that they felt like silk. But right at the moment, they were interfering with the task at hand. He supposed he could have magically vanished them but that didn't seem right.

He could feel the Dark Lord's long fingers tugging at the ties on his own shirt and smiled at Voldemort before he muzzled his face into the white skin of his throat, licking and nipping. He continued to pull on the ties of shirt next to him, as he raised his legs, hooking one over his lover, while his other thigh rubbed up against his genitals. Voldemort sighed and Harry could feel him pushing back and forth against him. He moved one hand down to stroke his beloved's shaft but was startled when his arm was stopped with a gentle grip. Harry looked up into red eyes.

"No, it's my turn" Voldemort said, as he turned Harry to lie on his back before straddling him. "Let me pleasure you." He rubbed himself against Harry, grinning as the boy squirmed, emerald eyes clouding with delight. He had one tie on the boy's shirt undone and the other came free easily. He pushed the cotton aside, exposing Harry's chest and moved one hand to a small nipple, as he moved his other to cup and massage Harry, removing his beloved's pants easily.

A shiver passed through the smaller body at the touch. "So enchantingly expressive," the Dark Lord laughed as Harry moaned. He wrapped his hand around Harry's balls and squeezed gently, rhythmically, massaging in time with his fingers teasing the boy's nipple, as his thumb rubbed back and forth on the base of his stiffening penis. Harry gasped, throwing his head back at the skilful pleasure.

Voldemort moved to muzzle Harry's neck as the boy had done to him, nipping a line along the artery he could feel before he extended his tongue to lick at a sensitive ear. He could feel his own excitement rising at the small noises Harry was making. Small hands were pressed against his chest, rubbing at his own nipples, making them surge with blood, through the fabric of his shirt. The serpent within was becoming aroused and his breath quickened as his magic responded, mottling his skin with the patterns of the Serpent King.

With a slight tremor the serpent awoke and suddenly he could more than taste Harry, he could smell him, smell the sweet sweat beginning to form on him and smell the clear scent of aniseed and vanilla, tangy and intoxicating but purely Harry. He moved back to kiss his little one, the taste of vanilla becoming stronger as his tongue entered Harry's mouth but the sharp aniseed never faded entirely.

Emerald eyes looked at him and he could feel Harry beginning to thrust against him. The boy's cock was standing tall and hard and he was ready for further attention. Small hands were running through his hair, keeping their mouths locked together, not that the Dark Lord was complaining. He persisted
in kissing Harry, hot, wet and passionate, pulling back periodically so that they could both draw breath before they continued their ardour. Voldemort unrelentingly massaged Harry's balls as his other hand traced archaic patterns, moving downwards to where he wrapped it around Harry's erect member and began pumping slowly up and down.

He moved his own cock against smooth skin and wondered when Harry had removed his loose trews, revelling in the tightness he could feel. Harry began to thrust against his hand, moaning through the kisses in time with the motion before he threw his head back. "Harder..." he gasped and beneath him Voldemort felt Harry strain against him. He bit into Harry's neck, sucking the skin there as he moved his hand faster against his treasure, tightening his grip slightly. He moved his second hand deeper between smooth thighs, his thumb continuing the massage the hot sack at the base of Harry's penis as his fingers probed for the boys opening. When he found it, he inserted one long finger, burying his digits in Harry's warmth. All the while he continued to pump at Harry's erection, feeling the blood pulse through it as Harry rocked back and forth.

"Deeper!" Harry cried, pushing back against the intrusion, his hips making small circles, pushing his cock into the hand stroking him and his anus on to the finger probing him. He was panting, crying out softly with every stimulus.

Small arms wrapped around the Dark Lord and he felt Harry muzzle his face into the top of his head as he continued to suck on the boy's neck, bruising the creamy skin. His own excitement was growing but he could sense Harry was almost there.

"Deeper," Harry gasped, "harder," he repeated the entreaty and Voldemort moved to comply, driving a second finger into the boy, scissoring him gently to stretch the still tight opening and redoubling his efforts but he almost lost it completely when Harry opened his mind.

Harry was suddenly everywhere within him and he could feel ghost fingers moving inside him and a sweet pressure on his own cock, the phantom feelings from Harry of what he was doing to the boy. He could feel Harry's arousal, he was Harry's arousal and he was so close to completion and spurring everything on he could feel the boy's desire, the over-riding craving for physical release which at the moment was the leading edge of Harry's love. The depth of feeling drove him almost to completion in an instant but he held back with the knowledge that he had not yet given Harry that feeling.

Voldemort was slightly amazed that Harry had not yet cum since he had opened his mind to him earlier and he knew Harry could feel everything he felt but suddenly the knowledge made him smile as he felt the phantom fingers within him brush against his prostrate. Harry stiffened at the stimulus, the pleasure almost to much to bear before the Dark Lord drew his fingers back and smiled, remembering how good it had been to have Harry's tight warmth surrounding him and knowing that Harry would be able to feel it all, his own pleasure at the cock inside him, and Voldemort's at the boy's tight body.

"More..." Harry cried, no longer thinking as he sought his release, thrusting against the Dark Lord's curled fingers desperately.

"Anything you want," he said softly as he pulled himself upwards to look down at Harry. Emerald eyes were clouded with passion and he was gasping, making mewling noises with every breath. He was biting his lip lightly, his cherry lips a brilliant contrast to his sweat covered cream skin. Small hands rested on his shoulders and he could feel the pin picks coming from Harry's nails as the boy gripped him urgently. Slowly, carefully, he pulled his fingers out of Harry and pushed the boy's legs wider before he nudged his cock into position. "Are you ready?"

"Now, please!"
The Dark Lord slipped about half way into Harry before he was stopped by the pressure, unable to go further without force because the boy was not yet stretched enough. Harry didn't seem to mind because he wrapped his legs around him and squeezed pulling himself upwards to allow deeper penetration. Harry cried out in denial as Voldemort drew back but his cry changed to one of passion as the Dark Lord pushed forward again moving deeper.

"Yes... yes... deeper!" Harry gave him the encouragement, no evidence of pain in his cries.

He continued to move, slowly and gently as Harry encouraged him, thrusting to meet him, eager to be filled completely. It was incredible. Voldemort could actually feel what Harry felt and it was almost as if Harry was driving himself into the Dark Lord's body. It was hot and there was a desperate need to be filled completely with the shaft, to have it buried completely within him. It was pleasure beyond words accompanied by an aching emptiness each time he drew back within his beloved.

"More... now!" Harry demanded as he tightened his muscles against Voldemort, enticing a groan from the Dark Lord, before the older man pumped him more savagely, stopping only when he was completely within him. "Don't stop!" Harry cried when the Dark Lord paused, controlling the Serpent's desire to dominate briefly.

Voldemort looked down at Harry. He was completely buried; the boy's buttocks flush against his thighs. Harry was so close, hence the demands, he was so close himself. His own pleasure at being deep within Harry was combining with Harry's own intoxication at the intrusion and it wouldn't take much more before they both lost it but he was determined that Harry would be first.

He pulled out almost completely before thrusting down again, watching black hair fly wildly as Harry shook his head at the pleasurable torment. Once, twice, three times, in and out, Harry moaned, his legs tightening as he sought to keep his lover inside him. Voldemort continued to stroke Harry's cock as it began to twitch, he smiled, moving to lock mouth's with Harry again as he pumped into the fiery, narrow passage that was his beloved, pleasuring Harry further as the boy exploded into his hand, moaning loudly, beautiful eyes squeezed shut against the assault of ecstasy.

Harry's satiation washed through him, spurring him to his own release. He thrust deep into his leman, with a savage strength that shook the smaller body but Harry was too lost in physical completion to even notice the rough gesture, his small arms wrapped around him tightly, as he pulled himself upwards, forcing the Dark Lord deeper into him at the instant of release.

They lay together for long moments, the passion of one mingling with the passion of the other until it was uncertain who was feeling what. Harry continued to flex his muscles around the still hard member within him and the Dark Lord's long fingers continued to massage his beloved, collecting the semen. Finally Harry drew back from Voldemort's kiss, breathing heavily but as he looked up at the Dark Lord his eyes were earnest. :I love you,: he sent through their bond, disentangling his thoughts slightly so that Voldemort could feel his love separately.

Voldemort responded by raising his hand to lick at Harry's essence. He licked with a slow sensual movement, making sure Harry could see his delight in the fluid. It was more precious to him than anything and the taste eclipsed the finest wine.

Harry pulled himself upwards, extending his own tongue to lick at the sticky fluid covering the Dark Lord's hand. Soon the white skin was clean and the fingers were once again stroking his face before they kissed again.

Aniseed, vanilla and pure heaven - did Harry try to drive him insane? Voldemort struggled for coherent thought, as he tasted everything that was Harry.
"I want to taste you," Harry said as he rolled them both and pulled off the Dark Lord. The penis sagged slightly as it exited his body but Harry didn't mind as he squirmed downwards, pinning Voldemort in place by sending a wave of mental love to him. He extended his tongue, licking the length with one long stroke and moaned appreciatively at the taste. He continued to lick, taking the head into his mouth and sucking gently, in between long careful strokes.

It wasn't long before Voldemort was hard again, and Harry stopped licking, moving now to suck more, flicking his tongue over the Dark Lord's length, tracing out the bulging veins as he sank his mouth deeper. He could feel his own arousal responding to the pleasure he was giving his mate and he was about to take the hard member fully into him, when he was pulled off the stiff shaft and dragged upwards to gaze into burning red eyes.

"No," the Dark Lord said firmly.

"But..." Harry managed to say the word before a long finger was pressed against his lips.

"You want to pleasure me?" The sentence was finished for him.

He nodded.

"Not like that then," Voldemort said. "Not like that."

Harry frowned as he felt an echo of need from his lover. It was an emptiness that ached to be filled.

"I need you, Harry. I need you with me, need you in me."

Harry nodded again as he understood where the echoing emptiness was coming from. He grinned, "Anything you want," he said, repeating the words that had been said to him as his kissed the finger. Voldemort was feeling the echo of his own desire, the desire that had been filled with his lover's presence within him. It was certainly no chore to grant the request.

"You are mine, Harry, but equally I wish to be yours."

Harry smiled, "You taste good," he murmured, as he leant forward, gently kissing the Dark Lord as he lowered his hands to stroke the member his mouth had been pulled off. Slowly his continued to withdraw his mind. While it was pleasurable to feel his lover's excitement he sensed that this time Voldemort needed to feel this alone, know this alone. Just as he had needed the assurances of love, the Dark Lord needed this assurance. The man's reticence made sense. For him, no matter how pleasurable this would be an act of surrender. And then of course there were a number of little things that had been grating, the Dark Lord's complete understanding of his pain, for example, had to have come from somewhere. Harry nodded as he understood. It made sense. It more than made sense but he let none of that understanding show in his mind. The Dark Lord had already killed them, but were others who had caused pain and Harry resolved silently to give his beloved those others.

He rolled them again, moving towards the edge of their bed. He could have taken the Dark Lord from behind, but he wanted to see his lover in the throws of passion, to see the usually refined and controlled Lord without any masks, just as he had watched him. With a flip, he landed on the floor, his feet silent on the thick carpet as he stood, Voldemort's legs straddling him.

Harry smiled as he continued to stimulate his lover, stroking the cleft of his buttocks slowly as his forearm kept pressure on the erect cock. He placed his other hand on Voldemort's chest, keeping the older man lying flat on the bed as he worked. The Dark Lord reached out to touch him but Harry shook his head, gently moving the arms so that they rested comfortably against his hips, the long fingers gripping his buttocks, before he returned his hand to the white skin of the chest. His other
hand had found the small opening and was now tracing around it tenderly. After a few moments, emerald locked with ruby and he sank one finger inside.

Muscles clamped around him at the intrusion and Voldemort moaned. Harry chuckled reassuringly as he wriggled his finger, enticing the muscles to relax. He raised his other hand and traced his fingertips down the white forehead and tickled them over a flat serpentine nose resting them on pale lips. He licked the air encouragingly as Voldemort's serpent tongue flickered around his fingers, tasting before his lips parted and Harry pushed his fingers inside.

Harry bent over, using his lithe bulk to keep the Dark Lord pinned as he pulled his finger out, moving his arm around his lover's leg, before he pushed back in. The short emptiness earnt a small muffled moan that Harry shushed sympathetically. He breathed deeply. Voldemort's scent was dry, like sun on leaves with the slightest hint of burning. Dry tinder that only required a spark to ignite the inferno. As he continued to probe around he pushed his cock against Voldemort's keeping them both excited. As the Dark Lord had done to him the first time, he quickly switched his hands around, driving a second finger into his beloved.

"Feels good?" He whispered the question and was answered with a slight nod that was lost in a muffled scream as Harry's probing fingers found what he was looking for. He laughed, pulling back before brushing his fingers back against the Dark Lord's prostate, earning him another inarticulate moan. "Nearly ready," he gave the encouragement, moving his hands again, this time plunging three fingers inside. He didn't bother replacing his fingers in Voldemort's mouth, instead he moved close to place butterfly kisses on the Dark Lord's neck, his hands continuing to stroke the erect member.

He chuckled wickedly in anticipation, stroking his fingers against Voldemort's most sensitive spot. Harry was not disappointed as the Dark Lord gasped brokenly, the pleasure washing through Harry even though his mind was closed.

"Ha...rry," Voldemort was breathing hard.

"Yes?" He answered teasingly, whispering into his beloved's ear.

"Now."

"Soon," he countered. The Dark Lord didn't object as Harry cut off any argument, twisting his fingers as he once again brushed against the sweet spot. His hand moved easily and he knew Voldemort was ready. He kissed his beloved once as he moved upwards, stroking his own cock briefly as he moved into position, both hands on the Dark Lord's hips to keep him from going too fast. He knew how strong the need could be.

"Ha...r..ry!" White hips bucked against him and ruby eyes fixed on his, begging for what he would not say.

Harry nodded at him and pushed forward slowly stopping only when he was completely engulfed in tight heat. Rudy eyes opened wide at the invasion and Voldemort gasped soundlessly, a sentiment that was shared by Harry at the intensity of feeling. This was a first for them both. After a few moments, slitted red eyes looked back at him and the Dark Lord gulped before nodding to him.

He moved slowly, not wanting to hurt him, pulling back half way before pushing forwards again, thrusting carefully into the hot body of the only man who had ever shown him compassion, the only man who had ever shown him love and throughout the world had always been truthful to him.

Voldemort was breathing in gasps as Harry pleasured him. It was beautifully fulfilling. He was complete and every movement was not only pushing inside him but pushing up against his member
and balls, in a wonderful friction that was everything. Harry was so gentle though as he needed to be, his movements smooth and controlled, but his face reflecting his own pleasure.

He looked down, bucking his hips rhythmically as he watched Harry move, disappearing within him. One of the others had liked to watch. They had liked to see themselves disappearing into his body and insisted that he watch. He'd hated it though, hated seeing the evidence of usage but this was different. It was incredibly erotic and stimulating. He could feel his arousal growing as he watched Harry moving, in and out, the connection between the two of them vital and fluid. He could have watched forever but emerald eyes intruded upon his vision as Harry muzzled into him, kissing him tenderly but with growing urgency.

Aniseed and vanilla swirled on his tongue and he bit down lightly, clamping his muscles around Harry, grinning against the boy as his pet gasped at the stimulation. The Dark Lord felt a tiny flash of worry though, when there came a throaty laugh from above him but he only had an instant to consider the implications before his lover struck, altering his strokes slightly, driving hard against his prostrate with every motion. After that, he couldn't do anything but cry out as each stroke drove him higher, physical delight at the movement filling him completely and leaving no room for thought. Finally he could take it no longer and with a wild thrust he pushed upwards, impaling himself on Harry completely as he came, his muscles squeezing rhythmically on the member within him as he climaxed in a long peak that left him breathless, his skin rippling with the patterns of the snake. "Harry!" He gasped.

As he came back to himself he looked up to find Harry smiling at him, emerald eyes glittering with understanding. He raised his arms, pulling the boy close to him before he rocked back and forth, flexing himself around Harry's cock that was still deep within him. "Take your pleasure," he urged in the warm after glow, breathing deeply. This is what pleasure was meant to be like but he still needed to feel his precious one cum within him, feel that liquid heat and know that he wanted it, know he needed it. He already knew that the boy above him was the only one who would ever be able to claim him, the only one he would willingly allow to take their pleasure in him.

Harry nodded at him, shifting slightly before he began moving once more. The strokes came long and hard, and the Dark Lord gasped, clenching his teeth at the thought that this was his only. It was almost enough to bring him to the peak again but it was over as with one final movement, that was his whole body, driving himself in deeper, Harry gushed into him with a strangled cry, "Voldemort!" Seed filled him, over flowing as his beloved continued to spurt into him in pleasurable waves. He was transfixed by the vision of inexplicable pleasure on his lovers face and with a hiss, he pulled Harry down to him as the boy stilled, long moments of release fading.

Voldemort breathed in the scent of vanilla, breathing deeply against the lethargy consuming him. :My only,: he sent the thought, so private that it could not be spoken, to Harry. My saviour, he added silently, the irony of the situation not lost upon him. "I would have almost sworn you would have called me Tom," he said softly, longer fingers stroking black hair as Harry gulped for air, recovering.

"No," the whisper came to him as they snuggled together. Emerald eyes were closed in complete rapture.

"Little one, I will allow you anything." If Harry wished to call him that, he would not deny it.

"No, that's not you," Harry shook his head as he rolled them back into the centre of the bed, guided by nothing but shadows. He pulled out of the Dark Lord with a soft wet noise.

Voldemort sighed as Harry exited him the emptiness quickly replaced by the memory of pleasure but he was still curious at the boy, even as he struggled against the heavy repletion that was coursing
through his system. The Serpent had been completely sated on the surfeit of pleasure given to him by his precious and the satisfaction was making him sluggish. It was like a snake that had been sun bathing too long, he was completely rested and now needed to rest in the shade to recover.

"It's not you," Harry seemed to sense the remaining question and he answered it easily although his voice showed his own weariness. "You are Lord Voldemort, not the child Tom Marvolo Riddle." Emerald eyes gazed at him for a moment before he continued. "You were once him but he died before I was even born and I do not love Tom Marvolo Riddle. I love Lord Voldemort."

The Dark Lord nodded, sighing as he smiled slightly, tightening his arms around Harry. He breathed in Harry's scent again, closing his eyes. :There is nothing to do today but rest,: he sent the thought to his beloved, recalling his orders to the Death Eaters and the Shadow's Gift, knowing Harry would be able to pick them up as he lost consciousness, falling into a deep pleasant slumber, secure in the knowledge that his precious one was with him.
In the confusion of last night, another nefarious plan from You-Know-Who is only now coming to light. Last night, Hogwarts, the only place, long considered safe from His wrath came under attack. It was not a large-scale attack but rather a small surgical strike at the castle with the intention of kidnapping the Boy-Who-Lived and information has come to this paper that the strike was regrettably successful.

It is a sad state of affairs when those, many of us consider too young, turn against their own but the Dark Lord's strike relied heavily on help from within, help he has silenced with his customary brutality. Several students were killed last night and while their names have been withheld, for the benefit of their families, it is known that the Dark Mark was burned into their arms. It is not known if the Mark was added post-mortem to add to the confusion or if they were all willing participants. At the moment Auror teams are blanketing the scene searching for clues.

Concerned parents have been owling both the Ministry and Hogwarts with their worries but Albus Dumbledore, esteemed Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, member of the International Confederation of Wizards, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and Head of the Order of the Phoenix had this to say. "We must remember that Lord You-Know-Who's (Editors Note: Dumbledore did actually speak the name but we are loath to publish it) forces only gained entry to the castle with inside help. They did not breach any of the defensive charms. At the moment, we are currently conducting interviews with the Aurors, with all students involved and review of security will be undertaken. This is a most unfortunate turn of events and it is at times like this that we must unite against the Dark. The Order of the Phoenix is already looking for young Harry and we must remember that Mr Potter is well known for his resourcefulness in difficult situations. Neither the Ministry, or I believe other students to be in danger of attack as it is regrettably true that Lord You-Know-Who has shown obsessive interest only in Mr Potter."

When asked if he was concerned about You-Know-Who's actions and the fact that it appeared Death Eaters were being recruited so young, Dumbledore said, "There is no denying he is an immensely powerful wizard but he is not invincible, providing that we remain true to that which we hold dear. The students who have followed him disappointingly strayed from the path. I can only pray that their souls are at peace and that they may serve as a warning to others that he does not show mercy, not even to his own. I share the sentiments of Auror Captain Sturges, in that we must unite and stand strong." After these comments Albus Dumbledore was called away for a conference with the Minister, to co-ordinate the efforts of Aurors and the Order of the Phoenix in the search for our young saviour as well as to offer advice on the events of last night.

We will of course keep you, dear reader, updated of all events but at the moment, there is nothing else left to report. We can only pray that young Harry has the strength to endure until he is rescued. We will not consider anything else.
Snape was more than concerned. Things weren't adding up and he didn't like it when nothing made sense.

He had known of the internal plot against the Dark Lord and had told Voldemort of the brewing unrest, even though he had known nothing more of the details. But what he had not known was that the Dark Lord's forces were moving last night, nor had he known about the plot to capture Potter.

And that was what was worrying him. At the very least, he should have known about the orders to attack. That would have been a general order to every Death Eater. But he had known nothing!

Nothing about the students who had been consecrated into the fold, nothing about the pinpoint attack on Potter, nothing!

_He knows._

That was the obvious conclusion, that the Dark Lord knew of his duplicity and had consciously and with great care excluded him from everything but that was not Voldemort's style. He'd seen it happen before. Once the Dark Lord found a spy he exploited them for all they were worth, used them to sow confusion and distrust before he struck.

_That's what he is doing now. Do you really think that Dumbledore and the Order will believe you when you say you knew nothing?_

No! Dumbledore _had_ to believe him. They could even drug him but it wouldn't change the facts. He had known nothing.

_Yes... As if you would really know nothing._

He did know nothing... Unless... Now that was an interesting thought. Black eyes narrowed and he flicked greasy black hair away from his forehead. Perhaps the reason he had known nothing was because there _was_ nothing to know. He couldn't have helped with last nights general attack so there was no reason to mention it to him and if the attack last night on Potter only looked like it was the work of Death Eaters but was really the work of the Rebels then of course he would know nothing about it.

It made sense. It more than made sense that with a rebellion so wide spread that they would also attack the perceived source of the Dark Lord's weakness in an effort to prove that they were stronger. And if the people he suspected had been helping Lucius were truly involved then the death of the students was not so surprising.

All of this meant nothing though because it still meant that he knew nothing and could essentially provide nothing solid which might help retrieve Potter from whatever fool hardy situation he had gotten himself into. Although why the Rebels would kidnap Potter was a question itself. He frowned again as more things with the theory came to light. It didn't make a lot of sense for the Rebels to attack Potter, no matter what point they were trying to make. It was a waste of resources they would have better spent attacking the Dark Lord and killing the students was not something that should have happened unless they were supremely confident that the belief that it was all Voldemort's work would hold.

Nor did it answer a more interesting question, in so far as he was concerned, about the fate of the Rebels or the Dark Lord. He had read the paper several times and still was no closer to discerning the truth and as much as it grated, he was reluctantly drawing the conclusion that the idiot reporter was right. The only people who would know the outcome were those who had seen it for themselves.
They'd know soon enough who'd won the night, when victims began appearing but soon enough was not now and they really needed to know.

He resisted the urge to scratch at the Dark Mark on his arm, running through what he knew and what he thought as he prepared for the meeting with the Order of the Phoenix. Potter's lap dog was going to want answers and he knew he couldn't give them.

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Sirius paced back and forth in Dumbledore's office. He'd stayed here to avoid the reporters who would have no doubt loved to get his version of events but it had been better that way. Now all he had to do was make it through a meeting of the Order without revealing that he knew Harry was safe. That was going to be a challenge.

:We will help you:, the voice sounded in the back of his mind, smooth and calming. :Dumbledore will not know a thing.:

He nodded, confident that if they were sure, it would be okay but he couldn't help harbouring a small feeling of unease. He would have felt better if he had spoken with Harry but he still didn't know where his Godson was and with the Prophet saying that Lucius had escaped...

:Lucius only escaped the Aurors, we were not about to let him get away, the same way as we are not about to let Draco get away.: The voice fell silent as the fire flared and Dumbledore appeared, followed by several other members of the Order.

Sirius nodded to them briefly, ceasing his pacing and taking a seat. The far door swung open to admit Snape and Sirius wasn't quite controlled enough to suppress the sneer of dislike. This was their much vaunted spy, who had told them nothing about last night, so how good was he really? Besides, it was the students he was responsible for who done everything last night. He was controlled enough though, to hold his tongue, snorting instead at the just slightly disbelieving look the other man directed at him. It was subtle and Sirius only picked it up from years of baiting Snape but it was there.

"So this is the famous, Sirius Black."

"And you would be the infamous, Elliot Bryant," Sirius returned the greeting, glaring at Dumbledore, wondering what the ancient wizard was thinking, bringing a reporter here!

"Sirius," the older wizard smiled as the reporter simply laughed. "Mr Bryant is a member of the Order and has been very helpful in rallying everyone. You may not always like the Press Sirius, but we are going to need everyone."

Sirius sighed, not something he really wanted to do but the Shadows indicated he should. "I just want Harry back," he said quietly.

"We all do, Mr Black, we all do."

"So why didn't you know anything about this?" Sirius turned back to Snape, eyes smouldering as he asked the question.

"Which bit dog?"

"Any of it."

"Sirius, Severus!" Minerva tried to calm them down.
"No, Minerva, he does have a point," Snape said calmly. "I didn't know because this wasn't the Dark Lord's work."

"You seriously expect me to believe that someone else wanted Harry kidnapped?" Sirius snarled as the Shadows seemed to nod, apparently impressed with Snape's thought. :He is very intelligent,: they commented softly as they continued to direct him.

"I don't have any power over what you believe but it is a theory that makes sense. The Dark Lord does want Potter but to get to him, he'd have to go through half the school, no matter who was helping him. And despite what you may be thinking, I would know if any Slytherin's were Death Eaters. Those one's were too young. There are a few who have nearly been inducted but they are all seventh years. In Dumbledore's presence, marking any student is stupid and the Dark Lord is anything but. You can examine the arm of every student, and I guarantee you, none will be marked. With no servants here, the Dark Lord had no way of getting your precious Potter, but there are other factions as everyone is now away and they have connections with students who are that young. Why they killed them though, I do not know."

"How many factions are we talking about?" Bryant asked.

Snape took a deep breath, glancing towards Dumbledore but the older wizard just nodded. "After last night, one faction - Voldemort's."

"How do you know he won?" Bryant seemed sceptical.

"Oh, he won. One way or another, he won," Snape said softly but sincere assurance.

"You can't know that though."

"If Lucius won, do you really think he'd be hiding?" Severus snapped, black eyes flashing. "No, Lucius did not win and the reason I know there is only one faction now, is that to be as effective as he was, Lucius would have had to get every faction following him and even then enough remained loyal. The Dark Lord doesn't care if your beliefs are slightly different to his, providing that you follow him, without question but right now, no one will be displaying any differences."

"So who were the other two?" Sirius asked the question, even though he knew the answer. Snape had developed his theory and from the general feel of the Order, most of them were buying it, so the shadows wanted to know what the man would make of them.

The man looked pensive and Sirius caught the slightest trace of fear before it was covered with the usual stoic mask. "They are the reason the Dark Lord won. If what they inferred was true, then we may need to concentrate on them."

Sirius sighed. "All this is well and good but it doesn't help us get to Harry," he said, drawing the conversation back to his Godson. There was a laugh in his mind. :He really is good.: 

"Given that every faction got themselves crushed last night, you'd better hope it was either one who is taking him to the Dark Lord, or one that will let him go now that they've lost. I doubt that though. They were smart enough to get around the defences, if that's the case they'll probably try to use Harry as a bargaining chip."

"And until anyone approaches the Dark Lord, I won't know a thing. No one will." Snape glared back at Sirius, daring him to object.

"Great!" Sarcasm dripped from Sirius' voice. "What do you want to do now, Headmaster?"
Dumbledore looked grim, he didn't want to admit this but it seemed there was no choice. "I'm sorry, Sirius, until we know anything, there isn't a lot we can do. I have members of the Order searching for Harry but he could be anywhere and until any new information comes to light, we don't even know where to look."

"But..."

"I know Sirius, I know. I want Harry back as much as you do and the instant we get him back, because we will, we will induct him into the Order."

"Albus! He's still a child!"

"That may be but he is fast becoming a man, and he is central to these events. He deserves to know the truth."

"And inducting him will give us a way of tracking him," Sirius added, nodding. "Only if we allow it; the Shadow's added smugly.

:You guys know where his is, don't you?:

:Yes:.

:So why don't you tell me?:

:What would you do with the knowledge?:

:Go to him:.

:Then you'd just be in the way:.

It was the way they said it that gave Sirius pause. :Is he..?:

:Quite enthusiastically:.

He resisted the urge to groan. :I didn't need to know that!: But he was reassured that Harry was safe and unharmed.

"Yes," Dumbledore was saying. "You know we can track all Order Members. But it will do something else, it will allow us to fully begin training Harry's power. He is only now coming into his birthright and we are going to have to train that. The Dark Lord, as you all know, wields the ancient power, Harry is capable of it as well, and to fulfil his destiny, we will have to teach him its use."

"You don't seem that concerned." Bryant stated, more that a little confused at the apparent lack of worry being shown and while he didn't direct the question, it was to several people.

"Raging's not going to get me anywhere," Sirius said delicately, "but when the time comes..." The shadows underscored his tone, making his voice chilling with power.

Elliot nodded, shivering, before turning to Dumbledore.

The ancient wizard sighed. Bryant was loyal but he was still a reporter and he was very perceptive at times.

"This goes no further," he said firmly, the threat implied in his voice echoed by Fawkes' trill. "I don't think it was a faction," he said. "I do believe it was Voldemort himself who ordered Harry taken but the Dark Lord will not kill Harry. Tom doesn't want that, not anymore."
"What does he want then?"

"A mate."

"What?!"

"A mate," Sirius repeated for Dumbledore as Bryant turned to face him.

"You can't be serious."

"We are, and if this ever comes to light your obituary will be in the next edition."

"How..?" Elliot gulped, trying to work his mind through the implications.

"Harry was kidnapped over summer by the Dark Lord, very briefly," Sirius said matter of factly, the voice not his own. "The Order got him back in a day or two, so no one knew about it but the Dark Lord was gentle with him - kept him asleep, healed wounds and allowed no one else to touch him."

"So what does Harry think of this?"

Dumbledore took up the explanation, impressed with the maturity Sirius was showing and the groundwork of his small explanation. It was truthful without revelling everything, without even hinting that anything else more intimate had happened. "He's understandably confused, but he was asleep most of the time so that the only thing he is really sure about is that someone healed his wounds."

"Wounds?"

"Harry's relatives, while providing him with excellent protection are rather against the use of magic and were over firm in their discipline. I regret it every day but at the time it was the only choice."

Elliot suddenly laughed mirthlessly. "They're dead, aren't they?"

"I hope so," Minerva said. "Lord Voldemort," she grimaced at actually saying the name, "isn't known for his forgiving nature and if he believes that they hurt something or someone he wanted... I really hope they are dead."

Bryant shuddered but nodded before his reporter instincts took over again. "If it weren't so serious it could be funny, a Dark Lord courting."

"So now you now why it is imperative that we act on any information to get Harry back. Tom didn't gain all his followers by force," Dumbledore said, quashing any amusement.

"You don't think Harry will give into him?"

"No, but I do fear that Harry may sympathise and while in the long run we will be able to bring Harry back to our side, we do have to remember that he is an impressionable teen. It wouldn't be his fault but we are in a position to prevent him making these mistakes and we need to pursue this duty actively."

The members of the Order nodded as Dumbledore spoke. Some of them were old enough to remember how alluring Lord Voldemort had been in his prime. Charismatic, handsome, with the ability to make you believe that helping him was the only choice. While his looks may have been destroyed by his retreat into spirit form, he still had his charisma and his charm and when applied with the right implications, that could be enough to sway anyone.
"We'll get him back," Mad-Eye said gruffly as the meeting broke up.

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Harry snuggled comfortably against Voldemort as he felt the older man fall asleep. He was tired himself but that was the momentary lethargy of completion and it was fading already. He smiled, feeling the Dark Lord's sleeping presence. A few things had changed and he could feel that they had changed for the better but right now he didn't need to consider it, it was something Voldemort would tell him in time. He squirmed, extracting himself from his lovers embrace before moving to sit on the side of the bed. He flicked the covers back over the Dark Lord as he stood, looking around the room.

He recognised it. He'd been here before and the thought brought him a slight smile. The Dark Lord had always known where his bed would be, it had just taken him a while longer to work it out but if this was to be his home, he did want to know about it. Harry looked around. There were a few serpents present but most of them were asleep.

-May I help you, Shadow Lord?- 

The polite question came from above him and Harry twisted slightly to look directly into the eyes of a cobra that was lowering itself from the canopy. He nodded, extending his arm for it to descend. Harry gestured towards the door, with its many locks. -Do you know which one is the bathroom?- He needed to clean up before he could go exploring.

-The second lock.-

-Thank you. Is the top one the way out?- 

-No, that's the middle one.-

Harry nodded as he walked towards the door, his feet silent on the carpet. -Do you know who is in the castle?- 

-The King ordered everyone away so there is only a few House Elves and a few other servants. Nothing that will disturb you, Lord.-

-Thank you,- Harry said to the cobra as he placed it on the carpet and opened the door.
Harry walked down the halls of his beloved's strong hold, his robes flowing around him. Once he'd finished in the bathroom he hadn't been sure what he was going to do since he hadn't been able to find any clothes but the shadows had gathered around him, forming themselves into a skin tight body suit before more of them had become his robes. They were warm and so light that it almost felt as if he wasn't dressed at all and they were comforting, whispering to him as he moved. He had known that with an empty castle, he probably hadn't needed the garments for modesty and had been slightly amused at that thought but it was cool here so they were necessary for warmth, besides there was something vaguely disturbing about going naked outside the bedchamber.

So far there had been nothing of interest in the castle but he was beginning to get the feel for the layout. In his exploring he'd found the throne room from last night, several magic rooms, a kitchen, lots of guest suites and a few rooms filled with books but nothing substantial enough to be considered the main library. He grinned softly as he imagined Voldemort's surprise when the older man realised that he wouldn't need a guide. Of course, the shadows had been directing him somewhat.

:Master, turn here.:  
:Hmm, why?:  
:We hunger.:  
:And there is food for you down here?: Harry said dubiously as he gestured towards the dark corridor. :What do you eat anyway?:  
:You.:  
:What?:  
:We eat light, Master, we eat your radiant energy however occasionally we need something else.:  
:Something else?:  
:Master, anyone may use our power - wizard or muggle. They only need the right mindset and the desire and we will answer their call. We have always answered the calls. The energy expended is minimal for us after all.: The Shadows seemed to sigh.  
:That doesn't explain what you eat,: Harry observed quietly but he began to make his way down corridor anyway.  
:Heh! We are the ultimate seduction, Master. Once a human calls upon our power, they call upon it again and again. In return for our power, we do eat their radiant energy but eventually it is not enough, and our hunger becomes their hunger and they call upon us again. For a human, our power is easy and once they start down our path, it becomes easier and that is our seduction. But radiant energy cannot sustain us for long and once someone is seduced by us they become so reliant that they don't even know what they are doing and that is when we strike. We are at your beck and call, Master, no one else's but a seduced person thinks we serve them, if they are even aware they are
calling upon us, and aren't attributing everything to luck. It doesn't matter though; believing we will always serve is their last mistake. At that point, Master, we take all their light.: 

:Light?: 

:We eat their light, or what's left of it.: 

:I still don't understand.: 

:We do not eat their soul, Master, but we do take all their light.: 

:So if..?: Harry trailed off, his emerald eyes wide with concern. He'd seen Voldemort use the shadow power, and Sirius... and he didn't want either of them consumed. 

:No, Master. The Dark Lord is strong enough to resist our seduction and by accepting your seduction he has gained the right to use our power and your guardian has become a part of us. They have both become like you in that matter. They need never fear us. Anyone else is fair game.: 

:So you are like Dementors?: Harry tried to link what they were telling him to something he knew. 

:No,: the Shadow's voice was firm. :We are nothing like them. They need souls to survive, and until they can get that, they eat memories. They may eat from anyone, we may only consume those who have used our power.: 

:So there are those who have used your power down here?: 

:There are a few but we may also consume the light of those you give to us, Master.: 

Harry shuddered, unsure that he wanted to condemn someone, anyone to an existence without light. He could remember what it was like, no hope, no love, no warmth. 

The Shadows sensed his reticence. :Master,: they said comfortingly. :We aren't like that. You have met people whose light we have consumed.: 

:Huh?: 

:Master,: they laughed. :If the people whose light we consumed were like that with no hope in life they would be like those who have been Kissed by a Dementor and then we'd be the guardians of Azkaban, if you disregard the fact that we cannot be controlled by any power except your light. However, we are not like that, it is more useful for us for those we consume to seem to be as they were before. They are completely under our control though, everything they do is for us, for you.: 

:So who have I met?: 

:Not many wizards, Master, it does take us longer to seduce them and then they are usually considered evil and destroyed. Snape was almost one of us.: 

:Snape?: Harry questioned. The Potions Master was the type to seek power, true, but he didn't think he would have sought the dark power, especially given his anguish at the Dark Mark and all that it implied and his memories of his time at school. 

:He has stopped, Master and will not use us again, so he is not ours. We tried tempting him but he is very strong willed and we will leave him be now... probably. You know more Muggles anyway...:: The Shadows considered the situation carefully before they came to their conclusion. :Most of your acquaintances haven't had the dark ambitions necessary, except of course, for those who hurt you but
even then, we did not answer their calls. We are not stupid after all, we knew what power you would wield one day and we are sorry Master, there was nothing we could do to protect you then...

:However there are several politicians in every country and businessmen in every industry who belong to us, and therefore to you. You'd be the wealthiest man in the world, Master because you own them.: With their words, the Shadows flicked Harry some images of the people he owned through them. They felt him relax as, even though he didn't recognise everyone by name, he did know enough to realise that the people shown to him were still active in the world of the Muggles. They were pessimists but they were very powerful people.

:Where now?: Harry asked feeling better about the situation, coming to another junction.

:Go right. Lucius' forces are there and a wizard will sustain us longer.: 

:I can't give you Lucius,: Harry cautioned.

:We know. It would be too easy. Pick someone else, we're sure there are those you will give us.: Emerald eyes narrowed at the tone. The Shadows were very confident and while he knew he could control them, knew he could do it as easily as breathing, he did wonder why they were so sure of his decision this time but they remained silent and after a moment he shrugged. He'd know in a little while exactly whom they wanted.

Harry glided down the corridor, ignoring those chambers he could sense were empty. It was quiet here, too quiet and he pulled up suddenly, looking around sharply for the guards. Not even the Dark Lord would leave his prisoners unguarded, no matter how secure he thought they were. He could feel the Shadows tightening themselves around him, protectively. :There,: they whispered after a moment.

He shivered involuntarily as his eyes fixed upon the guard.

There was only one creature that caused the air to freeze like this, only one that caused him to tremble, not in fear though, never in fear, but from the cold and the sheer hunger he could feel from it.

Dementor.

Harry held firm, gritting his teeth slightly as he kept his gaze steady, superior.

The Dementor paused for a moment as it spotted him and then it moved smoothly towards him, what passed for white hands extended. At seven feet, just as he felt it tug on his mind, searching for his memories, the Shadows struck, surging around him, without his direction, striking as a black whip.

It hissed and stilled, suddenly more cautious and the air became warmer but it didn't retreat and Harry could feel other Dementors beginning to gather. His eyes narrowed slightly, and he lowered his head, glaring over the rims of his glasses, daring the Dementor to approach him. Around him, his robes flowed, inky darkness embracing him closely, warmly, responding to his slightest thought, blocking everything that was the Dementor and filling him with power.

Four more Dementors appeared, moving to flank their fellow at the challenge implied in his stance, and Harry suppressed a tight smile. Numbers meant nothing to him, meant nothing to the Shadows and it appeared that the Dementors, like the Vampires had forgotten who were the true masters of dark. Idly he wondered how many more creatures had forgotten.

:Not many, Master. Most have longer memories than fools!: The last word was snarled as a shadow
leapt forward, a surge of black power with the wings of a fallen angel.

Beautiful, Harry thought as he watched. The Shadow struck with phantom claws, ripping into the lead Dementor, tearing ragged garments, each strike met with a scream of pain from the dark creature. Thick purple blood pooled on the stone and Harry knew with certainty that he was the only human ever to see this. He stood watching as the vaguely winged Shadow attacked the Dementor with a liquid grace that defied description. It was there, but the Shadow was not there and the feeble defence of the Dementor passed through insubstantial darkness. The screams become whimpers, and the black robed form fell but was met with more mauling and tearing before strong jaws gripped and shook it, shaking the Dementor as a crocodile shakes its kill to ensure death. Other Shadows moved protectively around him, their constant movement allowing no openings for the other Dementors to attack.

Finally there was an odd gurgle from the fallen Dementor before complete silence that was broken by the sharp crack of bones breaking. It was followed by crunching and Harry was transfixed as the Shadow literally ate the fallen Dementor, robes and all. Purple blood splashed on the stones and the other dark creatures drew back as several more Shadows detached themselves from him, widening his circle of protection as their fellow consumed the fallen.

As the last scrap of Dementor was eaten, the Shadow flowed back, leaving the blood and rejoining its companions as a part of Harry's robes. :Master:, the Shadows prompted, and Harry nodded slowly, knowing that now he would have to assert his dominance over the dark beings. They too would now call him Master.

Narrowed emerald eyes fixed on the remaining Dementors and Harry allowed his lips to crease in a sinister smile. These were the beings that had made Sirius' life miserable for the thirteen years of his imprisonment. He didn't really blame them. It was their job to watch Azkaban and he wouldn't be too harsh on them for that, he was saving his true ire for the Ministry but that didn't mean he was above a little revenge.

He remained silent; watching as they moved nervously before he slowly raised one Shadow covered hand. Fingers curled up and Harry concentrated briefly, filling his hand with light. He was careful though, and formed a mental barrier between the Shadow and his power so as not to hurt his servant. The Shadows ate his radiant energy, his light but they could not eat his concentrated light, it was too pure and that was his power over them, the power of Gryffindor.

The Dementors seemed to gasp and their movement became more frenzied as they beheld the steady glow of power. And slowly they understood. Their icy power broke and Harry almost laughed at what he could feel. Their reaction - confusion, leading to understanding, followed by panic as they realised what they had done - was very human and he understood how his beloved could enjoy it. There was something infinitely pleasurable about knowing that you held all the cards and that those before you had no choice but to submit.

He remained still, content to let them make the first move and was rewarded for his patience when yet another Dementor, larger than the others came forward. It stared at him for a long moment, looking between the gathered energy and his eyes before, with a soft hiss, it bowed to him oblivious of the blood as its hood swept the floor. The others hissed in obvious surprise at the apparent ease of their leader's submission but they did follow suit.

Harry let the power fade from his hand and as the Dementors straightened he nodded slowly at them, indicating his acceptance of their abasement. They flowed away from him, disappearing back into the darkness as he continued down the corridor.

He could tell which cell was Lucius and chuckled at the arrogant confusion he could feel from the
man but did nothing else. Voldemort had more practice at disciplining those who went against him and it was not something he wanted to deprive Lucius of. Besides, he already knew what he was going to do to Malfoy and was content to leave the wizard wondering if and when he would strike. Besides, he could feel some far more interesting presences...

"I see now," Harry murmured as he stopped in front of the cell.

"So we may eat them?:

"In a moment," he said, placing one hand on the cell door. "You don't need them to do anything later, do you?"

"No, Master, we just want their light. After that, we thought the Dark Lord would kill these ones, just as you are going to ask him to."

Harry smiled, suppressing a bark of laughter. "At least have the good taste to act like you don't know everything, would you?" He asked easily.

"Yes, Master;" the Shadows answered him contritely, heavy laughter not hiding their anticipation at the feast he was about to give them.

"Let me speak to them first."

"Yes."

He extended the merest flick of power, unlocking the door and lighting up the cell as he stepped inside.

The wizard and witch inside were sitting in opposite corners, their masks discarded but they both looked up as he entered. They recognised him but had the sense to remain silent. Both had their wands on the ground in front of them. Like all the others, presumably, they had been trying to discover why magic had deserted them.

"It's probably for the best that you two chose to side with Lucius," Harry began simply, wondering how much they knew of their children's actions against him.

"Oh why?"

"You truly don't know of your brat's transgressions?"

Blaise's mother still looked confused but Millicent's Father spat. "Some petty thing Draco wanted them to do."

"Petty?" Harry questioned. "Yes, it was very petty but it awoke Voldemort's anger and my true power."

Zabini looked interested now, even if she didn't know what was being spoken about. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, that even if you hadn't followed Lucius, you and your children would still be dead, for what they did to me!"

"You don't have the guts!" Bulstrode sneered.

"You're right, I don't," Harry agreed. "And I didn't come here to kill you," he added. "The Dark Lord will kill you in an instant as soon as I ask him to."
"You're still a child, playing with things you do not understand. You cannot control Lord Voldemort, Potter, and eventually he will see you are nothing but Dumbledore's child. You don't have the guts to kill, you don't have the strength for anything! You will be cast away like a broken toy when he finishes with you no matter what you delude yourself into thinking."

Harry smiled softly at the tirade, his quiet assurance eventually impacting upon Bulstrode and silencing him. "I don't think so," he said softly**, "but I did not come here to discuss the future with you. I came here to take your Light. Don't worry, it won't hurt." Harry frowned suddenly as he realised something. "Actually, I'm not sure about that," he said honestly :Is there anything I need to do?: He asked the Shadows silently.

:Answer one question.: 

:Ah?:

:Master, may we consume the light of the two wizards before you?: They asked formally, in an almost ritualistic tone.

:You may,: he replied, in an equally grave tone, sensing that what they needed was his whole hearted and honest permission. They could do nothing if he doubted.

:Thank you, Master.: 

Around him, despite the *lumos* charm lighting the cell, the air came alive with darkness.

"What is this?" Zabini questioned in a hysterical tone of voice.

"This is the power your son awoke!" Harry responded. "This is my birth right and my ability to stand equal to the Serpent Lord." He extended his arm, pointing towards the two who had instinctively jumped towards him, realising that even if magic didn't work, they had to try something.

They never even got close.

Unlike the power displayed against the Dementor, the only physical manifestation was the solidity required to drive the witch and wizard back into the wall. After that, there was only liquid, inky darkness that flowed all over them. In and around them, through them without any hindrance. Light flickered from them and Harry blinked, changing his eyes so that he could see the streams of magic.

Bulstrode and Zabini senior were brilliant, their magic confined within them from the Shadows earlier touch, but only a little bit of that brilliance could be seen. Wrapping them, from head to toe was pure darkness and it was seeping into their light, consuming it. They screamed but the shadows just flowed into their mouths muffling everything as they moved deeper. He could feel the Shadows hunger now and feel how the light, dirty as this source was, was fulfilling their desires.

After a few moments it was over and the Shadows pulled back to him, leaving the wizards slumped. Their light was completely gone and as Harry looked at them he almost couldn't see them. The once bright streams of magic were dull and against the back ground magic of the castle they were barely outlines. He altered his eyes back and noted even the light from the charm had been dimmed.

:You really do eat light,: he observed.

:Hmm, we are darkness.: 

Harry nodded, closing the cell as he returned to the corridor. :Is there anything else you want?:
Not at the moment, Master and you had best return to the Dark Lord so you are there when he wakes. The Shadows seemed almost sleepy. They had expended a lot of energy for their Master over the previous hours and they would require more food before they regained all their lost power but at the moment, they could eat no more simply because they had also been gorging on his energy as he had lain with Voldemort.

Harry nodded again, turning back the way he had come, feeling the echo of satisfaction from his servants and smiling, knowing he had made the right choice.
Harry had nearly returned to the bedchamber where the Shadows said the Dark Lord was about to awaken when he felt something else. :What's through there?: He asked silently, knowing that they would already know.

They hesitated before answering and that was slightly surprising. It wasn't that they didn't know, he felt that, it was they weren't sure about answering him this time. :Heprah.: The answer finally came, whispered.

:Heprah?: Emerald eyes opened wide and he shivered slightly, unintentionally remembering all the wizard had done to him. :I want to see him,: Harry said suddenly, turning towards the dark door.

:Master, are you sure?: There was a note of uncertainty in their voice.

:What is it?:

:You have seen what the Dark Lord has done to the other Muggles?:

:Yes?:

:A wizard, while not physically stronger, has their magic to sustain them against torture, and because Heprah hurt you the worst, he has given the wizard special attention. Master, we do not want you upset by the lengths to which he will go for you.: 

Harry took a deep breath, eyes half closed as he considered their words. He shook his head, placing his hand on the door knob. :No, I have to see him,: he said finally, opening the door.

It took a moment for his eyes to adjust and for an instant he thought he was looking at another guest room but then he saw the Dark Lord's punishment. He walked forward, feeling nothing at the evidence of torture, nothing but the vague need to finish it.

Harry looked at Heprah, ignoring the filth the wizard was immersed in. The glass tear was about half full of piss, shit, blood and sweat. He was still alive, barely, although his skin was burnt and bleeding, his hair was lank and he was so badly emancipated that he could almost be a skeleton. The only thing keeping him alive was his magic, and even that was beginning to fail. Weak blue eyes opened slowly as he sensed someone near him and Harry smiled slightly as Heprah realised who he was.

"You know how you always said I was good?" He said conversationally. "Imagine what it would have been like if I'd actually wanted to make love to you. Then I would have been great." Harry paused, checking that Heprah was still listening. "The Dark Lord is sleeping off the effects of great," he added, knowing that for someone like Heprah, this little piece of knowledge would be the final torture. He was not disappointed as the watery blue eyes opened wide and Harry felt a small pulse of jealous desire. He licked his lips and leaned in close to whisper the final word, "Thank you," before he turned away, leaving the broken wizard sobbing weakly, as he begged to die.
Harry leant against the door after he'd closed and locked it behind him, sucking in air through clenched teeth. He'd been able to keep his emotions in check in front of the wizard but now they were overwhelming. Slowly he opened his eyes, looking up into the shadows on the ceiling as he forced his body to relax. "Beloved," he whispered, "thank you."

:Master,: the Shadows broke in on his heartfelt reflection. :You must hurry,: They seemed relieved that he had taken Heprah so well.

:I understand,: Harry pushed off from the door, walking down the corridor again.

===

Voldemort blinked, coming awake all at once. He knew someone was watching him and it took him an instant to realise it was Harry. He relaxed immediately, smiling at emerald eyes. "I don't recall leaving clothes around here," he said teasingly when he saw the boy was dressed.

:Heh!: The Shadows answered him, flickering around their master.

He sat up, the sheets falling off him haphazardly as he gestured for Harry to come and sit with him. The boy obeyed with a smile, snuggling into him closely as the shadows wrapped around them both warmly.

"Have you been awake long?"

"Long enough," Harry sighed and Voldemort caught the implications.

"Oh," he asked, amused. "What did you see?"

"A lot of empty rooms," the black haired boy replied casually. "A few snakes, some Dementors, a couple of Lucius' forces and Heprah." He'd felt the Dark Lord tense when he said Dementors but had ploughed on through his list anyway. While he was grateful to his lover for punishing those who had hurt him, it was time that he learnt that he wasn't helpless and he could deal with the situations that arose.

"Harry!" Strong white arms tightened around him.

"Nothing happened," he said defensively. "The Dementors now know better than to get in my way, and the Shadows were hungry."

The Dark Lord trembled slightly, suppressing his emotions. "Start at the beginning."

"Hehe! You worry to much," Harry said softly, flicking a surge of calm through their link.

He felt Voldemort shake his head. "No, do not distract me. What happened? Harry... If anything should happen, I will destroy the world for you."

Harry sighed. "All right. It's nothing, really. The Shadows were with me the entire time."

"Please."

"I went exploring and eventually I came across the cells you've got Lucius and his forces in. The Shadows were hungry, so they needed some food but the Dementors were there as well. Nothing happened though, they never even got close to me."

Anger rose through the Dark Lord and his red eyes burnt as he unconsciously tightened his grip. "They should have known better than that. They shouldn't have even tried!"
"They won't now," Harry was quick to soothe his lover. "They won't try anything now." He sent the image of the Dementors bowing low to him to Voldemort and felt, despite the anger, the Dark Lord's curiosity.

The Shadows continued for him. :The Dementors are Dark creatures, like the Vampires but they have forgotten who the true Dark masters are. We reminded them, just as we will remind the Vampires.: 

Voldemort calmed slightly, feeling the power radiating from the dark presences and the icy and absolute protection they would give their young master. "So what about Lucius' forces?" He asked, breathing in Harry's intoxicating aroma.

:We were hungry.; they said defensively.

"What do you eat?"

"I had to ask that as well," Harry chuckled. "They eat light."

"Light?" One elegant black eye brow rose.

"I gave them Zabini and Bulstrode."

"So they're dead?"

"No."

He felt the Dark Lord breathe a small sigh of relief.

"What? You didn't need them?" Harry questioned worriedly.

"No, little one, no, I don't need them. But you are not ready to kill yet, beloved, not yet."

:We want you to kill them.; the Shadows sent to him privately.

Voldemort muzzled his face into Harry's hair as the boy moved against him, sighing contentedly.

:Why?: He asked silently.

:Blaise and Millicent are the ones who raped our Master at Hogwarts.: 

Ruby fire suddenly flared around the Dark Lord as the serpent came alive. "They what?" He snarled through clenched teeth. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"Because I did not want them to," Harry answered, guessing what the Shadows had told his lover.

"Little one," Voldemort pushed Harry back, taking his shoulders as he glared fiercely into wide emerald eyes.

"They are mine," Harry said quietly. "You can have everyone else, but they are mine. Them and Draco."

"Draco?"

"He arranged it for them, and he was the one who killed Hedwig."

"And?" Ruby eyes narrowed to slits as he sensed something more.
"He was the one who got the killing curse on me last night."

It was with infinite patience that the Dark Lord harnessed his anger. He trembled with the effort and it was only because Harry was in his arms, that he wasn't already raging.

:Calm down!: The Shadows snapped at him. :'At its burning the young Phoenix's fire touches both the Black Basilisk and the fire serpent and it emerges from the ashes as a Basilisk with the crest of a Phoenix.': They quoted the line to him. :What exactly did you think it meant?:

"It was the only way," Harry whispered at him, wrapping his small arms around Voldemort again, squeezing tightly as he opened his mind to allow the Dark Lord to fully feel his presence.

"My little one, I will kill them for you and leave their brats to you," Voldemort said finally as the fire died around him, the serpent calmed by the unfettered access to his precious.

:We'll tell you where to send the bodies,: the Shadows whispered.

"Harry, I meant what I said back then. I will take you through the difficult times of the first few but only when you are ready, little one, only when you are ready," Voldemort repeated. "Do not push yourself, it is not something that should be rushed."

Harry nodded, taking comfort from the words.

"And when you are ready, my little basilisk, I will give you your fill." Long fingered hands stroked up and down Harry's back soothingly. "Did you want me to save Heprah for you?"

"No, I've already finished with him."

"If you are sure.?." He let Harry silently know that he would not think it weakness if he needed to wait before taking the wizard's life.

"I am, although that glass is his coffin, leave his body where it is."

Pale lips quirked in a smile as a few new ideas came to the Dark Lord. "Anything you want," he seemed to laugh but was meet with silence as Harry burrowed into him, not sleeping, just enjoying his proximity.

They sat together, each drawing comfort from the others presence, for long minutes before Harry sighed and Voldemort felt his mindset shift.

"Did you want your wand back?" The green-eyed boy asked, looking up at him.

He shook his head, ruby eyes, never leaving emerald. "No, I gave it to your for your own protection and it seems you do very well with it. I ask you the same though."

"No, I don't need it. It... it no longer feels right."

"Hmm?" Voldemort reached out long fingers, plucking the wand from the air. As the wand settled into his hand, a thrill of fire passed through his body, the holly was warm against his skin, much like his own wand had always felt. It felt right.

"I did not foresee this."

"No," there was a note of sadness in Harry's voice. "And you did not foresee what has to happen now."
"Little one?"

"I have to go." Harry drew back from the embrace and moved to stand before the Dark Lord, head bowed slightly.

"But the Shadows said..."

"I know what they said, but the longer I stay, the more dangerous it is. Through Snape, the Order already knows where this strong hold is. You don't want to give them time to gather the resources to storm it, not yet. And the longer we leave Draco unattended the greater that danger is."

"Harry!"

"You are running a war, beloved. Sentiment can come when Dumbledore's heart is resting on the mantle piece, not before."

Voldemort rose to stand over Harry, the sheets transfiguring themselves into plain red robes. The sudden change in his precious one gave him pause but he could feel the boy steeling himself against what had to be done. He placed one finger under the boy's chin, raising his head to look up at him.

"And what would you have me do?"

Harry flinched slightly, not meeting the red eyes but his voice was firm when he spoke. "You said it yourself, I have to go back. I have to go back so that I can be the weapon they would use against you."

"I know that, but what would you have me do now?"

"Curse me," Harry said simply. "Hit me, hurt me. Do all the things you would do to someone who refused to obey you."

Voldemort froze at the words. He tried to speak but his voice refused to obey him. His mind repeated Harry's words and he searched for their logic, logic that came only too easily.

"You have to," Harry implored him. "Or else we will spend many, many years trying to subdue the lot of them. This way is the fastest and the surest way for victory. When the time comes, I will stay and everything will be as it should."

The Dark Lord didn't move. He already knew that even if he didn't want to know it. Something was howling at him to do it, and something was howling at him to not but both were filled with his love for Harry and he wondered how the emotion could tear him so completely. He could see the logic. If Harry stayed here, his presence would not be the over-riding blow to the light forces but would instead provide a rallying point. They would win, together, nothing would stand against them, but it would take years of fighting. With Harry working for the light, when the time came, the perceived betrayal from within would be the definitive, devastating blow.

"I will go back, I will be their Weapon but if I go back without a mark on me, there will be questions. I do want to stay, never doubt that. I love you, my Dark Lord but this is how it must be. You know that."

"No."

"Yes," Harry hissed urgently, his face sombre. "I know you don't want to and this will be the only time you ever raise a hand against me, but it must be done."

Voldemort turned away, striding to the far side of the room. "Harry," he hissed, breathing deeply.
"How long?"

"A year," Harry answered. "That's what they told me, a year, if I am the weapon."

"How long otherwise?"

"Twenty seven years."

The Dark Lord gulped before he sighed, slowly drawing the holly wand his mate had given him last night. The warmth spread through his body again but he willed it away. To do this, he would have to be as ice. He could see the logic and he loved Harry even more because of the courage it took to suggest this. It was courage worthy of his mate but that did not make it easy for him.

Emerald eyes gazed at him as Harry unconsciously tensed. :I forgive you. Remember, I belong to you, no one else,: he whispered directly into Voldemort's mind. :And I love you,: he added, cutting off their connection as the Dark Lord cast the charm.

"Crucio."

It hit him directly and he collapsed, writhing on the thick carpet as he tried to muffle his screams. He arched his back, screaming soundlessly, tears streaming from his eyes when something else hit him, as the Dark Lord traced out further punishment with the wand. All the air left him in a rush as Harry impacted with the bed, hitting it with enough force that he was sure his ribs were broken. But the beating didn't stop there. Even as the cruciatus curse filled his mind with pain the invisible force continued the slam into him, dealing more physical pain, bruising and breaking bones.

Minutes passed and Harry sobbed, tasting blood as he gasped for air. :Now!: He managed to command the shadows. They descended around him, and he disappeared.

Voldemort cried out as Harry vanished, falling to his knees throwing the wand away from him. His mate had blocked their bond completely so he hadn't felt the pain but he knew, being under the cruciatus curse for the minutes it had taken would have been enough to drive anyone to the limit. He shivered. "Forgive me."

Faintly, so faintly that he wasn't even sure it was real came the reply.

:...i love you...:

===

Dumbledore stood at the gates of Hogwarts, watching the sunset. It had been a long and difficult day. He had dealt with the Ministry in the aftermath of Tom's aborted attacks, calmed Sirius' murderous rage at Harry's disappearance, handled the students, called a meeting of the Order and asked several more personal allies to aide in the search.

There was a squad of Aurors guarding the gates now. The Ministry now resembled a training ground, there were so many patrols and guards and to move anywhere you had to submit to constant wand scans. There was an atmosphere of fear pervading everything. Usually he would have been against it, but there was also a team spirit. Everyone knew how close they had been to losing it all last night, and everyone was prepared to fight.

Lucius' Rebellion had given them more than Malfoy knew and now they needed time, time the Rebellion had given them but they needed one more thing. They needed the boy who could become
the weapon they needed to destroy the darkness.

"Harry, where are you?"

No one had managed to find anything in regards to the Gryffindor Boy's location. Nothing.

The Weasley twins had even come forward and pointed out several secret passages that no one had known about but the search of them had turned up empty. Short of the Dark Mark burnt into the bodies, there was nothing connecting the Dark Lord to Harry's disappearance.

"Headmaster!"

Hagrid interrupted his thought. The large man was hurrying over the grounds and he appeared to be carrying something.

"Professor!"

A chill passed through Albus and he moved towards the half giant, motioning some of the Aurors to come with him. The small group met a short distance from the gates and Dumbledore couldn't help but notice that Hagrid was exceptionally happy.

"Headmaster!" The big man said breathlessly.

"What is it, Hagrid?"

"I found him."

"Who?"

"Harry!" Hagrid opened his jacket, lowering his arms to allow everyone to see his precious bundle.

Blue eyes opened wide at the sight. The boy was a mess. His hair was everywhere, his robes were torn and dirty, his face bruised and blood trickled from his mouth, but it was definitely Harry.

"How? Where?" The questions came from the Aurors.

"I don't know. He just appeared!" Hagrid said happily, not caring about the implications of broken wards of Hogwarts.

"We have to get him to the infirmary."

The Aurors parted and Dumbledore moved to Hagrid's side as they began towards the castle.

"..." There was a choking gurgle.

"Harry!" Hagrid shouted.

"Professor..." the black haired boy said weakly, struggling in Hagrid's arms with small hisses of pain.

"What it is Harry?" Dumbledore asked gently.

A shaky hand rose, offering the ancient wizard a wand of yew.

Dumbledore shook his head, taking the weak hand, placing it back on Harry's chest, tucking the wand out of sight. "No, Harry." It was Tom's wand but right now, Harry needed it and until he knew where Harry's was, the Aurors could not be allowed to destroy it out of hand.
"Headmaster," the boy said shakily, gasping.

"Rest Harry," Dumbledore implored him.

"No, I have to tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"I'll fight him," Harry gulped, trembling as the effort of speaking became too much. "I will be the weapon."

Chapter End Notes

End 'Possession' – Thank you to everyone for reading!

Continued in 'Weapon'

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